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Regional Architecture as a Basis for the Identification of Historical Cultural Regions

INTRODUCTION

The theme of this paper is topical nowadays. It is of significance for the study of sites and cultures of various regions of the world and for Europe that is now facing the possibility of its unification. At the same time the existing numerous diversities on its territory should be preserved. More than that they should be developed. In view of that, nowadays, the identification of historical cultural regions, cultures functioning within their boundaries and the identification of the boundaries themselves have acquired particular importance. It appears that regional, local architecture, more than any other element of culture, may demonstrate traditionally formed cultural zones. In many cases the boundaries of historical cultural zones do not coincide with existing administrative borders. Open air museums (skansens or 'in situ') provide a more interesting model for the demonstration of beautiful pieces of culture and its processes in different aspects. Before considering the methods of projecting and creating the Open Air Museum in Malye Koreli we'll try to define: What is 'a historical cultural region'?

We understand by it an area, a region that is characterized by a community of natural, ethno-territorial, historical town buildings within architectural parameters. That are in correspondence with a certain period in the development of the ethnos or some other territorial community of people.

There are several ways of looking at how cultural regions come into being. For example American scientist Mining is elaborating the idea of an 'ideal region' in which there is a core, a domain and a periphery. Its core is a cultural centre with a very high density of population characterized by one given culture. It can be a town of any type. A domain is the middle



Fig. 1. Village Kozmogorodskoe, River Mezen, Archangelsk region. North of Russia. Picture of O. Sevan, 1987.

part, the region's features are more evident here. Its sphere is a zone of external influence. In it the culture under consideration is represented by separate elements dispersed in other cultures.

Another model of cultural development (the result of investigations by V. Orfinsky — Russia and F. Hajkinen — Finland) differs considerably from the first one. It pays attention to the presence of certain 'symbolic' boundaries, that such areas have, which were identified for example in Karelia and in Finland. When we move from the centre to the periphery of such an area (monuments of architecture, ethnography, folklore) we do not observe the dissolution of the image bearing symbolism and sign elements in neighbouring cultures. On the contrary, we see the active intensification of their specific expressiveness. That can be seen in the decorative elements of structures, in objects of applied arts, in rites, etc. That must be reflecting external mechanism of behaviour, a way of life, national characteristics of people, etc.

Thus the boundaries of historical cultural zones can have different structures. It may be the smooth, gradual overflowing of one national ethnic culture into a neighbouring culture, possibly close to it by its qualities. It may be a fixation 'assertation' of its significance in relation to neighbouring nationalities and areas. There is no doubt that the climate conditions, economic structures, differing socio-cultural conditions could not but tell on their formation.



Fig. 2. Village Vereola, River Pinega, Archangelsk region. North of Russia. Picture of O. Sevan, 1985.

However the mechanisms of the formation of such boundaries and specific features of their existence today remain unclear. Not clear are the cultural processes and the ways the cultural regions function within the system of contemporary developing agglomeration, the gigantic new building-development areas, the impact of mass communication, etc.

I. The historical cultural zoning of the territory of Northern Russia and general plan of the Open Air Museum in Malye Koreli (Archangelsk).

We now try to define how the investigation into monuments of regional architecture in Archangelsk's regions different historical cultural zones were used in the projecting and the building of the Open Air Museum in Malye Koreli.

The population of the areas was effected in several stages starting with the XI–XIII centuries and up to the XVII century. The Russian people cultivated the North in two streams coming along the rivers from the North, from the town of Novgorod, and from the South from the Rostov-Suzdal and Moscow lands. Both streams were of Russian people — they, however, had their ethno-cultural differences, evident in the economic activity of the population and in the languages spoken by them, in various rites they had, in crafts. etc. These cultural differences can still be seen in the regional peasant houses of the XIX — early XX centuries. The corresponding elements of regional architecture have been found in archaeological excavations done in the town of Novgorod in the past few years. The building

culture of the local aboriginal populations (Vepses, Finns, Karels, Komis and others) has also effected structures in various areas of the region and brought about differences in their character.

On the regional map of Archangelsk and Vologda you can see the historical cultural areas identified as a result of studies of regional houses. They are mainly in conformity with the river basins: the Onega, Vaga, Dvina, Mezen, Pinega and Pomoric river, etc. In other words, the historical cultural zoning, in my opinion, can be used as a basis for general cultural zoning. The analysis of regional architecture discussed below has made possible the drawing of a map and brought about the identification of seven zones of this kind in Archangelsk region. Each of such zones has its climate, socio-economic and cultural characterization. Therefore in the general plan of the Open Air Museum in Malye Koreli we can see some villages (or sectors) which are corresponding to these natural zones on: the Onega, Dvina, Vaga, Pinega, Mezen and Pomoric river. The route of tourist groups helps people see the culture of Archangelsk region gradually, slowly from the West to the East. The landscapes of these territories different sectors correspond to the real rural sites of Russian worth.

II. The lay-out planning of settlements, patterns of location for churches and chapels in villages and rural sites of Northern Russia and in the Open Air Museum in Malye Koreli.

There are certain peculiarities in different zones, since people used to settle mostly along rivers, their villages are located mainly along river beds and near lakes. When all the river lands were occupied people started settling in water shed areas.

From the point of view of lay-out planning the villages and areas under study can be subdivided into five main types: free-style type (the most ancient type), enclosed type (around some centre), row type (with orientation of facades towards the South), street type (that is along the street) and mixed style type. Therefore in each sector (or village) of Museum Malye Koreli we can see all this diversity: for example, the sector North Dvina is situated along the lake; the sector Mezen is situated on the high bank of the river, and the monuments of Kargopol sector are standing around the settlements square.

The cult structures are located in villages in different places: outside the living area (in the graveyard, on the pogost, on the brink of a precipice, on the bank of a river, in the forest, in fields); at the end of a settlement; in one row of living houses; on open or closed squares (in the centre or near one). These peculiarities in the locations of monuments give certain special original charm to the villages, and in each sector of the Museum Malye Koreli this has tried to be shown in all its historic and cultural originality. For example, in the village Kargopol the church and belfry are standing

on the square and in the sector Pinega the church is at the end of the settlement.

III. The peasant farm-steads.

Often the areas under study have taken shape under the influence of economic, natural, and socio-cultural causes. They have their own peculiarities in different zones of the region. Northern Russian farm-steads can be: free style building developments, of enclosed structures and of united type structures. The last type is most widely spread. On such farm-steads the living dwellings and farm-yard are under one roof. Other buildings such as barns, bathhouses, wells, ice cellars and so on are located in different areas, around the house, depending on the climate, life conditions, traditions and so on. When studying peasant farmsteads attention should be paid to archaeological and historical materials concerning the formation of families, their genealogical trees, their way of life, social composition and so on.

IV. The classification of dwellings in Northern Russia aimed at for the identification of historical cultural regions and for the elaboration of the general plan of the Open Air Museum in Malye Koreli.

The dwellings of Northern Russia had a lot of typological original features differing from zone to zone of the region. However, the common conditions of peasant life, their economic structure and the climate, brought to life common principles of building techniques. We have chosen the architectural monuments for removing to the museum. On the basis of this classification. The main tasks were:

- 1) To show the maximum different types of buildings from various groups of the population regions.
- 2) To show the different structures of organizing the boundaries between the historical cultural regions mentioned above.
- 3) To show the various modes of life in the Archangelsk region.

A house complex consisted of a dwelling and a farm-yard : a) the living part could be one room (chamber) type consisting of one 'izba' with a stove, b) two chamber type: 'izba' and corridor entrance, c) three chamber type: 'izba' with a stove, corridor and a summer room. The last variant being d) four chamber type. The four chamber type differs from the previous types in that it has also a small store room in between the 'izba' and the summer room. The houses themselves differ in how the living part and the two level farms yards were connected with each other. The first level of the farm-yard was meant for animals, the second for keeping hay and agricultural tools. The study of the monuments in different regions of the North have revealed their characteristic features and originality.

The interiors of peasant houses have common features with those of Eastern Slavs: in the centre of any 'izba' is a stove, it used to stand to the

right or the left of the entrance. The furniture was of a stationary type constructionally related to the hewed frame of the house. The pieces being: shelves, cupboards, benches. In the second half of the XIX century, early XX century moveable furniture made its appearance, first in the houses of well off peasants and then in other peasants houses. At the same time many parts of cupboards hiding the stoves as well as doors and shelves were covered with various painted pictures. They were flowers, figures of lions, unicorns, birds. Sometimes even portraits of the houses owners. The pictures were drawn by local people as well as by peasant painters coming from other regions of Russia. The different interior in Archangelsk's different regions are shown in Malye Koreli Museum.

V. The constructive and decorative principles of house building have a lot in common in different zones of Northern Russia. We find differences in separate details and decorative frames and we can see this in Open Air Museums, too.

Constructionally the houses consisted of hewed wooded frames. For them they used aspen trees and larches. The methods of hewing were numerous and existed in dozens of variants (all based on a no nail connection parts). The most widely spread of them was the hewing of round logs with fitted ends and later on with dove-tail connections. The variants of fitting were numerous. In between logs they used to put moss, oakum and flax.

The carpenters attached a lot of importance to structures and decoration of roofs. The roofs were one, two, three, or four slope types. They were covered with deals, roofing slates and straw (in the south of the area). The most widely spread type of roof is the two slope-type. The longitudinal beams of the roof were out into the frontings of the house. They supported the upper ends of the props like carved hooks 'curitses'. The ends of drain spouts, by which rain water runs off, and on which the deal boards of the roof rest and lie on the 'curitses'. The ends of drain spouts as well as the 'curitses' are decorated with carvings. The most important symbolic structural part of the house is the 'okhlupen' — that is cut-in logs that from above supported the deal boards of the roof. As a rule, that part of the house looked like a horse's head, bird's head or deer's horns, symbolizing happiness. The ends of the roof beams on the facades were covered with carved 'prichelines-carved' boards.

The windows and doors were of different structures and they can be found in many areas of the North and in Malye Koreli Museum. The windows were decorated with blinds and shutters. The porches were with one- or two staircase flights. They were common not only in dwellings, but in churches and chapels as well. The decoration of the houses depended on local traditions and craftsmanship, and the well-being or social position of the peasants. Various trades, crafts and applied arts all affected the character of the decorative structures.

The balconies, porches and facades of the structures were not only decorated with various details but were also painted with pictures. The paintings differed from area to area, this can also be seen in Open Air Museums. Oil paintings covered the parts of the frontings made of deal boards. The pictures of lions, unicorns, flowers, horses, birds, samovars, portraits and geometrical drawings of various symbolic meanings and various flower compositions decorated balconies, the centre parts of the main facades and doors.

VI. The agricultural buildings of Northern Russia, and the different varieties seen in Malye Koreli Museum.

Their structures and significance are very much like many other similar buildings in other countries of Northern Europe. Their topology may be of interest. It is based on their planning characteristics and structures of roofs (barns, ice cellars, bath-houses, wells, gates fences, mills — both water and wind mills — bank solidation structures, bridges etc.). Their peculiarities characterize many areas by the difference in them. For instance the northern cold river Mezen is characterized by barns and bath-houses built on high fortified river banks, this can also be seen in Malye Koreli. At the same time in the Pinega upper stream area we find them at the end of the villages standing in rows to protect them from fires.

VII. The cult architecture of Northern Russia is varied and is in correspondence with the historical cultural zones of the regions mentioned above. Some churches have been transferred to Open Air Museums. Churches and pogosts were put up in various parts of villages as has been mentioned before. The structures still in existence refer to the XVII–XVIII centuries. There used to be a great many chapels in all the areas, practically speaking in each other village; this can be seen in Malye Koreli.

When considering the cult monuments by respective historical cultural zones we can identify their general and specific characteristics. They had in common the specific techniques of hewing. They differ in forms and decorative elements. The major volume of a cathedral has an original structure, the top of which has an original shape which differs from similar structures in other regions. The refectory, as a rule, is covered with a two-sloped roof. The church porch is sometimes completed with a bell tower. Sometimes a belfry stands apart.

As for the tent-like cathedrals, they are found in many areas of the North. They differ in proportions, detail-parts and decorative elements. They may be up to 40–50 m high and this type of Georgievskaya church we can see in the North Dvina sector. The Onega river basin is characterized by cubiform churches. As an example we can take the XVII century scension church from the village of Kursherka in the Onega area. The temple is completed with five domes which can only be found in the given Western

cultural zone and in Kargopolskij sector of Malye Koreli.

In the Vaga river basin we can see small tent like chapels, as well as churches, typical of the North, with an eight-facet cover. Their architecture shows the influence of the culture of the Ukraine, for in the XVIII century this region of the North attracted a lot of migrants. This type of church is also present in Malye Koreli Museum.

On the Pinega river as well as on the Mezen river we can see still preserved, an original structure known as 'a tent on interesting barrels' (it is called Pinega-Mezen type). In this case the temple is completed with five domes, high legs and dome heads covered with 'silvery lemehs' (shingles).

CONCLUSION

Thus, we have analysed the methods and principles of building characterizing the regional architecture of one Russian region. The study of regional architecture allows us to identify and specify the characteristics of different historical cultural zones in Archangelsk's region and to show all the variety in the Open Air Museum in Malye Koreli.

Such an investigation is significant not only for arranging skansen museums and 'in situ' museums, where care is taken to preserve not only monuments but also the cultural milieu of villages. It is also important for regional development of contemporary culture, as well as for finding solutions to the problems of restoration and reconstruction of new and old building developments, which is a very complicated process for forming the milieu of historic towns or villages.

Obviously those historical and cultural zones (or regions) should be taken into consideration when shaping contemporary culture and the way of life of the local population, and when designing the regional system of population settlement, when prognosticating socio-economic, demographic and other processes. However, in contemporary culture: designers, architects, urbanists, sociologists, etc. — all who are called upon to shape contemporary urban and rural milieus—practically speaking — do not take into account the peculiarity and trends existing in the historical cultural zones. The above is happening when experts in historical disciplines are unable to substantiate, prove and suggest new methods of development for historic areas. Obviously our society is facing a mutually-directed interdisciplinary process, and we should take it seriously if we want to preserve our own originality at regional and international levels. Open Air Museums can provide a basis for the promotion of cultural processes and for the development of architecture.