

# Orthodox Monastery Complexes in Modern Conditions: Main Principles of Reconstruction and Development

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**Abstract-**We investigate formation of the architecture ensembles of the Orthodox monasteries in the Russian North in the modern conditions of increasing number of tourists and pilgrims. We analyze six the most frequently visited monasteries, reveal their common and specific problems. On the basis of this analysis we formulate the general principles and approaches of reconstruction and development that are applicable to any monastery.

**Keywords-orthodox monasteries, architectural complexes, restoration, architectural principles, tourists and pilgrims**

## I. INTRODUCTION

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russian society has been shown a rising interest to the Orthodox Christianity. The Russian Orthodox Church always unified Russian people. Throughout Russian history, the Russian Orthodox Church has been traditionally performed many functions in the areas of economy, education, medicine, arts, etc. All this explains the present interest to the Orthodoxy and the church history. Many tourists and pilgrims are visiting Orthodox monasteries nowadays. As the result, work with the visitors has become one of essential activities in many monasteries. The work with visitors includes development of the monastery museums, presenting lectures, organization of conferences and visits of eminent professors and artists, etc. This makes it necessary to arrange hotels, canteens, parking places, and other facilities nearby the monastery complexes. It is clear that this infrastructure should provide visitors with comfort, convenience, and necessary overall sanitation. The visitors should also have a possibility to see the art values and heritages belonging to the monasteries. This requires special rooms that ensure necessary conditions for storage and protection of the artefacts [1].

Moreover, the presence of a large number of people can hamper the everyday life of the monastery severely [2]. The buildings designed for accommodation of monks must be isolated from visitors. Therefore, it is natural to divide the territory and the buildings of the monastery between the visitors and the monks. Reconstruction and development of the Orthodox monasteries require a new concept of the architectural organization of the monastery territory, in order to isolate so-called “quiet” zone for monks. It is also

important to take into account that the visitors come to a monastery with a variety of purposes. Two major groups of the visitors can be distinguished – tourists and pilgrims [3]. Tourists come to monasteries, in order to enjoy the beauty of architecture and nature. In contrast to them, pilgrims visit a monastery as a holy place. These two groups of visitors have completely different goals, and they can also disturb each other.

Therefore, the development of the architectural approaches to zoning the territories of the Orthodox monasteries is presently an important problem. Housing development for monks and visitors, as well as the arrangement of other necessary rooms is often hampered by the fact that many monasteries have lost many of their buildings.

There is a need for the architectural decisions aimed to the restoration and development of historical buildings with adaptation for modern functions and sanitary regulations, including availability of the buildings to people with disabilities. However, formation of the modern architectural structure should not contradict the preservation of the architectural composition and the natural landscape of the monastery complexes [4]. New construction in this area should not interfere with the scale and the difference of architectural volumes, as well as not close the main viewpoints. To the best of our knowledge, the development the architecture of monastery complexes in the modern conditions of increasing number of tourists and pilgrims and developing of museum functions has not been studied so far.

## II. ANALYSIS OF THE ARCHITECTURAL ENSEMBLES

In order to identify the main problems of the monastery complexes, we analyzed the present status of the architecture ensembles of the several well-known Orthodox monasteries in the Russian North, which attract substantial number of visitors. We investigated the architectural and landscape organization of the monastery complexes, the functionality of the buildings and the territories belonging to the monasteries, as well as the main driving routes of the visitors and monks. In addition to this, we studied the change of the functions of the monastery complexes until they were closed

in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as after they were returned to the Russian Orthodox Church in the 1990s. We carried out analysis of available archive images and photos and the materials of archeological researches. More specifically, we performed a graphical reconstruction of then Antonievo-Siysky Monastery on various stages of its development. This was necessary to justify the restoration of its volume-spatial composition.

We analyzed the work on the reconstruction and adaptation of the buildings that was done in the Valday Iversky Monastery in 2004-2008. We recommend the results of reconstruction of some buildings in this monastery for use in other reviving monasteries. We identified the most common problems of these monasteries. Among these are: The lack of the churches capable to accommodate a large number of people, the difficulties in access to churches and other houses of the monastery for disabled people, the lack of the rooms necessary for the cultural and educational purposes, and, especially, the lack of the museum buildings.

On the example of the Kirillo-Belozersky Monastery we revealed unique problems caused by the joint ownership of the monastery complex by the monastery community and the state museum. Finally, for the Ferapontov Monastery we analyzed the problems that make it difficult to transfer a part of a monastery complex to the monastery community.

Our analysis revealed the common problems of the reviving monasteries include:

- Insufficient isolation of the living accommodation of monks, as well as crossings between the streams of visitors and the main routes of monks to the places of church service;
- The lack of the residential and social-functional groups of buildings and placements designed both for the inhabitants of the monastery, and for the visitors.

In addition to this, we found a number of individual problems. The most common of them are:

- The lack of the churches of required capacity;
- Impossibility for people with disabilities to enter the churches and other premises of a monastery;
- Insufficient number of rooms that can be used for lectures, presentations, exercise classes, etc. Presently there is a trend of increase of the number of church museums. However, in many monasteries there are only a few buildings suitable for accommodation of a modern museum.

We suggest the number of approaches to address all these problems. These approaches include:

- Division of the territories and buildings of the monastery complexes into isolated functional areas;
- Reconstruction of the destroyed buildings and scientific restoration of the architectural monuments with their historical or modern functions;

– Construction of new buildings on the places of the other ones that were built later and have to be demolished, or on the free places. The latter should be identified by a visual analysis. This construction is often necessary to restore spatial composition of the architectural ensemble;

– Creation a barrier-free architectural environment. The aisles of the monastery churches are developed to be available for the disabled pilgrims.

### III. PRINCIPLES OF RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Furthermore, we have developed architectural principles of reconstruction and development of the monastery complexes [5]. First, it is necessary to divide the territory of the monastery into functional zones (territories) aimed at different groups of permanent residents of the monastery (monks and brethren) and the visitors. The paths of these groups of people should be separated as much as possible. In order to achieve this goal, we propose the first principle: *The principle of division of the monastery territory into functional areas*. This principle implies the division of the territory based on the analysis of the modern architectural organization of the monastery. Here we propose six different functional areas:

- 1) the area of the monk community,
- 2) the service area for pilgrims and tourists;
- 3) economical area;
- 4) recreational area;
- 5) tourist and museum area;
- 6) sacral area.

The requirements for the formation of each area are formulated. We have also investigated the varieties of the areas, as well as the main functional groups of buildings that are necessary in every area. For example, the area of the monk community should be organized so that the monks do not meet visitors of the monastery [6]. This implies that the monks and the visitors can be together only during the church services. It is clear that in the monastery there should be buildings and premises intended solely for living of the monks, cooking, eating, etc. The service area for pilgrims and tourists should be formed by the premises with residential, social, cultural, educational, and trade functions. The economical area of a monastery consists of the workshop buildings. The recreational area is for the relaxation of the visitors. It should be situated on the territory of a monastery far from the sacral area. The tourist and museum area should be formed, if the monastic complex is jointly owned by the existing monk community and the state museum. Finally, the sacral area has been historically formed on the territory of the monastery complexes. It should be noted that churches and chapels that belong to different historical periods can often be scattered throughout the monastery territory.

The second suggested principle is *the principle of conservation and restoration of the volumetric - spatial composition of the architectural complex* [7]. The efforts on the revival of the monastery complexes in modern conditions are aimed to restoration of not only their main, i.e., religious functions, rather their entire functional systems. The change of the approach to the restoration of the monasteries implies not only the restoration itself, but the construction of new buildings on the historical territories. However, the restoration of the destroyed and construction of new buildings should not lead to a distortion of the spatial composition of a monastery complex.

The third *principle of conservation and use of the natural landscape of the monastery territories* is aimed at preserving the entire architectural and landscape composition of the ensemble. Landscape features, including the relief of the territory, were widely used in construction of monastery complexes in the past. The proposed principle suggests continuing the tradition of an integrated ensemble approach in the development of the monastery complexes. The practical implementation of this principle should be based on the same research that are performed to study the spatial composition of the architectural complex. The main goal is again the conservation of the entire architectural and landscape ensemble of the monastery.

The fourth principle is *the principle of accessibility of the buildings for disabled people*. It is clear that this requirement was not taken into account when the monastery complexes were designed and built. It should be noted that the practical implementation of this principle is not a simple problem. Nevertheless, this necessary modern condition of the barrier-free architectural environment of monasteries can be met not only by using standard architectural solutions, but the increase of the doorways, widened of footpaths, the use of elevators and ramps, special furniture, plumbing fixtures etc.

#### IV. SUMMARY

In conclusion, we have analyzed the current state of a few Orthodox monastery complexes of the Russian North area.

We investigated the problems in architectural organization of these complexes in the modern conditions of a large number of tourists and pilgrims visiting the Orthodox monasteries. We identified the common main problems of the monasteries: The lack of the spacious churches, the problems in access the buildings for the people with disabilities, the lack of the museum, cultural, and educational buildings, etc. We proposed a number of different methods and approaches that can be used to addressed the revealed problems. Finally, on the basis of the performed analysis, we developed four main principles that should be used in restoration and development of the monastery complexes in modern conditions. These principles are with some adjustments applicable to any Orthodox monastery in northern part of Russia.

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