

# Religious Buildings in the Spatial Pattern of a Provincial Town of the XIX Century

Case Study: the Towns of the Southern Russia

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**Abstract**—The article is devoted to the role of religious buildings of different faith groups in the formation of the town spatial system of the Southern Russia in the XIX century. The authors identified features of the temples arrangement system in Taganrog, Novocherkassk, Rostov and Nakhichevan-on-Don. The importance of the temple as a compositional center of the classical ensemble and as the basis of the polycentric urban framework of the Southern Russian town of the XIX century is reflected in the article. The main types of the Orthodox Churches in towns of the region were specified in the second half of XIX century: city cathedral, parish and cemetery churches, chapel of a public building. The article presents main forms of integration of non-Orthodox religious buildings in the town planning pattern and town spatial framework which was typical for the region.

**Keywords**—*temple; chapel; synagogue; urban layout; classicism; architecture of the XIX century; towns of the Southern Russia*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Historically, temple in the urban layout is a compositional center, a spatial landmark towering above the surrounding buildings. Traditionally, the Cathedral church established the area of the main town square and parish churches were the dominant element of the district. Having a high social significance, temples became a focus of the citywide or local (district) center taking other significant urban functions: administrative, commercial, cultural, entertainment and others. The system of temples arrangement in town reflects the features of its formation history, conditions and logic of the urban layout. In the town

planning pattern of the Russian town of the XIX century temples of different faiths are identified in different ways which are determined by the traditions of religious architecture, socio-political situation, regulations and local conditions.

## II. TRADITIONS OF HIERARCHY AND POLYCENTRICITY OF THE SYSTEM OF RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS IN THE TOWNS OF THE SOUTHERN RUSSIA

The traditions of the Russian church architecture had a direct impact on the formation and development of the church building in the South of Russia. “The idea of hierarchy, subordination, consistent perfection from the far world to the world of the high is one of the fundamental religious ideas for the entire Christian (and not only Christian) world... And each type of buildings and structures had its own subordination, which... embodied in size, richness and expressiveness of architectural forms as well as in buildings location in the urban or rural landscape” [1].

In the second half of the XIX century following the sociodemographic and territorial-planning changes the religious buildings of the towns of the Southern Russia formed a spatial framework in which the traditions of hierarchy were revealed to various extents. “With a greater certainty, the hierarchy of the ancient towns was expressed in their main cathedrals.” [2] During this period the place of the main cathedrals was marked as the city center: The Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Rostov-on-Don (1854-1860, architect K. A. Ton), the Voznesensk Army Cathedral in Novocherkassk (1892-1905, architect A.A. Yaschenko), the Cathedral of Saint Gregory the Illuminator

in Nakhichevan-on-Don (1783-1807). The main temple is located in the heart of the town. In many cases, the position of the main temple showing its importance of an artistic dominant of the architectural ensemble is determined by the general layout of the town developed in the era of classicism as in Novocherkassk and Nakhichevan-on-Don. The architectural and artistic image of the temple is dictated by its role as a symbol of the town and matches the leading trends in the capital's temple building.

The representative sample is the construction history of the Voznesensk Army Cathedral in Novocherkassk illustrating the change of stylistic preferences in the Church architecture of the XIX century. The search for an architectural and artistic image which corresponds to the status of the main Cathedral of the new military capital the place of which was determined by the first general layout in 1805 had been done since the foundation of Novocherkassk. During the XIX century three designs were developed in different styles. The first design of the Cathedral was created by the architect A. I. Ruska in 1805 in the forms of classical architecture. "The design of the Cathedral satisfied the spirit of the era. The victorious participation of the Don Cossacks in the Patriotic War in 1812 strengthened the state orientation in the style of architecture of Novocherkassk and the desire to embody the spirit of the Russian capital in the buildings and structures under construction of the new capital of the Don Cossacks." [3] According to the second design developed by the architect I. O. Valprede, the Cathedral was constructed in the Russian-Byzantine style. The third design of the Voznesensk Army Cathedral (architect A. A. Yaschenko) developed in 1905 was built in the Byzantine style which at the turn of XIX-XX centuries became the typification of a large metropolitan Cathedral. The magnitude of the building as well as its location on the hill gives the temple a dominant role in the silhouette of the town especially at the town entrance from the North.

The history and factors of formation of Rostov-on-Don, Novocherkassk and Taganrog determined polycentricity of the urban layout which was reflected in the church building. So, at the turn of XVIII - XIX centuries Rostov-on-Don presents a series of separate administrative and territorial formations with a church in the center: The Fortress of Saint Dmitry of Rostov, the Temernitsky customs settlement and outer settlements. "From the decree of the Novorossiysk Spiritual Consistory of 1800 it is evident that at the end of the eighteenth century there were the following churches: Pokrovskaya... Kazan and Nicolaevsky Cathedrals, The Nativity of the Theotokos... and of all Saints." [4] On the scale and decoration these churches were identical and played a similar role in shaping of town silhouette towering over low buildings. This situation remained until 1860 when the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary was built on the Central Square which became the only dominant of the town for many years. At the end of the XIX century along with the expansion of the territory of Rostov another cathedral was built on the Novobazarnaya square which was located to the North-East of the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary — The St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral (1908, architect. A. A. Yaschenko). The

monumental building in the Byzantine style dominated the urban layout symbolizing a new town center.

### III. TEMPLE AS THE ELEMENT OF A CLASSIC ENSEMBLE

The formation of the spatial-planning pattern of the Southern Russian towns belongs to the era of classicism. "General layouts of Taganrog, Novocherkassk, Stavropol, Nakhichevan-on-Don, Rostov-on-Don and Kizlyar became the implementation of urban approaches of classicism in the newly developed region." [5] Despite the fact that the environment, peculiarities of the administrative structure, the existing buildings were taken into account while developing the general layouts for the Southern Russian towns at the turn of the XVIII - XIX centuries and there also dominated the desire to create a clear, regular and geometrically correct planning structure. In the urban layout of classicism which is the brightest style of Modern times and gives formal compositional tasks an independent value, the temple often plays the role of the central element of the ensemble or even the whole planning structure of the town and has a town-forming importance. That is typical for all Southern Russian towns but the most clearly dominant compositional role of the temple in the classic urban layout system can be seen in Novocherkassk and Nakhichevan-on-Don.

Nakhichevan-on-Don is a good example of the most complete creation of urban layout ideas of classicism and rather exact compliance of the urban layout design and its implementation. "Researches of the architecture characterize town as classic not only because of its regular planning system but also because of the majority of its dominant buildings were made in the style of classicism or tended to it. Six town churches including the Cathedral were built in the style of Russian classicism." [6] The first general layout of Nakhichevan (until 1781) specified architectural, cultural and compositional basis of the town, defined ensembles and urban accents. "The general layout of Nakhichevan reflected the important components of the architectural and urban layout theory of the last quarter of the XVIII century: an integrated approach to the town planning defining the architectural and urban accents with a special role of the areas "full of monuments" [7]. In accordance with the concept of the general layout, the Cathedral of St. Gregory the Illuminator (1783) became the dominant element of the composition of the whole town and its high-rise dominant retained its importance until 1966 when the temple was destroyed.

A good example of transformation of the temples spatial framework in the structure of the town in the practical implementation of the classic general layout is the urban history of town Taganrog in the XIX century. The ideal model of spatial arrangement of Taganrog with the ray system and the central axis of Alexandrovskaya street connecting the territory of the fortress and expanding in the North-East direction of the town with composite accents areas strung on this spatial axis which were to become functional centers of urban activity was formulated in general layout of 1808. "...The new center is the oval administrative and trade Alexandrovskaya square which was planned to continue the axis of symmetry of the fortress and

the cape near the town entrance and as if opposed to the fortress as the old center." [8]

Temples were given a special place in the regular classical system. The main cathedral was the dominant of the architectural ensemble and was to be located on the Alexandrovskaya square emphasizing the status of the new town center.

Arrangement patterns of parish churches and non-Orthodox religious buildings obeyed the compositional and aesthetic logic of classicism. Thus, the Catholic and Protestant churches were planned to be built on the main boulevard which was the axis of Alexandrovskaya square. However, the status of the main Taganrog temple retained the Holy Assumption Cathedral Church (1814-1828, architect A.I. Melnikov; destroyed in 1938) which was founded in 1778 on the border between the Trinity fortress and the town with a shift from the central axis which was convenient for parishioners but contrary to the compositional principles of classicism.

The lack of funds prevented the implementation of the general layouts of 1808 and 1834 (revised and simplified). "The ensemble of the huge Alexandrovskaya square (its size in the axes is about 680×200 meters) with the Mitrofanyevskaya Church in the center of its South-Eastern semicircle was not completed during the period of classicism. Construction of the Church was begun on the marshy ground but soon it was taken down." [9]

#### IV. TYPES OF TEMPLES IN THE TOWNS OF THE SOUTHERN RUSSIA

The scale of the church building, its role in the spatial framework of the town, the nature of the influence on the town silhouette and architectural and artistic image are largely determined by the type of the temple. The main types of churches of the Orthodox religion having different urban significance, forming a system of spatial dominants, compositional and species relations in the panorama of the town were identified in the towns of the Southern Russia:

- Cathedral located in the center of the town and is a compositional accent (St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Rostov-on-Don; St. Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral in Nakhichevan-on-Don);
- monasteries that surrounded the center of the town emphasizing its compositional and semantic meaning (Alexander Nevsky Jerusalem Greek Monastery in Taganrog) or located in the suburbs of the town influencing the formation of its transport routes (the monastery of Surb-Hach);
- the most numerous parish churches reflecting the socio-territorial structure and planning organization of the town (St. Nicholas Church, Kazan Church in Rostov-on-Don, the Church of Archangel Michael in Taganrog);
- chapel of a public building related to medical, charitable, educational institutions. These temples are less revealed in the spatial structure of the town. They

represent a small Church on the territory or a separate space of a public building (Archangel Michael Church at the Rostov Municipal Hospital, 1890-1896, architect N. M. Sokolov);

- cemetery churches are less than other spatially related to the architectural environment of the town (the Church of All Saints in the cemetery of Rostov-on-Don);
- chapels and crosses marking memorable places and events of Church history (St. Nicholas' Chapel is situated on Sennaya square in Rostov-on-Don and was built in memory of the coming to the throne Emperor Nicholas II)

#### V. PLACE OF RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS OF VARIOUS FAITHS IN THE CITIES OF SOUTHERN RUSSIA

The region is characterized by a variety of forms of integration of non-Orthodox religious buildings in the planning structure and spatial framework of towns due to socio-political processes, town-planning regulations, morph type of background development, urban and natural landscape conditions.

Catholic and Lutheran churches are actively present in the compositional and spatial relationships on the town level. Thus, the Lutheran Protestant Church located on the upper Boulevard street in Rostov-on-Don and thereby came to the fore and was one of the dominants in the linear composition of the town silhouette perceived from the left bank of the river Don.

The location of synagogues in the urban planning system generally corresponds to the European principles: synagogues are not included in the system of visual landmarks and are characterized by a narrow visibility. Its location, role in the formation of the urban silhouette, visual interaction with the urban landscape depends on the location of the Jewish quarter or the area of compact residence in the urban development. "The Southern region of Russia is characterized by a variety of forms of synagogue integration in the planning structure and spatial framework of towns and settlements due to socio-political conditions, town-planning regulations, and morph type of background development, the existing urban structure and natural landscape." [10] The most significant Jewish communities are formed in Rostov-on-Don and Taganrog and were accompanied by the creation of a whole system of religious Jewish buildings in these towns (The main choral and Soldier's synagogue, Church house in Rostov).

#### VI. CONCLUSION

The main construction periods of religious buildings are inextricably linked with the process of urban culture formation of the South of Russia, the stages of architectural and urban layout. Polycentric is more peculiar for the system of temple buildings at the turn of XVIII–XIX centuries due to the peculiarities of the formation process of the town spatial pattern in the region. In this period temples became a compositional accent of urban ensemble in the style of

classicism. In the second half of XIX century such tendencies as the hierarchical principle of the temple's location, growth of the sacred space from the periphery to the center reflecting the structural zoning of the town gained popularity. The multi-confessional nature of urban societies is reflected in the spatial morphology of towns. The urban layout aspect of the organization of non-Orthodox religious buildings is an important indicator of the socio-political and economic background of ethnic communities in the region.

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