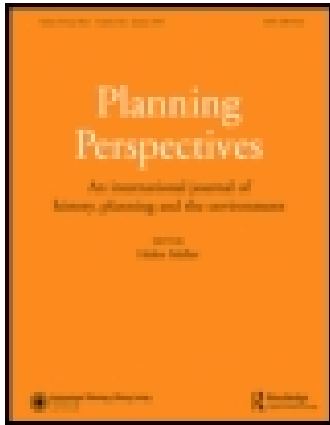


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Defence, identity, and urban form: the extreme case of Gjirokastra

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Gjirokastra, a century-old small city in southern Albania (now a UNESCO World Heritage site), provides an outstanding example of a Classical and Late Ottoman urban centre. At the same time, it is a special example of urban and architectural design based on self-defence by individual family units. Through an excursion of Gjirokastra's residential neighbourhoods, this article discusses how defence concerns guided its urban morphology and building typology until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The idea of war, feuds, and fear has pervaded the residents' self-identity for centuries. The military character of their houses owes much to the local 'warrior' mentality that prevailed in times of war and peace.

Keywords: Gjirokastra; Albania; identity and built environment; kule houses; Ottoman Empire; defence and house form

Introduction

This article discusses the unusual defence character of residential construction in Gjirokastra, Albania, through the lens of the political, cultural, and economic conditions that led to it. In various periods and places, defence has been a central concern in house, neighbourhood, and city building. The provincial cities of the Roman Empire, for example, which could not rely on Rome's central protection, were walled. In medieval Europe, city walls were widespread, and in some cases, as in the Netherlands, essential for a settlement to qualify for a charter. During the Renaissance, ideal city schemes were devised – with radial streets setting out from a vast central plaza and directly connecting with the bastioned periphery wall – where strategic considerations outweighed all others.¹ Examples of enclosed neighbourhoods surrounded with walls and guarded gates range from the flat and rectangular *fang* (wards) of traditional Chinese cities, in place since 1700 BC, to present-day gated communities, which are ubiquitous in North and South America. In the latter, an 'aesthetic of security' has evolved based on walls, fences, and guards.²

Cases of defensible individual buildings are considerably less common. In England, several hundred houses survive from the late Middle Ages, which display defence trappings such as moats, gatehouses, portcullises, turrets, battlements, and archery loops.³ In San Gimignano, a walled city in Tuscany, 13 *case torri* (houses with slender vertical towers) survive from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which create a skyscraper skyline on a hilltop.⁴ Tall, turreted stone tower houses built from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, scattered or aggregated in unwalled, compact settlements, are also found in the highlands of Svaneti, Georgia.⁵ Colonial Spanish and Portuguese houses in Latin America were often walled.⁶

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Gjirokastra, a small Ottoman-era city in southern Albania (now a UNESCO World Heritage site), is an outstanding example of urban and architectural designs based on a culture of self-defence by individual family units. The old town section is perched on an impressive mountain slope, Mali i Gjerë, overlooking the Drino River valley, at about 300 metres above sea level. A boat-shaped citadel, the second largest in the Balkan Peninsula, caps it (Figure 1). On the opposite side of the valley, the town faces another dramatic mountain range, Lunxhëria. Ismail Kadare, a renowned contemporary writer and Gjirokastra native, describes the city in his semi-autobiographic novel, *Chronicle in Stone*:

It was a strange city, and seemed to have been cast up in the valley one winter's night like some prehistoric creature that was now clawing its way up the mountainside. Everything in the city was old and made of stone, from the streets and fountains to the roofs of the sprawling age-old houses, covered with grey slates like gigantic scales. It was hard to believe that under this powerful carapace the tender flesh of life survived and reproduced . . . It was a slanted city, set at a sharper angle than perhaps any other city on earth, and it defied the laws of architecture and city planning.

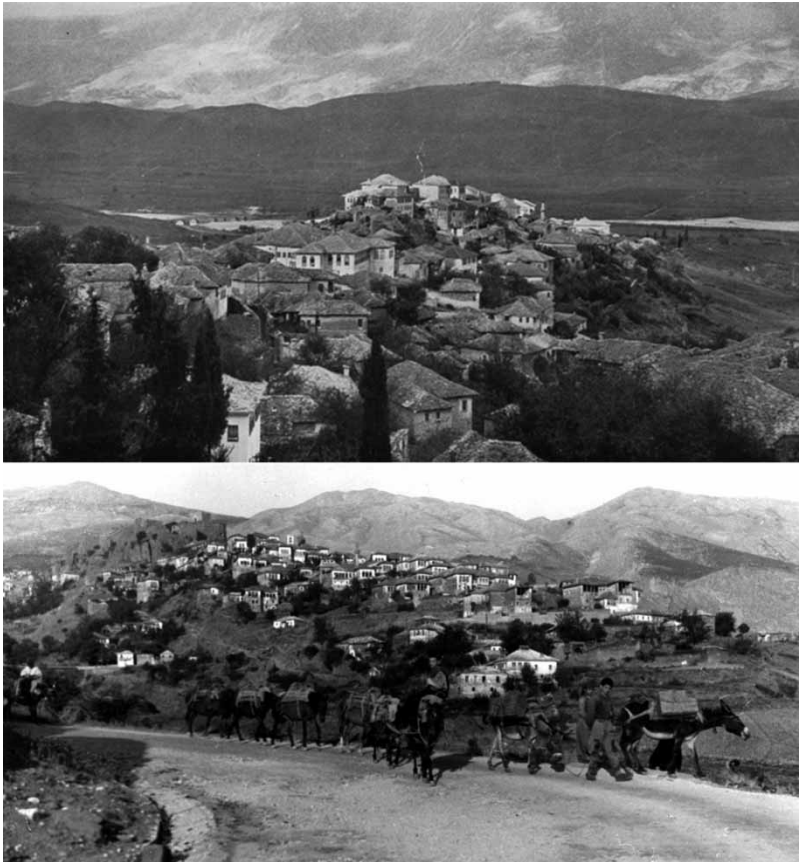


Figure 1. Photos of Gjirokastra in the mid-twentieth century (above: by Robinson Vandeleur, below: Branimir Gušić).

The top of one house might graze the foundation of another, and it was surely the only place in the world where if you slipped and fell in the street,⁷ you might well land on the roof of a house – a peculiarity known most intimately to drunks . . .

Gjirokastra's domestic architecture comprises more than 500 fine prototypes of *kule* (in Albanian *kullë*), an Ottoman detached tower house, which served the dual purpose of defence and habitation. Mostly built between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, Gjirokastra's monumental *kule* illustrate the disquieting compatibility of vernacular design, sensitive to topography and human needs, and war preparedness. The society and lifestyle these houses served, which was influenced by the culture and traditions of Islam, has now almost disappeared.

Up to now, the urban design and architectural literature on Gjirokastra has been largely descriptive, rather than focused on discussing its social and cultural bases. UNESCO's main criterion for including Gjirokastra among World Heritage sites is its 'outstanding testimony to the diversity of urban societies in the Balkans', which resulted in various types of monument and vernacular urban environments.⁸ Little mention is made of Gjirokastra's special defensible traits. Some scholarship has analysed Gjirokastra's domestic architecture from the perspective of building technology.⁹ Ample attention has also been paid to preservation issues.¹⁰ While discussion of defence elements in *kule* houses is encountered in existing literature, no single comprehensive review exists.

With an enviable geographic position, controlling the Drino River valley and serving as a bridge between the Ionian coast and the Ioannina basin (now in northern Greece), Gjirokastra has always been sought after by local and foreign rulers. Internal feuding was also rife. Therefore, defence concerns guided the city's morphology and building typology until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, when the construction of *kule* housing was discontinued. This article shows how Gjirokastra's built form uniquely combines Albanian fortified construction with elements of Ottoman luxury design.¹¹

The scene is set with a summary of Ottoman urban design compared to Albanian vernacular design, followed by a reconstruction of Gjirokastra's history, urban development, and architectural history from the Middle Age to the present. This overview draws on a number of firsthand accounts of foreign travellers,¹² focusing on the role of wars and blood feuds in the construction and persistence of a belligerent identity, which is manifest in the built environment. While primarily based on the authors' own observations and interpretations, this analysis draws on the extensive work of Albanian architectural historians, most notably the work of Emin Riza.¹³

Historical research in Gjirokastrite (Ottoman) archives, as well as on the identification of owners or tenants of household units, is very limited. Albanologists are just beginning to contextualize the bulk of evidence. Research is also constrained by language, with most archives being in Ottoman and some in Greek. The first graphic illustrations of Gjirokastra date from the early nineteenth century. Architectural surveying efforts were not undertaken until the communist era, which began after the Second World War.

Ottoman urban design

The Pax Ottomana in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries led to intense economic and cultural development and densification of urban areas, as well as the consolidation of the Ottoman city form. While it blends Persian, Byzantine, Seljuk, and other styles, Ottoman architecture and

urbanism are historic styles in their own right. The ‘Ottomanity’ of the Classical Age persisted well beyond the Empire’s political vigour. The cultural heart of the Ottoman Empire comprised the Sea of Marmara and the three imperial cities near it (Bursa, Istanbul, and Edirne), Macedonia, the southwestern Black Sea, and western Anatolia. These areas shared many urban design traits, including wooden houses of a distinct shape, central dome mosques, a close rapport between city and nature, and a loose articulation of the urban space. However, wide variation existed across the Empire, especially between the centre and the peripheries. Only those structuring elements of Ottoman cities, neighbourhoods, and houses that are relevant to the discussion of Gjirokastra’s defensible urban planning and architecture are discussed here.

Ottoman cities were typically defenceless, with no walls. This characteristic reflected Ottoman self-confidence. The building mass was articulated into distinctive units called *mahallas*, organized around a mosque and a founder/leader figure. Mahallas were small urban villages, most often inhabited by homogeneous social and religious groups, which exercised strong social controls and strove to preserve law and order. There was no deliberate division by class. The density was relatively low and cities were full of trees, which blurred the urban-rural separation. The residential fabric had primacy while public space was comparatively weak. The road systems were tortuous and convoluted, with many cul-de-sacs and no precise hierarchical transition. Virtually all houses were single-family, reflecting a measure of individualism. No precise rules were in place to regulate house form because government, in the Western sense (i.e. charters or communes), was foreign to the Ottoman city. Citizens were only enjoined from building in such a way that threatened accepted norms of social behaviour.

House construction rules were subject to the respect of custom, ownership, and privacy. The appearance towards the street being unimportant, houses were typically introverted while urban vistas were avoided. Blocking neighbours’ views and prying on their gardens were unacceptable behaviours. Most domestic construction was rather frail (reflecting the ephemeral nature of property rights), made of wood and plaster, and occasionally brick. A central hall (*sofa*), which served both as a circulation space (with all bedroom doors opening into it) and a living room, was an enduring element in house plans. This layout was conditioned by the fact that houses, especially larger ones, must be divided into *harem* and *selamlik* – separate quarters for women and men.¹⁴

Some Ottoman urban design traits, such as house introversion, lack of formal planning controls, organic street patterns, and the presence of large open or semi-open circulation spaces within houses were replicated in the Albanian lands of the Empire. Here the main,



Figure 2. Non-defensible Ottoman-era house typologies in Albania. From the left: *vatër zjarri* type, *hajati* type, *çardak* type, and *qoshkë* type. Illustrations courtesy of Emin Riza and Pirro Thomo.

non-defensible vernacular house types, which were directly influenced by the Ottoman style include (1) *vatër zjarri* type in Tirana; (2) *hajat* type in Kavaja, Elbasan, and Shkodra; (3) *çardak* type in Berat and Shkodra; and (4) *qoshkë* type in Korça (Figure 2). The defensible kule environment of Gjirokastra and some other Albanian cities and villages, with vertical sturdy houses on hilltops, radically differs from the typical open and spread-out Ottoman townscape. However, it also incorporates some elements of Ottoman-style domestic comfort in the upper levels.

Albanian vernacular tower-house environments

Variants of tower houses have been present in Albanian territories since the Roman era. But they did not become widespread until Ottoman rule, during which increased feuding, warfare, and vendettas instilled fear and prolonged hostilities. Earlier urban fortified houses typically consisted of a regular house adjoined by a tower (sometimes two), to which the family repaired in case of danger. The house and tower formed a complex surrounded by thick walls and sometimes moats. In some cases, for example, in the summer residencies of wealthy urbanites, the house was absent and the family lived in the tower itself. These inhabitable but uncomfortable towers had a typical defensive design: compactness and vertical thrust, stone walls, a simple square layout with a single room per floor, top floor machicolations,¹⁵ laconic *façades* pierced with embrasures and loopholes, and a single main entrance located on the second floor that reached through circuitous external stairs to expose visitors. In some areas, mostly rural, inhabited towers entirely replaced regular houses. If the family expanded, a new adjacent tower was built to accommodate the new members. In other areas, mostly urban, the towers and houses gradually merged into the kule type, a device that organically integrates defensive and residential functions. Its robust structure and military appearance were designed to intimidate and ward off enemies. A taller and stronger kule signalled the presence of a more powerful clan.¹⁶

Several Albanian cites, including Gjirokastra, Berat, Shkodra, and Kruja, have kule houses (Figure 3). Gjirokastra contains the most advanced and elaborate exemplars. Berat bears the closest stylistic resemblance to Gjirokastra, to the extent that some scholars consider them complementary. The materials and residential construction techniques are virtually identical in the two cities, except for the roofs which are covered by tiles in Berat. However, Berat houses are more horizontal and better connected to the outdoor domain. Many houses are built in rows along the main streets, with predominantly horizontal layouts. These differences are partly explained by natural causes: Berat has a smaller amount of rocky terrain, which builders sought to use as efficiently as possible by bunching houses together. More pertinent to this study are stylistic differences due to the social makeup of the two cities. Unlike Gjirokastra, which was ruled by major landowners in constant conflict with each other, the main occupations in Berat were trade and handcrafts, which are necessarily linked to a more open building and life-style.¹⁷

Elsewhere in the Balkan Peninsula, examples of Ottoman-era cities, which contain forts and tower houses, are found in Tivar (Bar), Budva, and Kotor in Montenegro, Dubrovnik in Croatia, Ohrid in Macedonia, and Ioannina in northern Greece.¹⁸ However, the style is distinct and, in territories north of Albania, integrates elements of Dalmatian architecture. Also, Gjirokastra is set apart by the size, quality, and the substantial preservation level of its townscape.



Figure 3. Simpler versions of Albanian tower houses. Courtesy of the Institute of Cultural Monuments.

Gjirokastra under the Ottoman rule: intermittent warfare and prosperity

Ottoman conquest

The Ottoman expansion in the Balkans started in the thirteenth century, as Byzantium began to crumble. In Albania, it was aided by the local political fragmentation into many small participates (despotates) at odds with each other. Gjirokastra was first invaded by the Ottoman army in the mid-1390s. At the time, it was a prosperous, though small, urban centre, with a developed feudal economy. The local despot, Gjon Zenebishi, resisted the conquest. However, in 1418, Gjirokastra was ultimately subjugated by the Ottomans. The rest of Albania became an Ottoman dominion before the end of the fifteenth century (Figure 4).¹⁹



Figure 4. Ottoman Empire expansion. Left: Albanian medieval principalities. Middle: Vilayet of Albania in mid-fifteenth century. Right: Albanian territories in the Empire in the nineteenth century.

A major step taken by the Ottomans, with the purpose of establishing a new economic, social, and political order, was the expropriation of the land of Albanian feudal lords. This gradual process continued through the fifteenth century, with southern Albania complying earlier than the more isolated north. In the early days, Ottoman land ownership differed from the Western fiefdom model. Here, the majority of land was in public rather than private ownership. Most state land was divided into *timar* (small units), which were assigned to *sipahi* (cavalrymen), who, in return, served in the army. This approach, with land usufruct tied to army service, gave a distinct military character to the Ottoman administration, at least at its onset. However, the *timar* system, in which feudal lords were land beneficiaries but not owners, limited the arbitrariness of individuals and simplified the former feudal hierarchy.²⁰

Muslim *sipahi* from Anatolia were sent to colonize Albanian territories. Local Christian subjects with a benign attitude towards the Ottoman administration were also allowed to serve as *sipahi*, but they constituted a small number. In the mid-fifteenth century, there were more than 300 *timar*-holding *sipahi* in Albania. Generally, members of the old Albanian nobility were assigned less desirable, barren fiefs, which led to resentment and uprisings. Other forms of Ottoman land ownership, such as *mülk* (private) and *vakıf* (pious endowment) were rather limited here.²¹

As for urban areas, in the aftermath of the Ottoman takeover, all major Albanian cities were in ruins. Their former flourishing economy floundered; a good portion of the urban population migrated to Dalmatia and Italy while others were captured and sold as slaves. Many cities turned into mere defence sites. Ottoman garrisons settled within their forts.

Trade and crafts decreased to a minimum. Most urban residents, like the peasantry, earned their living through agricultural production, a privilege for which they paid tax to the sipahi and the central government.²²

In 1419, Gjirokastra became the capital of the *Sanjak* of Albania (an administrative division of the Ottoman Empire), reconfirming its strategic importance.²³ But its population was minuscule relative to its administrative and political role. According to the first Ottoman census of 1431–1432, the city had just 121 houses; according to the second census of 1520, it still had only 142 houses, grouped into eight neighbourhoods.²⁴

Classical Ottoman period

During the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520–1566), Albanian cities revived and prospered. Their role as the economic, commercial, and cultural centres of their agricultural hinterland strengthened.²⁵ However, the Albanian lands were of secondary importance within the Empire, their value laying mainly in the proximity to the Adriatic Sea. Therefore, the Ottoman architecture here is less splendid than elsewhere.²⁶

Gjirokastra's urban development gained a strong impetus, with the city becoming one the largest in Albania (although Berat was the leader in the southern Albanian urban hierarchy). The 1583 census indicates that Gjirokastra had more than doubled in two-thirds of a century to reach almost 400 houses. To a large extent, this growth was due to the rural-urban economic migration that took place in the Gjirokastra region, as well as other parts of Albania at the time. Growth continued even after the move of the regional government to nearby Delvina. Most of the incoming population was accommodated in the eight existing neighbourhoods, which became denser; a single neighbourhood was created anew. Residential construction was complemented by new shops, inns, and markets. 'Architect' was listed among the professions exercised by local residents, suggesting that the urban population had certain expectations in terms of building quality and aesthetics.²⁷ The military, administrative, and religious leaders constituted the urban elite. While craftsmanship and trade gained importance in the urban economy, agriculture remained a vital activity for urban residents (as indicated by the type of taxes paid to local sipahi). Just 6% of householders were registered as craftsmen, compared to more than half in Berat and Elbasan.²⁸

Economic prosperity was also accompanied by unrest in Gjirokastra and throughout Albania. Insurrections broke out at intervals throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They were partly due to dissatisfaction with the high taxes imposed by the central government. Moreover, the longstanding self-governance mentality of Albanian lords was in opposition to the Empire's centralized approach.²⁹

Religious frictions, on the other hand, do not appear to have played a major role in causing strife.³⁰ While retaining a theocratic state character, the Ottoman Empire was characterized by pragmatism in matters of religion: religious conversions through violence rarely occurred and a tolerant attitude towards non-Muslim subjects prevailed.³¹ An English lady, travelling through Albania in 1717, noted:

These people, living between Christians and Mahometans, and not being skilled in controversy, declare that they are utterly unable to judge which religion is best; but, to be certain of not entirely

rejecting the truth, they very prudently follow both, and go to the mosques on Fridays and the church on Sundays[...].³²

The beginning of the end of the Empire

By the second half of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire began to lose its vitality. The territorial expansion halted; therefore, there was no new land to be divided up among the military class. As a consequence, powerful local sipahi began to demand full ownership and inheritance rights on land. The weakened central government was forced to recognize their claims. A new land management system called *çiflik* appeared (which lasted until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire). *Çiflik* were private, inheritable, land holdings. At the end of the sixteenth century, 26 *çiflik* had formed in the Gjirokastra region. While peasants had been serfs under the timar system, working for their own monetary gain, they now were ruled by a feudal lord, who could also dispatch them to war should the sultan require it. Dues substantially increased, producing frustration and violence. Some peasants migrated to areas outside *çiflik* control (i.e. to self-governed, isolated mountainous areas) or joined guerrilla bands. Land gained a new importance, allowing major holders to finance the construction of grand houses and a lavish lifestyle. *Çiflik* owners, free from central government control and the rigid rules of the timar system, began to quarrel among themselves over territorial property, leading to endless feuds and vendettas.³³

These were exacerbated by a quadruple legal system that operated in southern Albania, consisting of Sharia law, the Islamic moral code and religious law derived from the Quran, which extended over the whole Empire; Byzantine law, used by ecclesiastic courts and covering Christians; local canon law, comprised of sets of traditional Albanian laws; and Roman law, covering territories under Venetian control. These laws often contradicted one another. Local canons heavily focused on the concept of 'manly honour' and condoned or prescribed blood feuds. Ottoman judges applying Sharia laws were notoriously corrupt; many trials were in effect farces or auctions.³⁴ Under these circumstances, locals often took justice into their own hands. These factors explain Gjirokastra's obsession with security. A contemporary Albanian political analyst offers an alternative explanation: he suggests that, when bureaucrats in the Ottoman apparatus returned to their hometown upon retiring, they needed protection from the revenge of those who might have suffered from their abuses of power during their career.³⁵

The seventeenth century found southern Albania, as the rest of the Balkans, plagued by anarchy; entire areas were under the power of brigands. Gjirokastra was divided among several leagues, whose chieftains were continually at war.³⁶ Much of the information from that era comes from the vivid travelogue of a Turkish traveller, Evliya Çelebi, who visited Gjirokastra in 1670, right after the Fifth Ottoman-Venetian War. He noted that, notwithstanding the reign of anarchy, Gjirokastra had expanded further, reaching 2000 dwellings. By some other accounts, labour migration from southern Albania (including Gjirokastra) into Istanbul was substantial due to the fact that local resources were insufficient to support such a large population increase.³⁷ The city was the seat of a number of Ottoman functionaries, including a judge (*qadi*), a grand mufti, a chief architect, and several military leaders (overseeing 200 garrison troops), tax controllers, and inspectors. Gjirokastra's historic centre dates from the late seventeenth century, a time when it prospered as a trading hub for farmers. Recorded public buildings included: two covered and gated bazaars with a total of 200 shops, eight

congregational mosques, seven neighbourhood mosques, three dervish lodges (*tekkes*), three madrasas, three churches (in a predominately Christian quarter), five primary schools, one *hamam*, five fountains, and five merchant guesthouses. The stores were typically owned by craftsmen and vakif trusts, although some large landowners had begun to invest in them as well. Çelebi spoke highly of Gjirokastra's castle and mansions. He described the inhabitants as 'a race of warriors': mournful, sombre, chaste, virtuous, and brave.³⁸

Gjirokastra's defensible houses were first mentioned by Çelebi. His description follows:

Each of these well-built houses has a tower . . . The manner in which the outer walls of all the homes are constructed has no parallel in all the world. They are all twenty ells [15 metres] high of red sandstone blocks, just stone with no mud, lime or plaster . . . The walls are so tall and solid that not even a sparrow can get a claw hold . . . The walls of the courtyards of these houses are constructed of a kind of white granite, hewn out by master stonecutters as though they were Ankara bricks from a single mould. Both rich and poor have such walls. Such square-cut stone is to be found nowhere else on earth except in the cities of Tyre and Magnesia in Anatolia.

However, he also noted that this style was by no means recent: 'the walls and the houses are all centuries old, dating from the time of the infidels'. This comment hints to the Byzantine origins of the fortified tower typology of the kule.³⁹ Apart from kule houses and the fort, there were no other defensible elements, such as city walls, at the time of Çelebi's travels.

Ali Pasha's rule

In 1811, Gjirokastra (along with nearby Delvina) fell under the control of Ali Pasha of Tepelena.⁴⁰ A towering figure in Ottoman history, Ali Pasha (c. 1740–1822) was the governor of western Rumelia, the Ottoman Empire's European territory. European accounts have portrayed him in typical 'orientalist' terms: irrational, despotic, cruel, and untrustworthy.⁴¹ However, in Albanian official historiography he has been regarded as a patriotic figure who led the country in the direction of national independence and unity (Figure 5).⁴²

Born in Tepelena, near Gjirokastra, Ali Pasha was hired by the Turkish army and quickly rose through the ranks. Around 1788, he acquired the stronghold of Ioannina, which became the seat of his luxurious *Pashalik* (court) for the next three decades. He annihilated the pashas forming the aristocracy of the place, banishing many, putting others to death, and ruining their possessions. He proceeded against the rebellious members of the lower classes with just as much severity.⁴³ Ali Pasha replaced his old enemies with Albanian mountaineers, but, too prudent to allow all the power to fall into the hands of a single caste, he added to and mixed with them an infusion of Greeks.⁴⁴ Taking advantage of the weakening Ottoman government, he further expanded his territory until he gained control of southern and central Albania, Epirus, and Thessaly.⁴⁵

Ali Pasha established and maintained contacts with all the great powers of Europe at that time. He corresponded with Napoleon, the English Admiral Lord Nelson, and the Russian Tsar. His court was visited by many Europeans, including Lord Byron in 1809 (Figure 6).⁴⁶ Byron noted that the locals carried weapons as part of their daily dress.⁴⁷ Another traveller remarked that life in Ali Pasha's court afforded 'some fine pictures of feudal life, which carry one back in imagination to Europe in the tenth century'.⁴⁸

Cleverly exploiting his diplomatic relations, Ali Pasha attempted to secede from the Ottoman state. Although the European great powers never recognized the Pashalik of Ioannina



Figure 5. Portrait of Ali Pasha, painting by Joseph Cartwright, 1819. Private collection.

as independent, in practice they treated it as an autonomous state. Under Ali Pasha, Ioannina was the largest Pashalik, and one of the most advanced centres in Rumelia. By one account, the Turks 'looked upon it with a mixture of fear and contempt'.⁴⁹ This type of administration created the conditions for faster economic development. Ali Pasha carried out considerable construction in both Epirus and Albania, including road building and the draining of marshes. His merciless punishments curtailed anarchy and crimes, such as road piracy, and contained the corruption of Ottoman judges. He often presided over court proceedings in person.⁵⁰

Gjirokastra was brought under Ali Pasha's control relatively peacefully. While he led a march against the city, the inhabitants surrendered before the besiegers had made much progress.⁵¹ The marriage of Ali Pasha's sister with one of the principal local chiefs consolidated his influence. Thus, Gjirokastra escaped the fate of other nearby places, which were destroyed during his expansion fury.⁵² The city and its annexed territory were of much importance to Ali Pasha's interests in compacting his dominion and increasing revenues. Incorporated into the Pashalik of Ioannina and under Ali Pasha's autocratic rule, Gjirokastra developed greatly, reaching its apogee. The population grew to approximately 15,000 inhabitants by the turn of the nineteenth century. The French Consul in Ali Pasha's court, François Charles Hugues Laurent Pouqueville, wrote that the city was still 'distracted with sanguinary and endless contentions'.⁵³ However, its economic role as a trading centre for local



Figure 6. Lord Byron in Albanian dress. Painting by Thomas Phillips (1835), National Portrait Gallery in London.

merchandise (livestock, fabrics, handcrafts, and dairy) was consolidated, with products gaining a reputation in the rest of the Empire.

The prosperity of the era is reflected in the large number of dwellings built, many of which are preserved almost in their original state. New kule were built by all social strata, but the ones belonging to wealthy landlords (the Muslim elite) were particularly impressive. By contrast, religious buildings, although numerous, were inconspicuous because now political power was not based on religious institutions as strongly as it had been earlier.⁵⁴ Three English travellers hosted by Ali Pasha described Gjirokastra as an attractive city with a grand fort, striking tower houses standing on deep ravines and precipices, and numerous armed soldiers. By then, nearly the entire population had converted to Islam, but Muslims' relations with the few remaining Christians were harmonious.⁵⁵

To defend himself against the various Albanian and Turkish enemies that he inevitably made during his territorial expansion, one of Ali Pasha's first acts in newly subjugated Gjirokastra was to reinforce the fort and enlarge it to its present size (500 by 80 metres).⁵⁶ Although reconstruction works proceeded with urgency and lasted only one year, mobilizing around 2000 workers, the result was grand for the time. The fort was built entirely out of carved stone. It had seven bastions, the tallest of which was 30 metres high. The three entrances, including the oldest to



Figure 7. Gjirokastra's castle and aqueduct in the earliest graphic illustrations of the town.

the north, were monumental, decorated with side pilasters and bas-reliefs. The fort had a network of giant galleries covered by robust vaults. To supply it with drinking water, a 12-kilometre, two-storey aqueduct was constructed, which connected Gjirokastra with a nearby mountain. The aqueduct was one of the most imposing structures of its time in the Balkans (Figure 7). Clearly these efforts were made to enable the population to withstand a long siege.⁵⁷ By some accounts, 5000 soldiers lived in the reconstructed fort.⁵⁸

Due to his political manoeuvres, Ali Pasha's relations with the Sublime Porte⁵⁹ were tenuous. However, he managed to avoid an open breach for a long time. Eventually, ousted rival Albanian and Turkish feudal lords persuaded Sultan Mahmud II to depose him. In 1820, Turkish forces were dispatched to Ioannina and Ali Pasha died after two years of bitter fighting.⁶⁰ At the end of his reign, he destroyed Ioannina, but not Gjirokastra, fearing that it might afford shelter to the enemy.⁶¹

The end of the Empire

After Ali Pasha's demise, Gjirokastra again fell under Ottoman administration. A Scottish traveller, who visited this and other Albanian cities in 1831, described a stagnant country languishing under the weight of a decaying Empire. He compared the people to the highlanders of Scotland, in terms of customs and appearance.⁶² The *Tanzimât* (1839–1876), a movement to reform, modernize, and re-centralize the Empire and increase its taxes, led to a major popular revolt in 1847, which involved Gjirokastra in a major way. Ultimately, it was crushed. The English writer and painter, Edward Lear, who travelled to Albania in 1848, described the city's fallen glory:

... the castle, at present a shell of dark mouldering walls; it was built by Ali Pasha, to command the town after its subjection to him, but was dismantled and destroyed upon his fall, though its remains are witness to its former strength and importance[...].⁶³

In 1868, Gjirokastra became capital of the Sanjak of Ergiri (Gjirokastra's Turkish name), in the Vilayet of Ioannina. In the absence of totalitarian control, anarchy returned and old vendettas recommenced.

*Defence features in late Ottoman residential design*⁶⁴

Many Gjirokatra kule houses date from this late Ottoman period. They are more elaborate than earlier versions, borrowing some elements from the Ottoman Rococo of that era. However, their defence traits are clearly evident.

While the location of the city on a rocky, steep, and uneven mountain slope posed a number of severe limitations on builders, the selection of such a difficult site was strategic.⁶⁵ An English traveller in the nineteenth century noted that hostile families built their kule in disadvantageous spots, on ravines and rocks, where they could 'cherish their quarrels for years together without any effectual result'.⁶⁶ A French traveller explained, 'The more difficult of access [*sic*] the more a house is valued ... [W]here no law but that of brutal force exists a regard to self-preservation is the governing principle among men[...]'.⁶⁷

To shield the city's highest section, Gjirokastra's main quarters leaned against the mountain. The urban configuration resembled the shape of an open hand, where the palm constituted the city core and the fingers (the mahallas and kule houses on opposing ridges) were the city extensions. Between the 'fingers' there were gaps where watercourses ran. Some of the gaps were impassable on foot. Free of construction, those areas were generally planted with vegetation, through which paths crept up to the centre.

The difficulty of access within the city offered protection in case of internal feuds (Figure 8). As in other Albanian cities, various restrictions were in place for circulation in urban roads.

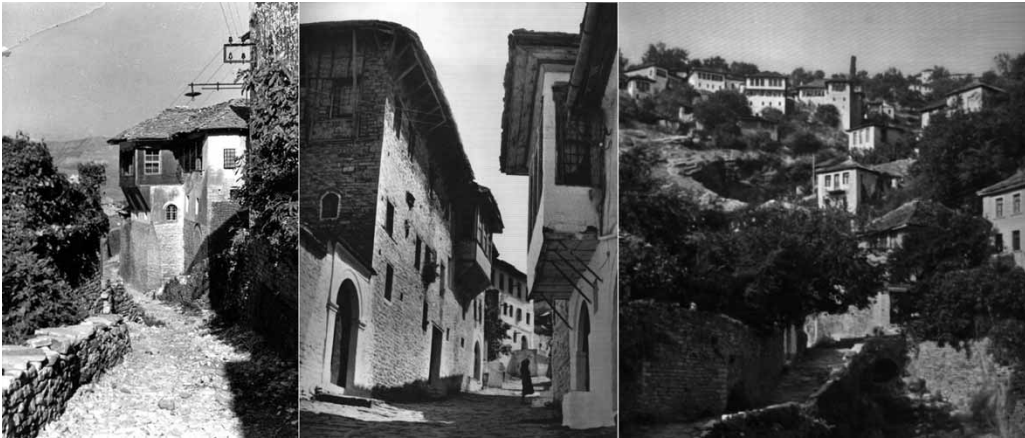


Figure 8. Views of the narrow roads and rivulets. Left photo by Branimir Gušić c. 1947, middle and right photo by the Institute of Cultural Monuments c. 1975.

Women were not allowed to promenade on the main street. In case of conflicts, local lords split the city into imaginary lines, claiming their territory. External enemies would have found the city rather impenetrable as well. They would have had to attack from above, climbing over the mountain, a nearly impossible task. Alternately, if they endeavoured to infiltrate from below through the shores of the rivulets, they would be trapped and soon captured, as the gaps were overseen by the houses on the hills. The roads that divided the houses were also narrow, steep, and winding, constituting another trapping device for outsiders who were unfamiliar with the city.

On the outside, Gjirokastran houses were remarkably austere and massive. With their tall, slightly tapered walls, they had a powerful, fort-like appearance (Figure 9). Stone, the most durable building material locally available at the time, was predominant in the city: the house walls were made of rectangular, carved stone bricks, the roofs were covered with flat, grey stone slates, and the streets were paved with cobblestones. The presence of one or more chimneys, as well as their height, was symbolic. Only the wealthy were allowed to build chimneys on their roof; the taller the chimney, the more important the household. The walls of the lower floors were bare, with the stone construction uncoated. Few architectural details embellished these walls. Notwithstanding feeble efforts by the Ottoman administration to enact rules on the minimum size of façade openings, lower level windows were either very small or entirely absent. If present, they were arched and usable as gun embrasures (Figure 10).⁶⁸ Johan Georg von Hahn, the Austrian Consul in Ioannina (1847–1851), described this scene:

In case of quarrels among the city elite – a rather common occurrence – the lord and his people defend the house, and from behind the walls waste much gunpowder shooting at the houses of the enemies. Blood is rarely shed because each is well protected.⁶⁹

On the kule style, von Hahn commented that ‘these buildings resemble our urban castles of the Middle Ages; their primitive but interesting style is more Western than Eastern’.⁷⁰



Figure 9. Zekate residence, one of Gjirokastra's most monumental houses. Photo courtesy of Cultural Heritage without Borders, Albania.

To withstand the area's rough terrain without excessive levelling works, and to accommodate Gjirokastra's multi-generational extended families, houses needed to have as small and efficient a footprint as possible and extend vertically two or three storeys, rather than spread horizontally and recess in volume from one floor to the other, following the mountain contour (Figure 11). This led to the adoption of highly creative and functional solutions; for example, the use of narrow, angled, and circular stairs, and built-in closets, cupboards, and lofts was common.

The functions were distributed according to a vertical hierarchy. The lower sections, built in stone, were uninhabited. They housed the livestock (*katoi*) and served to store food reserves (*qilari*), rainwater (*stera*), and often a mill. Thus, any house could be self-sufficient for a significant period. By contrast to the lower floors, the upper floors were much lighter, airier, and more elaborate. Large balconies, verandas, or porches (*çardak*) were present here, with carved wood railings, murals, and other ornaments (Figure 12). For security, the larger upstairs windows were fitted with wooden shutters (*taraba*) on the inside, which were closed at night, and with criss-crossed wood trellises (Figure 13). The main entrances were located on the front façades, overlooking the valley. Entrances were rarely on the sides and never at the back; these locations were avoided because they were less visible. Side façades had fewer openings than the main façades.

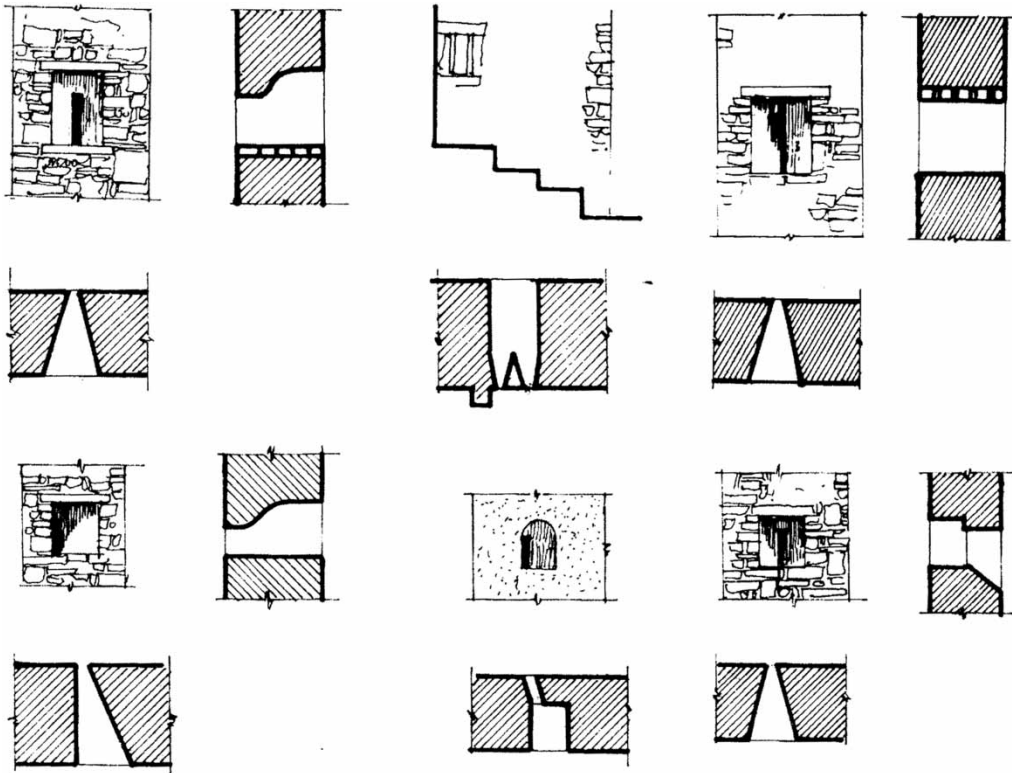


Figure 10. Embrasure types in Gjirokastra kule houses. Courtesy of the Institute of Cultural Monuments.

The openings in the back façades, which leaned on the mountain slope, were minimal. Here, very little wood was used to help protect the house against arson (Figure 14).⁷¹

In contrast to the ascetic house exteriors, Gjirokastra's interiors (in the inhabited upper floors) were rich and refined. The social spaces reflected the hospitable nature of the local people, as well as their cultural proclivity to display their status through opulent interiors. These characteristics were in opposition to defensive needs and traditional hostilities. The larger upper floors accommodated the living areas: the living room, also called the 'fire room' (*oda e zjarrit*), and the more formal 'guest room' or 'good room' (*oda e miqve* or *oda e mirë*). In smaller houses, the guest room constituted the selamlik (men's area), while in larger houses the selamlik was a separate building. As the most important room of the house, the guest room was opened only when trusted guests (i.e. relatives) arrived, who also slept here (Figure 15). Women entered this room only when the visitors were close relatives, who were allowed to see them unveiled. Three-storey houses also had large central halls or mezzanines for the distribution of movement (the sofa of the Turkish house, called *divan* in Albania).

A special, two-storey structure, with a single room in each storey for passive defence, was the *kamerie* (Figure 16). Lower than the house and ending in a terrace, the *kamerie* could be

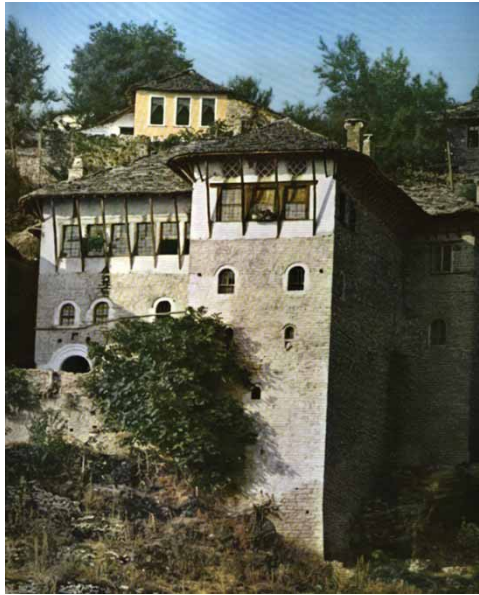


Figure 11. An example of a kule's verticality and adaptation to the terrain. Photo courtesy of the Institute of Cultural Monuments.

attached to, or detached from, the main house body. The ground floor, with very small windows, was used as a refuge, while the upper floor was used as a bedroom. In earlier, lower houses, outside stone stairs were sometimes employed to reach the inhabited spaces. With increasing security concerns, the stairs were eventually inserted within the house walls.

Three-storey houses often had two main entrances: one on the first floor and another on the second floor, which was reached by climbing up a flight of external stairs, thus leaving a potential enemy exposed. The main house types are shown in Figures 17–19, with the most complex types located closer to the city core. In many houses, the tastefully built main gate directly faced the street. The gate slabs were made of thick, wooden boards with heavy bars on the inside (*katarakt*) to lock the gate. In some cases, the walls flanking the gate were equipped with embrasures (*mazgalle*) (Figure 20). Larger and taller gates signalled a wealthier and more powerful household: the homes of elite members were referred to as 'high porte'.

The yards of the Gjirokastra houses were almost always surrounded by *ovorot*, thick, stone walls built with or without mortar. These walls sometimes had battlements, or crenellations, to allow the discharge of weapons. Yard enclosures were necessary to clearly define the property lines; also, in Muslim households they served to protect female members from the gaze of outsiders. Had not defence been a concern, simpler and less costly wooden fences could have been employed to fulfil these functions. Wealthier households had two or, in some cases, three yards between the main gate and the house. Each of these yards was surrounded by walls. A symbolic element of courtyards was the drinking water fountain, which only major landowners were allowed to have.

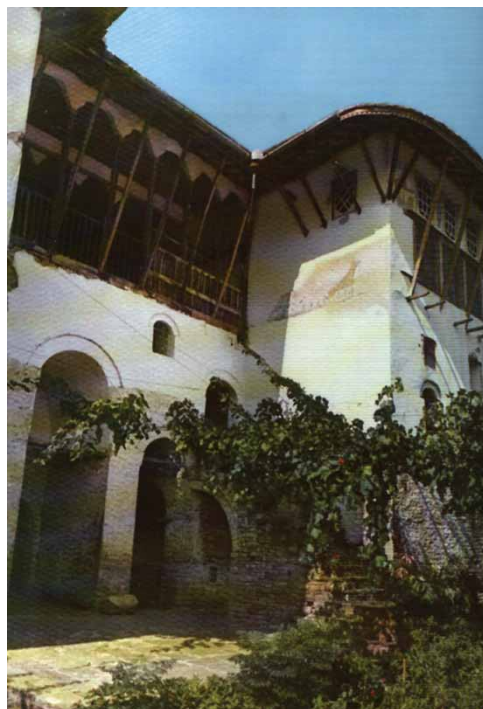


Figure 12. Çardak openness on the third floor. This is also an example of a house with two entrances and both external and internal stairs. Photo courtesy of the Institute of Cultural Monuments.

The auxiliary buildings, including the kitchen, were placed outside the main house. The accessory house (*odajashta*) was more often located in the outermost yard. An *odajashta* was used as a bedroom for guards and servants, as well as a makeshift inn.⁷² Cities only had simple hostels for peasants who came to sell produce in the markets. Any traveller of a certain standing expected to be hosted by well-to-do local families. According to Albanian tradition, local families had a duty to host stranded travellers for the night. However, they were cautiously kept outside the main house. The men of the house greeted these strangers. Women remained hidden in the harem or kitchen and food was served to the guests by their male relatives.

In regards to other lifestyle aspects, the limited ethnographic sources and a few fictionalized memoirs from the early twentieth century paint a picture of patriarchy and backwardness in southern Albanian cities. Gjirokastra families were large, typically including 20–30 members living in one house. Women were considered property of the various male family members and could not participate in public life. With advancing age and after having produced and raised male heirs, they gained authority over younger female relations. Husbands and wives led separate lives in separate quarters. By some accounts, they did not even share the same bed at night or address each other by name. In the city of Gjirokastra, women wore veils in public, and typically remained confined to the domestic sphere. In the province, where women were involved in agricultural production outside the home, they were allowed to go out uncovered.



Figure 13. Murals on the upper floor walls of kule houses. Photo courtesy of the Institute of Cultural Monuments.



Figure 14. Side and back façades with minimal openings. Photo by Branimir Gušić c. 1947.

From independence to the present

As the Ottoman Empire declined in the second half of the nineteenth century, a strong national independence movement, The Albanian National Awakening, took root, with ethnic identity prevailing over religious affiliation among the educated population.⁷³ The turbulent atmosphere



Figure 15. Guest room. Photo courtesy of the Institute of Cultural Monuments.



Figure 16. Kamerie topped by a veranda. Photo courtesy of the Institute of Cultural Monuments.

surrounding the National Awakening is reflected in the photographic records of the period, in which Albanians were often represented as armed warriors or soldiers.⁷⁴ When Albania declared its independence in 1912, Gjirokastra played a significant role in the independence movement.⁷⁵ The present frontier, which included Gjirokastra in Albania and Ioannina in Greece, was ratified internationally in 1921.

After the Second World War, a communist dictatorship was installed in Albania, which lasted until 1990. The dictator, Enver Hoxha, was a Gjirokastra native. Due in part to this association, in 1961, the city was assigned protected status as a ‘museum’ by the Albanian government. Thereafter, construction in the old section was minimal, while many traditional houses were restored (Figure 21). Fifty-one houses were assigned Category 1 listing, meaning that

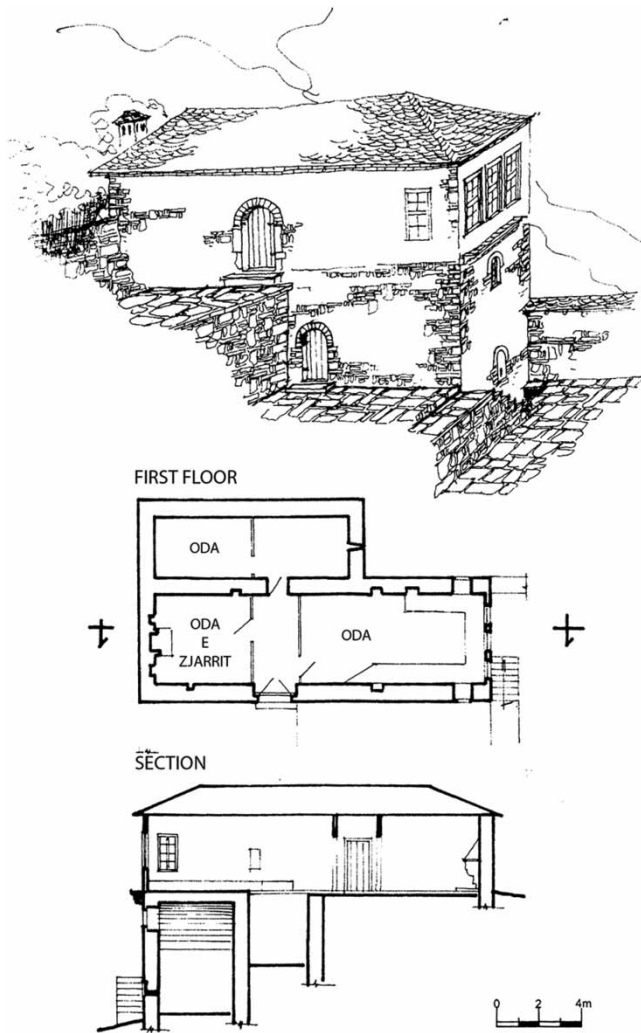


Figure 17. Example of the perpendicular house type. Courtesy of the Institute of Cultural Monuments.

no external modifications were permitted, and more than 350 houses were listed as Category 2, that is, some modifications that matched the existing built volumes, materials, shapes, and colours were allowed. Throughout the buffer zone, interventions could not disturb the authentic look of the environment.

With the collapse of the communist regime, and the subsequent economic, social, and political turmoil, institutional structures dedicated to historic preservation disintegrated. Skilled workers and craftsmen emigrated abroad. This led to wear and degradation. In addition, the historic section experienced some damage during Albania's civil unrest of 1997. While in 2005 Gjirokastra became a UNESCO World Heritage site, this designation did not resolve

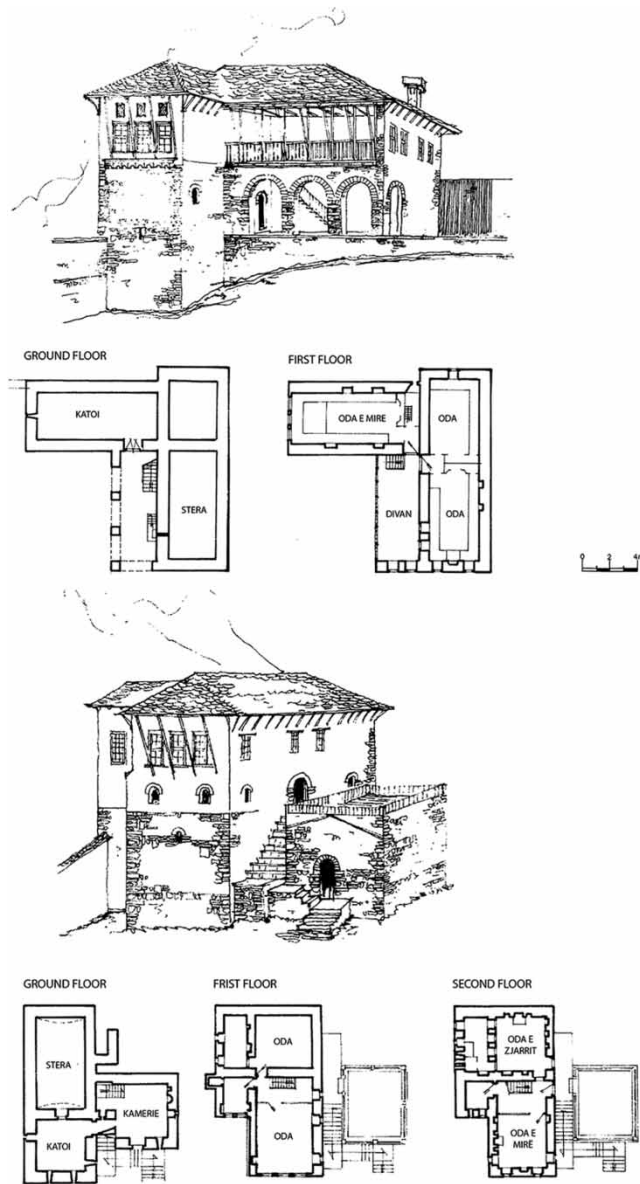


Figure 18. Examples of the one-wing house type. Courtesy of the Institute of Cultural Monuments.

the problems of conservation. On paper, the city, now with a population of 40,000, enjoys quite a strict legal protection. Nevertheless, a number of buildings are at great risk from neglect, abandonment, and fire. Urban development and modern additions to inhabited historic buildings represent other threats. The public sector does not have the resources to

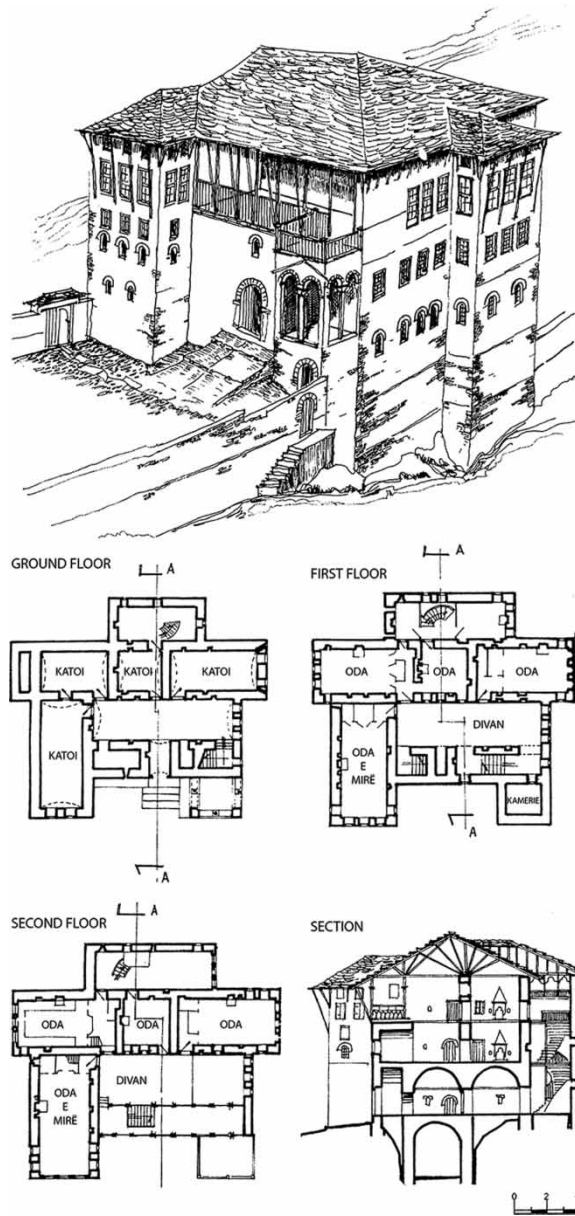


Figure 19. Example of the two-wing house type. Courtesy of the Institute of Cultural Monuments.

fully deal with these challenges. However, due to the past legacy of active state involvement in the country's cultural affairs, private businesses and the general public do not view the preservation of cultural heritage as part of their responsibility. The Albanian chapter of



Figure 20. Examples of gates. In the middle photograph, notice the embrasures on both sides of the gate. The above and middle photos are courtesy of the Institute of Cultural Monuments, the photo below is by Branimir Gušić c. 1947.

Cultural Heritage without Borders and the Gjirokastra Conservation and Development Organization are among the few local NGOs that work in heritage management and conservation in Gjirokastra and own internationally recognized skills. Cultural and heritage tourism is developing slowly.⁷⁶

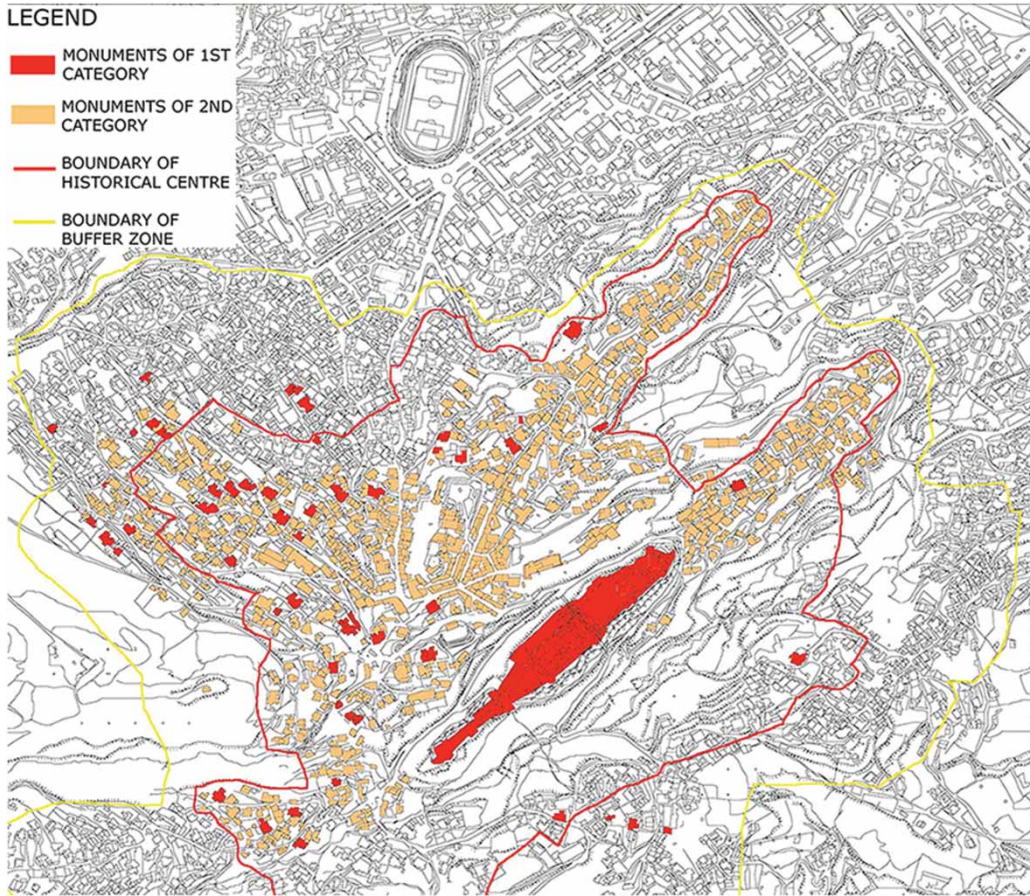


Figure 21. Protected cultural monuments. Map by authors.

Conclusion

The most important dimension of defensible city planning, urban design, and architecture, is fear: fear of enemies, strangers, or others. Other important dimensions related to fear are status and identity: the most secure city, neighbourhood, or house is the strongest, wealthiest, and most powerful. Based on theories of environmental psychology, first advanced by psychologist Amos Rapoport, the process of establishing identity involves the setting up of some boundary separating ‘us’ from ‘them’ and locating people in social and/or physical space. The boundary can be spatial, territorial, religious, ethnic, cultural, behavioural, or related to lifestyle or appearance. Environments establish context and define a situation, eliciting appropriate emotions and guiding users to act accordingly. In this sense, environments can be seen as teaching media and mnemonic devices. As such, they play an important role in the enculturation process and the routinizing of behaviour.⁷⁷

With the spectre of war and conflict ever-present in its history and culture, Gjirokastra’s houses had to guarantee effective protection from attack. A number of architectural features

reveal this requirement. Its fortified kule houses were akin to small fortresses sitting at the foot of the big mountaintop fort. They were perched on inaccessible ridges. Their stone walls were thick, with embrasures and heavy gates; windows had inside shutters. Houses were surrounded by two or three yards. Only trusted friends were allowed inside, while servants, guards, and occasional travellers were kept on the outside. Residents lived farther from the reach of outsiders, in the upper floors. Ground floors were uninhabited: they were used to store long-term provisions, such as food and water. These features rendered construction more costly than necessary under peaceful circumstances. The fact that Gjirokastra's parsimonious residents elected to make certain excessive house-building expenses speaks to their deep security fears. Some of Gjirokastra's residential design traits are encountered in other Albanian provinces. However, the elaborate, highly developed design sets Gjirokastra's kule house environments apart from other tower-house versions.

This style of domestic architecture reflected the city's tumultuous history. While its incorporation into the Ottoman Empire for almost five centuries brought prosperity to Gjirokastra's inhabitants, the city also experienced incessant raids, insurrections, invasions, guerrilla fights, despotism, and blood feuds, starting with the Zenebishi surrender in 1418 and ending with the National Awakening movement (c. 1850–1912). This turbulent atmosphere inculcated residents with fear; each family must protect itself, even when inside the home. Thus, a local warrior identity and culture was forged, which prevailed in times of war and peace. While Gjirokastra's built ensemble is still impressive today, understanding its history and design is puzzling for researchers and tourists.

Notes on contributors

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Notes

1. Kostof, *City Assembled*, 62–4; Kostof, *City Shaped*.
2. Low, *Towards a Theory of Urban Fragmentation*. See also Davis, *Fortress Los Angeles*.
3. Emery, *Late-Medieval Houses*.
4. Castex, *Architecture of Italy*.
5. Pavan, *Svaneti Towers*.
6. Low, *Towards a Theory of Urban Fragmentation*. See also Davis, *Fortress Los Angeles*.
7. Kadare, *Chronicle in Stone*, 1.
8. See <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/569/>.
9. Kamberi, *Disa të Dhëna mbi Teknikën e Ndërtimit*; Merxhani and Mamani, *Construction Materials*.
10. Torresi, *Alla Scoperta della Città di Pietra*. See also Cultural Heritage without Borders: <http://www.chwb.org/regional/index.php>.
11. This identity presents itself even in relatively minor details, such as the legend surrounding the city name origin. To date many local residents claim that 'Gjirokastra' derives from the name of Princess Argyro, the sister of the local feudal lord, who, during the final siege of the city by the Turks threw

- herself and her infant son from the fortress battlements into the rocks so as not to be taken alive by the enemy – an unlikely explanation since the first mention of the city’s name appears in Byzantine records, well before the Ottoman conquest.
12. The city is most often referred to as ‘Argyro-Castro’.
 13. See edited volumes of *Folk Art in Albania, Architectural Monuments in Albania*, and *History of Albanian Architecture*, as well as Shkodra, *La Ville Albanaise au Cours*; Riza and Thomo, *Collection d’Arts*; and Riza, *Qyteti dhe Banesa Shqiptare*. Also, Kiel, *Ottoman Architecture in Albania*.
 14. The discussion of Ottoman neighbourhoods is based on Cerasi, *Il Tessuto Residenziale della Cita’ Ottomana*; Goodwin, *A History of Ottoman Architecture*, 429–53; and Kostof, *City Assembled*, 62–4. The discussion of Ottoman house design is based on Bozdogan, *The Legacy of an Istanbul Architect*; Eldem, *Türk Evi Plan Tipleri*; Borie and Pinon, *La Maison Turque*.
 15. Openings for dropping rocks or boiling water on an enemy.
 16. Karaiskaj, *5000 Vjet Fortifikime në Shqipëri*.
 17. Baçe et al., *Historia e Arkitekturës së Shqipërisë*.
 18. Kiel, *Ottoman Architecture in Albania*.
 19. Bozhori and Liço, *Burime Tregimtare Bizantine*.
 20. Pulaha, *Qytetet Shqiptare nën Regjimin Feudal*, 17–42.
 21. Ibid.
 22. Ibid.
 23. Sanjak were further subdivided into *vilayet*. The Sanjak of Albania included 10 vilayet. In the nineteenth century the naming was reversed and sanjak became subdivisions of vilayet.
 24. Duka, *Profili i një Qyteti Shqiptar*.
 25. Ibid.
 26. Kiel, *Ottoman Architecture in Albania*; Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*; Albanian Academy of Science, *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*.
 27. Duka, *Profili i një Qyteti Shqiptar*.
 28. Ibid.; Pulaha, *Qytetet Shqiptare nën Regjimin Feudal*.
 29. Albanian Academy of Science, *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*.
 30. One fierce uprising in the areas near Gjirokastra, which had a religious impetus, took place in 1611.
 31. Isufi, *Aspekte të Islamizimit në Çamëri*; Giakoumis, *Dialectics of Pragmatism*.
 32. Montagu, *Letters and Works*, 157.
 33. Pulaha, *Pronësia Feudale*; Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece*.
 34. Nano, *Aspekte të Sistemit të Drejtësisë*; Giakoumis, *Archival Codices*; Elezi, *Kanuni i Labërisë*.
 35. Myftaraj, *Gjygji Intelektual*.
 36. Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece*.
 37. Ergin, *The Albanian Tellák Connection*.
 38. Dankoff and Elsie, *Evliya Çelebi in Albania*, 71–87. The bazaar burned down at the beginning of the nineteenth century and was reconstructed along its present lines.
 39. Ibid.
 40. Various known as ‘Ali Pasha of Ioannina’, ‘Lion of Ioannina’, and ‘the Muslim Bonaparte’.
 41. Fleming, *The Muslim Bonaparte*. See also Brønsted, *Interviews with Ali Pacha of Ioannina*.
 42. Godo, *Ali Pashë Tepelena*.
 43. Hobhouse, *A Journey through Albania*.
 44. Dumas, *Ali Pacha: Celebrated Crimes*.
 45. Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania*.
 46. Who was thus inspired to devote a canto of Childe Harold to Albania.
 47. Quoted in Prothero, *The Works of Lord Byron*, 29–34.
 48. Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece*, 53.
 49. Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece*, 40.
 50. Hutchins, *Historical Dictionary of Albania*.
 51. Davenport, *The Life of Ali Pasha of Tepelena*.
 52. Dumas, *Ali Pacha: Celebrated Crimes*.
 53. Pouqueville, *Travels in Epirus, Albania, and Thessaly*, 64.

54. Kiel, *Ottoman Architecture in Albania*.
55. Holland, *Travels in the Ionian Isles, Albania*; Hughes, *Travels in Greece and Albania*; Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece*.
56. The fort survives to our time. See Karaiskaj, *5000 Vjet Fortifikime në Shqipëri*.
57. Ibid. The aqueduct was demolished in 1932. Only a small section survived, which is known locally as Ali Pasha's Bridge.
58. Ibid.
59. The Council of Ministers of the Ottoman Empire, alternatively called Divan.
60. Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania*; Dumas, père, *Ali Pacha: Celebrated Crimes*.
61. Dumas, père, *Ali Pacha: Celebrated Crimes*.
62. Urquhart, *Spirit of the East*.
63. Lear, *Journals of a Landscape Painter in Albania*, 315.
64. To prepare this discussion, the following sources were consulted (unless otherwise noted):
 - For general discussions of architecture, urban design, and historic preservation: Baçe, *Vështrim mbi Qendrat e Banuara Antike*; Lazimi and Doraci, *Probleme të Mbrojtjes së Vlerave Urbane*; Strazimiri, *Gjirokastra dhe Vlerat e Saj Kulturore*; Riza, *Gjirokastra Qytet-Muze: Album*; Riza, *Gjirokastra, the Town That Is a Museum*.
 - For analyses of domestic architecture: Mitrojorgji, *Analiza Morfologjike e Elementeve të Pamjes*; Riza, *Banesa e Fortifikuar Gjirokastrite*; Riza, *L'Habitation Type Gjirokastrite*; Riza, *Kamerietë në Banesën Shqiptare*; Riza, *Les Maisons à Traits Défensifs en Albanie*.
 - For case studies of specific houses: Riza, *Arkitektura dhe Restaurimi i Banesës së Zekatëve*; Riza, *Një Shembull i Zhvilluar i Banesës Gjirokastrite*; Kamberi, *Një Banesë e Shekullit XVIII*.
 - For construction techniques: Kamberi, *Disa të Dhëna mbi Teknikën e Ndërtimit*.
 - For Albanian fortification architecture: Karaiskaj, *5000 Vjet Fortifikime*.
 - For interior design: Riza, *Shtëpia e Zjarrit*; Riza, *Oda e Miqve*; Shkupi, *Zbukurimorja*; Lazimi, *Oda e Mirë*.
 - For ethnographic observations: Nova, *Pozita e Gruas*; Gjergji, *Mënyra e Jetesës*; Kokalari, *Vepra*. A narrative of Gjirokastra's layout and houses is also provided in the memoirs of the late Albanian dictator, Enver Hoxha (likely ghostwritten by the Institute of Cultural Monuments).
65. In addition to defence concerns, another reason for building at an altitude was the preservation of agricultural land on the plains.
66. Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece*, 363–84.
67. Pouqueville, *Travels in Epirus, Albania, and Thessaly*, 64.
68. In Albanian they were referred to as *frëngji*, which means embrasures.
69. von Hahn, *Albanesische Studien*, 52–4.
70. Ibid.
71. In addition to providing a sense of security, this also helped limit the penetration of water and humidity into the house.
72. In smaller houses, the kitchen and the odajashta were combined in one building.
73. Marmullaku, *Albania and the Albanians*.
74. Some photographic albums, collected by historian and linguist Robert Elsie, are available at <http://www.albanianphotography.net/> (accessed February 15, 2014).
75. A notable Gjirokastra figure of this period was the guerrilla fighter Çerciz Topulli.
76. Ahn et al. *Sustainable Tourism*; Torresi, *Alla Scoperta della Città di Pietra*.
77. Rapoport, *The Meaning of the Built Environment*; Rapoport, *Identity and Environment*; Rapoport, *House Form and Culture*.

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