

Architectural Decorative Elements of Tirana Traditional Villas: The Italian Impact

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of the architectonic details of traditional villas, during the years 1920-1950, in Tirana, Albania. The impact of the Italian architecture is studied. The research is focused on the categorization of the traditional villas, based on the urban situation and the construction period. Firstly, the study analyses and compares the details of the façade such as I) entrance, II) stairs, III) volume composition, IV) terrace and V) windows. Then, the villas are classified accordingly based on their features. The results concluded that the detailed comparison of the traditional villas in terms of decorative features could be of valuable information for the design of the modern buildings in Albania by using traditional elements. In addition, the study addresses the importance of the conservation and assessment of the maintaining all of these elements.

KEYWORDS: traditional villas, Italian architecture, facade details

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional architecture, as a manifestation and physical representation of the culture of the people, includes dwellings and other buildings (Lim, 2007). Conserving the character of the buildings, together with the suburbs and districts is the only way to conserve cultural heritage in its context. Heritage conservation, in turn, contributes to ecologically sustainable development (Pearson & Sullivan, 1999). As such, to evident, categorize and transfer this attitude to the future generations is crucial.

This study highlights the values of old traditional villas in Tirana. Researches would consist basically of a documentation of Italian architecture in villa's façade details, treated in the design of new individual villas. Staring from 1920's, Italian architecture has a considerable impact on the development of the city. A considerable influence started when Tirana was chosen the capital city of the country. The first arrangement plan was drawn up in 1923. The most notable Italian architects were involved in the designs of modern Tirana, like Gherardo Bosio (1939), Ivo Lambertini, Armando Brasini (1926) and Ferdinando Poggio (1943). One of the main requirements of the Regulatory Plan of 1942, that marked the redesign of the Old Tirana in metropolitan dimensions, was the uncial composition of the city garden. The

idea of ‘citta giardino’ (city garden) was combined with the purpose to convert the urban chaos of a village in a western city.

Different authors in Albania have studied the impact of Italian architecture in Albania (see Nepravishta 2012, Shkreli 2012, Giusti 2012, Vokshi 2010). Nepravishta (2012) presented the design for the villa of of Julius Bertè Nepravishta. Shkreli (2012) explained the beginnings of the capital Tirana and Armando Brasini. Giusti (2012) presented the architecture of “Villa Reale” in Tirana. Vokshi (2010) studied the Gherardo Bosio’s works in Albania. Bushati (2012) categorises the Tirana traditional villas based on spatial organisation, style, and site analysis. Mitrojorgji (2013) analysed specifically the vernacular houses in Albania, the composition of architectonic elements to the design process of each typology, façade details such as: texture, colour, and materials.

The main aim of the present study is to create a wide overview, evident and estimate the Italian Traditional Villas in Tirana. Generally speaking, there are more than 100 villas built on 1920’s – 1940’s. The authors study specifically villas details (e.g. facades) of Italian Architects in Albania during 1920s-1940s. The study analyses and compares the details of the façade such as i) entrance, ii) stairs, iii) volume composition, iv) terrace and v) windows. Then, the villas are classified accordingly based on their features. The results concluded that the detailed comparison of the traditional villas in terms of decorative features could be of valuable information for the design of the modern buildings in Albania by using traditional elements. In addition, the study addresses the importance of the conservation and assessment of the maintaining all of these elements.

1 METHODOLOGY

The approach of this paper includes the following steps:

- i. At first, the position of 60 villas are evidenced and analysed though different surveys (*photos, measurements, interviews*). Figure 1 illustrates the position of the Italian villas in Tirana’s urban pattern. The villas are generally placed in the historical Old Bazaar, surrounded by “Bardhyli” St. in the East, “Dibra” St. in the North, “Hoxha Tahsim” St. in the South and “Barrikada” St. in the West.

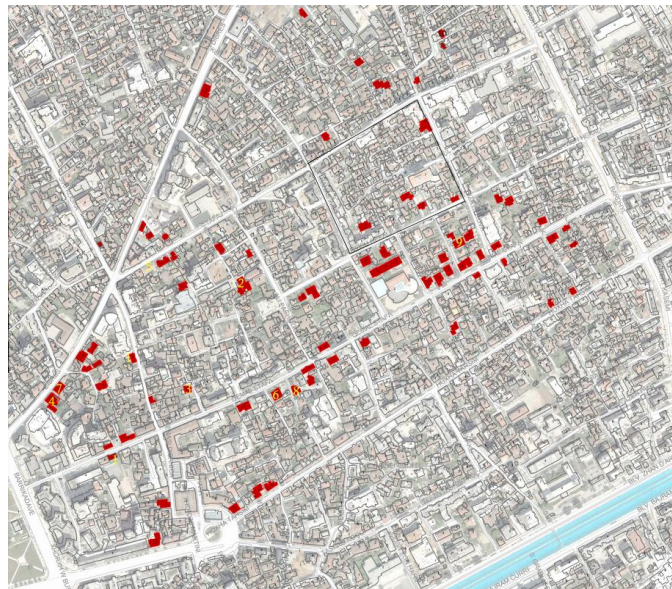


Figure 1. Position of Italian villas in Tirana




- ii. Secondly, interviews with villas owners help enriching the study with the necessary materials like old photos, plans, sections and facades, villas owners in years and possible functional additions.
- iii. Thirdly, comparative studies are done between 60 villas to understand and classify specific details of villa's facades. Figure 2 lists all 60 villas used in the study.



Figure 2. Sixty Villas used in the study

- iv. Villas are categorised based on the level of decorations. Table 1 illustrates the decoration level of Italian villas. Some of the villas are rational style (simple plaster frames only in windows or to differentiate the building levels). The other ones are villas with average level of decorations with much more decorations including the treatment of the building's corners. The other category is that with many floral decorations in balconies, on the top of the windows.

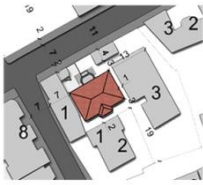
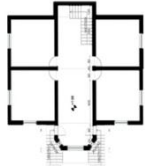



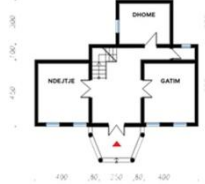



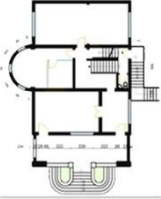



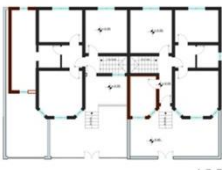


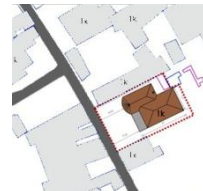
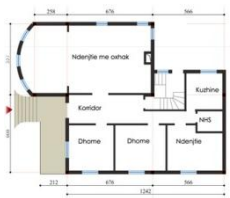


Table 1. Decoration level of Italian villas


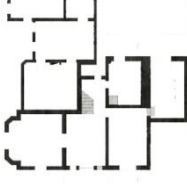


Decoratio n level	Description	Villas photos
Rational	Composition of simple volumes Simple plaster windows frames. Differentiation of floors by a simple rectangular frame	
Average	Windows frames with simple decorative element on the top. Artificial columns at corners	
High	Floral decorations on windows and roof frames.	

- v. The total number of the villas (60) is further categorized into the six main groups. Table 2 shows the distribution of the villas by six categories. Group one (referred as VA) is mainly one (white colour) floor villa, built in 1925. This category is a symmetric, rectangular volume combined with a hexagonal one in the entrance. Group two (referred as VB) is the combination of rectangular and hexagonal volumes with much more ornaments than VA, generally painted in yellow. Group three (referred as VC) is a unique villa design with arched symmetric entrance and arched stairs. Group four (referred as VD) is the rational villa, symmetric volume with two hexagonal volumes near the entrance. Group five

(referred as VE) is the one floor rational villa. A composition of an arched volume near the entrance and a rectangular simple one, with no decorations, simple windows frames with Persian louvers. Group six (referred as VF) is a simple volume composition with straight lines, painted in yellow with a balcony at the second floor serving as the shelter of the main entrance.

Table 2. Categorization of 6 specific villas

	Site Plan	Information	Plans	Photos	Facades
VA		Nr of floors: 1 Built Year: 1925, Function: Residence Volume composing: symmetric with hexagonal entrance			
VB		Nr of floors: 2 Built Year: 1922 Function: Residence Volume composing: asymmetric with hexagonal volume			
VC		Nr of floors: 2 Built Year: 1935 Function: Charity home Volume composing: asymmetric with arched entrance and stairs			
VD		Nr of floors: 2 Built Year: 1928 Function: Residence Volume composing: symmetric with hexagonal volumes			
VE		Nr of floors: 1 Built Year: 1948 Function: Residence Volume composing: asymmetric with arched volume			

VF		Nr of floors: 2 Built Year: 1936 Function: Residence Volume composing: rectangular forms, asymmetric			
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The sixty villas are grouped based on the respective categories. As figure 3 shows, the villas with hexagonal volumes composition dominate Italian Architecture Individual villas.

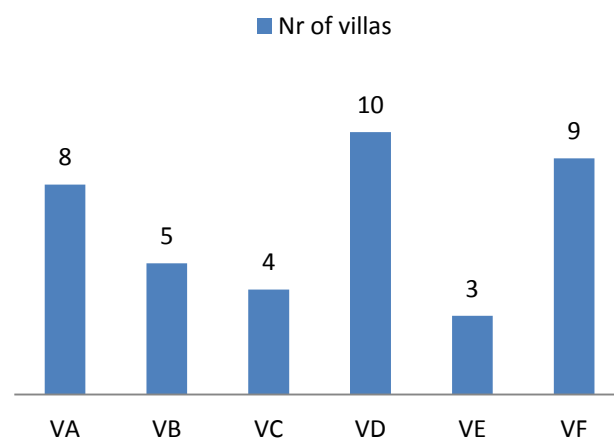


Figure 3. Distribution of villas by the six categories (VA, VB, VC, VD, VE)

2 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 4 and table 3 show the comparison of the Traditional Villas based on: i) volume composition, ii) conditions iii) decorative elements iv) number of floors v) symmetry of the Villas vi) colour. As the figure shows, 78 % of villas have a simple rectangular form(VF) while the other volumes evident in the main façade are arched cylindrical volume (VE) or hexagonal ones (VA, VB, VD). Few villas are in good conditions (paleness of colours, humidity only on wood frames, partial plaster damages), an average of 34 % is being restored, and 38 % found in bad conditions (humidity, plaster cracks, brick deterioration, the presence of horizontal and diagonal cracks on the walls and decoration damage), and need to be preserved. In addition, 60 % of villas studied, have a rational façade style, and few of them with much more floral ornaments. More than 85 % are composed of two floors. Palazzinas are generally three floor buildings. On the other hand, individual one floor villas have an entrance with 7-8 stairs. The yellow colour in the main facade represents 52 % of villas considered in the study. The other colours that dominate the other facades are: white, combination of yellow and white, yellow and red, or a red brickfaçade respectively. More than 57% of the Villas are symmetrical.

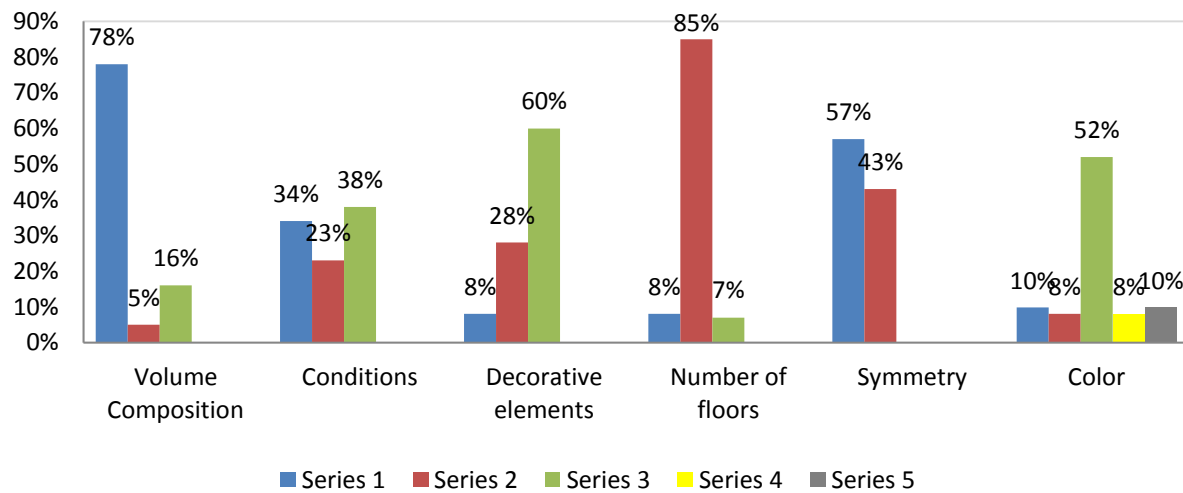


Figure 4. Comparison of the façade elements of the sixty villas

Table 3. The representation of the Bars of the figure 4

	Volume Composition	Conditions	Decorative elements	Number of floors	Symmetry	Colour
Blue Bar	Simple rectangular-VF	Restored	High	3 floors	Asymmetric	White
Red Bar	Arched volumes-VE	Good	Average	2 floors	Symmetric	Red bricks
Green Bar	Hexagonal volumes-VA,VB,VD	Bad	Rational	1 floor		Yellow
Yellow bar						Yellow+(white or red)
Grey Bar						Others

Figure 5 compares the villas based on the window detail (graphically drawn). In individual villas, windows have a plaster frame, which is decorated with a floral element at the top of the first floor window and absents at the ground floor window. As illustrated, typical Italian style windows have a rectangular element under the window, decorated or rational various to the villas style decorations. On the other hand, windows with simple rational frames have Persian wood louvers.

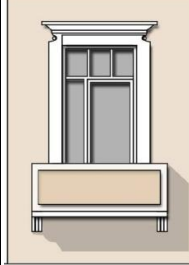
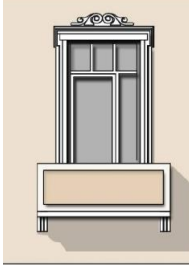
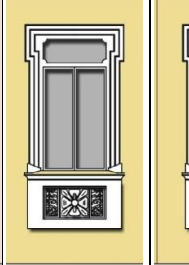
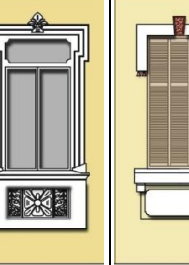
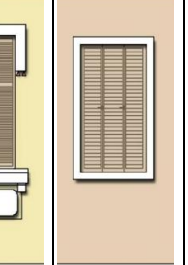
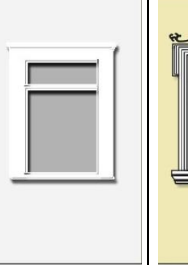


							
Window of the second floor, with the balcony and a simple decorated frame	Window of the third floor, with the balcony and floral element at the top	VB - Window of the first floor, with a rectangular decorated element below	VB -Window of the second floor, with a rectangular floral element below	VF - Window with half frames decorated with triangles	VE - Rational window frame with simple Persian louvers	VA -Rational windows frame, simple	Window of the second floor, with floral decorative elements at the top

Figure 5. Windows details

Figure 6 compares the villas based on the door detail (graphically drawn). The door materials are: wood, or wood and glass with Persian green louvers. In “palazzinas”, they are treated totally in glass with a narrow wood frame and in individual villas. They are half with wood and half glass. On the other hand, in the villa with many decorations, the doors and the windows have the same characteristics.

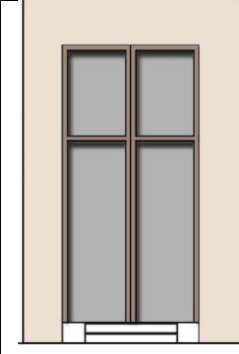

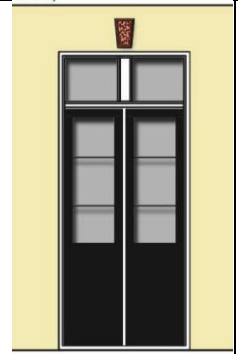


				
Simple, used for commercial aims in “palazzinas”	VB - Door with white stucco frame decorations. Materials: wood & glass	VF - Door with trapezoid decorative element at the top.	VD - Simple wood door with glass panels at the top	VE - Simple wood door with Persian louvers at the upper part

Figure 6. Door details

Figure 7 compares the villas based on the columns detail (graphically drawn). Columns are of the same style as the villa’s one. The decorations are positioned at the highest floor, under the roof frames. On the other hand, there are columns only under the balconies of the first floor, to evident the main entrance.

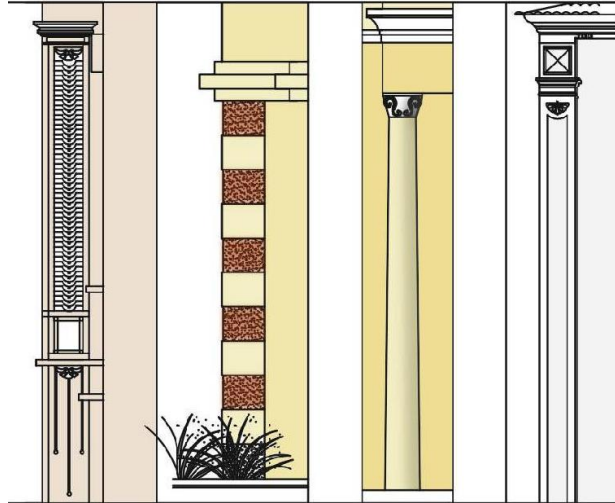


Figure 7. Columns details

Figure 8 compares the villas based on the entrance types (graphically drawn). Entrance is the most essential element of the façade analysis. Italian architects take care of specific detailing to emphasize the entrance. Figure 8 illustrates 5 different types of the entrance: i) positioned under the balcony of the first floor and serves as a shelter, symmetric, with two narrow windows on two sides and columns that continue to the ground level, ii) simple entrance positioned at the intersection of the arched volume with the simple rectangular one. Before the entrance, seven stair steps are placed, iii) Arched symmetric entrance, with 8 arched stair steps and a veranda, iv) the entrance is hexagonal in volume and goes off the main façade, 120 cm up from the ground level, with two symmetric ramps on the two sides v) the same composition, but its positioned in the ground level, without stairs and with four symmetric cylindrical columns, two for each side.



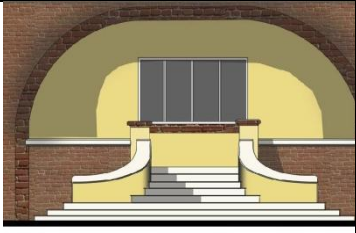


				
VF- Entrance with a balcony as shelter, with two symmetric columns and windows, no stairs	VE – Simple asymmetric entrance with arched stairs	VC- Arched symmetric entrance with a veranda and arched stairs	VA- Hexagonal volume that goes off the main facade, two symmetric arched stairs	VB- Hexagonal volume that goes off the main facade, symmetric with 4 symmetric columns, no stairs

Figure 8. Entrance types

Figure 9 compares the villas based on the roof details (graphically drawn). Roof decorations are highly correlated with the villa style.. Villas Volume composition are two types: i) simple rectangular volume, ii) The composition of the hexagonal volume at the entrance with simple rectangular ones. This is reflected

also in roof shapes. Villas with a hexagonal volume at the entrance have a wide frame, decorated with rectangular or floral elements (VB, VA). On the other hand, villas of the rational style have simple narrow rectangular plaster frames.(I)






				
VD - Hexagonal roof. Simple arched frame	I - Simple roof. Rational frame	VB - Hexagonal volume composition. Flat roof. Decorative frame	VA - Simple roof. Hexagonal volume composition. Rectangular decorative elements	Wide frame with rectangular decorative elements .Placed above cylindrical shape columns.

Figure 9. Roof Details

Figure 10 illustrates the percentage of the Villas that are collective buildings here mentioned as “Palazzina”. More than 80 % of villas used in the research are individual villas, whereas the other ones are “palazzina”, or in general terms collective buildings, designed for a high-class population, mainly for the highest rank of the military or the population with a certain social position. Palazzinas are mainly three floor and their style is rational. In palazzinas, the windows are high, especially those near to the main stairs. They are made of wood and green shutters and iron grills. The entire building is made of brick, but plastered from the outside. The building is raised from the ground and the entrance in the apartments is provided through stairs with concrete balusters of a rational style.

Typology	Description	Palazzina's photos
Palazzina	-Collective buildings -Designed for a high class population. -Three floor objects. The first floor used for commercial aims	

Figure 10. Palazzina- typology

3 CONCLUSIONS

This paper presented an analysis of the architectonic details of the Italian traditional villas in Tirana, Albania. At first the research presents with a general overview of 60 villas and categorize them in two main typologies: i) individual villas, ii) collective villas called “palazzina”. Secondly, 7 specific villas that represent main different Italian architectonic villas elements, have been studied in details by classifying them based on: i) windows, ii) doors, iii) columns, iv) entrances, v) roofs. The detailed comparison of the traditional villas could be of valuable information for the design of new villas in Albania by using the traditional elements. In addition, the above data can be used as a guideline for

architects, engineers and researchers to evaluate the existing historic buildings and form a basis which may support the design process.

4 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank the students of the Polytechnic University of Tirana, Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, for the contribution toward the data collection of villa's plans, facades and photos.

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