

recente le casite, come esempi caratteristici dell'architettura tradizionale dell'Istria, hanno assunto un ruolo speciale nell'ambito dell'identificazione e dell'interpretazione dei contenuti etnoculturologici, il che avanza la questione della necessità di un approccio adeguato nella ricerca, nella tutela e nella preservazione delle casite in Istria.

Kažun as the recognizable element of the Istrian identity

Summary

This article analyzes the meaning, the function and the importance of the edifice which is in Istria most commonly known by the name of *kažun*, but also *casita* (found in several localities which use Istrian-Roman language), and *hižica*, *hiška*, *koča*, *kućica* in the Northern part of the peninsula. The research is based on field work done over the past several decades, as well as the gathered literature. The construction of *kažun* is based on a round dry wall: rings of stone are shaped into a round stonewall and then narrowed until they make "a false ceiling" which is then covered with fine building material and covered with stone plates shaping it into a cone. *Kažuns* are used as field dwellings, safe havens during storms or strong sun during ploughing and mowing periods at the times of traditional agricultural work, up until mid 20th century. They became obsolete when the way of life and work had changed, leaving these archaic examples of traditional architecture in Istria to the decay. The heritage value of *kažun* is great; when glancing over the map of the widespread density of *kažuns*, it can be noticed that they are most commonly found in the South-West Istria (especially around Vodnjan), while they are scarcely found in the middle and North-West Istria. Similar round ground-planned edifices are known under different names (*bunje* etc.) in the middle and South Dalmatia. In Europe, this type of drywall building can be found all over Mediterranean, all the way to the British Isles and Scandinavia up North. This geographical distribution, architectural structuring and archaeological findings suggest that the origin of this type of round ground-planned edifice could be found in the dwellings and burial sites of Paleo-Mediterranean period. However, the abundance of available stone and the strong development of agriculture were basis for survival and spreading of this type of building in different European areas, as well as the formation of original examples of round stone edifices which had the role of shelters in the field. Lately, *kažuns*, as characteristic examples of traditional building in Istria, have had a special role when one is identifying and interpreting ethno-cultural contents so the question of the proper research, protection and conservation arises.