

Representation of the Ethnic World View in Architecture

Evidence from Armenian Architecture of the Lower Don

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Abstract—The article dwells upon the study of the representation of the ethnic world view in architecture. Their correlation is observed in architecture and the worldview of the Armenians of the Lower Don. The author comes to the conclusion that besides the architecture of the Don Armenians in addition to their world view there reflected ideological principles of the Russian government and its changes happened under the influence of Russian culture, were represented in the architecture.

Keywords—armenian architecture of the Lower Don; representation of the worldview; ethnic worldview

I. INTRODUCTION

Armenian colony of the Lower Don was formed as a result of the resettlement of the Armenians lived in Crimea on the territory of the Russian Empire. Catherine the Great granted them the right to settle near the fortress of St. Dmitry of Rostov (decree dated 1779). Colonists founded the city of Nakhichevan (Nakhichevan-on-Don, since 1928 the Proletarsky district of Rostov-on-Don) and five villages and the monastery of Surb Khach to the north-west of the city. So, a compact sub-ethnic group of the Armenians for a long time preserving their ethnic features was selected for this study. This gives the opportunity to study the representation of their world view in architecture deeply and to trace its transformation under the influence of Russian culture.

Representation, understood as a mediated representation of the prototype is directly depends on the prevailing worldview and its changes. The worldview can be represented in a variety of ways, but the most studied among them is the linguistic representation [1]. Methods and specific manifestations of the ethnic worldview representation in architecture are still underexplored until now, but the architecture is a specific expression of the ideals and values of the ethnic group, which reflects their transformation in time.

The representatives of adaptive theory [2] understand culture as a "functionally determined structure with the mechanisms of self-preservation, even in dynamic cultural

and political conditions which gives adaptation to its members to external... environment and adapts the external reality to their needs and requirements"[3]. The category summarizing the elements of the adaptive system, putting them together in a single system, is a worldview.

The ethnic worldview is a coherent idea of genesis existence peculiar to the members of one ethnic group, which is expressed in culture and reveals itself through the actions of people. It consists of ethnic constants and value dominants. Ethnic constants function as a protective mechanism that prevents the penetration into the unconscious representations, which would conduce to the loss of ethnic wholeness and are slow to change as the system of values is easier to change.

The worldview both of subject and each historical period can be changed and updated. However, the presence of the protective mechanisms in the ethnic culture prevent the penetration of alien elements that can lead to the loss of ethnic wholeness. Notice that the stability of the ethnic group depends on how it is able to overcome the threat of disintegration. Therefore, in a critical situation, the ethnic group with well-established psychological defense mechanism may unconsciously reproduce a complex set of reactions, emotions, acts that in the past in a similar situation gave the opportunity to experience it with minimal losses.

Researchers noticed that almost all Armenian sub-ethnic groups demonstrated similar protective mechanisms to overcome the threat of loss of ethnic component in different periods of the history. The Don Armenians also demonstrated a high level of adaptation to a foreign culture and adapted, if possible, other cities to their needs and requirements.

II. THE PREHISTORY OF THE ARMENIANS OF THE LOWER DON AS THE BASIS FOR THEIR WORLDVIEW

The basis of the constants' formation of the ethnic worldview is the history of the people. Key historical events that influenced the formation of the worldview of the Armenians in the Middle Ages were Christianity and the

geopolitical position of Armenia, which made its land an object of conquest. After the religious schism into the Muslim and the Christian world, Armenia became a line of division between them.

Conquests and persecutions on religious grounds has led to several large waves of Armenian migration during which they inhabited different areas including the Crimean Peninsula. Researchers have noted the presence of a large number of the Armenians in the Crimea in the second half of 13th century. Here they settled in the economically developed Eastern and Southeastern parts of the peninsula. The largest of their colonies appeared in Kafa, Sudgeya, and Surkhat etc.

The medieval population of the Crimea consisted of representatives of the various ethno-religious communities: the Armenians, Greeks, the Jewish people, Turkic peoples and the Genoese. There formed a certain cultural community, but along with the interaction in the culture the preservation of national and religious features is clearly observed.

The presence of a cultural entity of settled population of the medieval Crimea is confirmed by the tradition of house building. Specifically, Armenian dwelling in the medieval Crimea did not exist. The types of dwelling are identified not by the ethnic criterion but by the territorial principle. Dwellings located in places of the greatest concentration of the Armenian population were united by a common feature of closed estates and inaccessibility of the residential area. Just retail and craft shops were in the streets.

Generally, favorable conditions have led to the flourishing of Armenian culture on the territory of the Crimea. A school of Armenian book painting appeared in Kafa. Also, Armenian schools were opened and a handicraft industry was developed. A large number of temples built by the Armenians on the peninsula in the 14th – 15th centuries shows that these centuries were the heyday of the Armenian community of the peninsula.

S. V. Lurie says that the main feature of the Armenians worldview is their existence under the conditions of constant pressure from the outside, that was almost normally. The easing of such pressure to a certain critical point depressed the traditional Armenian mentality. They began to lose the lines of ethnic identity: language and traditions. However, as soon as they felt the increasing external pressure, the worldview immediately changed. They began to protect their identity jealously. A similar situation is observed in the Crimea during the rule of the Genoese. During this period, the Armenians intermarried with the local population, learnt the language and some habits of other peoples. In the 14th – 15th centuries, some of the Armenians subjected to the Church of Rome and it led to the signing of the Union of the Armenian and Roman churches. That fact was announced at the Ferraro-Florentine Church Cathedral in 1438 – 1439. The other part of the Armenians of the Crimea remained adherents of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

During the Ottoman domination on the Crimean Peninsula which began in 1475, the situation is changing. The Crimean khanate became a vassal of the Ottoman

Empire and the Christian population of the peninsula was at a disadvantage. It was imposed by a large number of taxes and duties and also by various restrictions. During this period, the Armenians united more closely around the Church, which embodied not only the idea of civil unions, but also played the role of a secular government. And this is a defense mechanism that promoted to the preservation of Armenian ethnos – an appeal to the Church as to an interlink for all the Armenians.

During the Ottoman domination in the Crimea, the Armenian church construction decreased markedly. However, as in the previous heyday of the traditional building, the churches retain the form and symbolic details peculiar to the traditional churches of Armenia.

III. FEATURES OF TOWN PLANNING AND HOUSING OF THE ARMENIANS OF THE LOWER DON

The city of Nakhichevan was located on the bank of the river Don near the eastern border of the Russian fortress of St. Dimitry of Rostov and became the first city on the Lower Don founded by the Russian government not as a fortress, but as a trade and craft settlement. In contrast to similar cities that were formed, generally spontaneously, it was originally built under the plan created in accordance with the town planning ideas of the last quarter of the 18th century. The first development plan of Nakhichevan dated 1781. It laid the foundations for the subsequent development of the city and from then on it has not been significantly disrupted, though it has undergone some changes. The author of the project is unknown.

The spatial planning of the city was like a net of rectangular system of streets united by a common multifunctional center – commercial and religious Cathedral Square and located at the intersection of main thoroughfares of the city. Architectural and town-planning dominant was the Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator, built in the Cathedral Square. Rectangular blocks, united in urban areas with local landmarks in the form of parish churches became the elements of urban system.

Plan of the city reflected the desire of the Russian authorities to form the basis of a new world view of immigrants. The system of principal streets in the city from West to East was unusual for the southern cities of the Russian Empire. Generally, streets lied towards North-South that corresponded with the geopolitical interests of the country. In our case, except the fact that the city had an unusual system in the cardinal directions, the river Don was not a constituent part of the city. This may be explained by the fact that the city was focused on the Russian fortress of St. Dimitry of Rostov located near the Western border. The fortress was planned by the authors as the ideological dominant, fixing a position of the settlers-Armenians in the Russian Empire. The Russian fortress was a symbol of imperial power and showed the citizens that they were under reliable protection.

The urban development plan of 1781 provided the location of the administrative and some religious buildings on the bank of the river Don. However, the main building

began to develop from the center of the city, and the city was never tended to the river. Perhaps, this fact may be explained by the spatial pattern of the migrants' worldview. They had some experience living by the sea in large commercial cities in the Crimea. The fortress walls served as a solid border between the sea and the city. Besides being a transport artery, the sea was often a source of danger. There were many cases of attacks of Turks, Cossacks from the sea. There is a legend, which confirms the transference of historical experience gained in the Crimea on the new historical ground. The legend has it that the Nakhichevans began to build houses in the center of the city after they were attacked by the robbers from the left bank of the river Don who caused significant harm to people.

Researchers noted that the Crimean port cities had a polycentric character. Port, market, temples, residential area of representatives of various ethno-religious groups were in the center of the city [4]. Maybe that is exactly why in Nakhichevan early enough, compared with other Russian cities, there appeared a functional specialization when the engineering buildings were built separately from the residential part of the estate on the banks of the river. The river has become here an industrial area.

Residential buildings of the Don Armenians of the late 18th – early 19th centuries have not preserved. We can get the idea about them only by means of written sources and sketches, preserved in the archives. S. Pallas who visited the city in the late 18th century wrote that the houses were built as well as in the Crimea. Windows were only on the elevation facing yard, the street front remained blind. The entrance to the house was from courtyard. Initially, following the Crimean tradition, the houses were built in the depth of the yard.

In course of time, under the influence of Russian architectural practice people began to build houses on the building line and made windows on the street front, often constructing balconies and verandas there. They also began to position here showrooms. It is obvious, that it took settlers a short time to follow the Russian architectural traditions. Relationship with Armenian community of the Russian Empire, whose representatives resided in the capital cities and had contact with the Nakhichevans, had a great impact on this situation.

Since the mid-19th century plan and artistic solutions of public and residential buildings in the city of Nakhichevan did not differ from such kind of buildings in other cities of the region and were designed under the influence of Russian architecture. Buildings designed in the forms of eclecticism and art Nouveau were built according to function and typical planning. As in other cities of the region, the central streets of Nakhichevan were overbuilt by multi-storey commercial apartment buildings, many of which had space-planning structure. The first floor had large picture windows and was intended for trade; the upper floors were divided into a number of different areas and had a lower height.

Many buildings were built from designs of local architects who were educated in the capital. Since 1889 to 1911, N. N. Durbakh was a city architect of Nakhichevan-

on-Don, who graduated the Saint Petersburg Imperial Academy of Arts. The impact of the St. Petersburg Architectural School was felt throughout his work. The municipal secondary school (1891), Catherine girls' high school (1893) and city theatre (1899) was built according to his projects.

IV. RELIGIOUS BUILDING OF THE ARMENIANS OF THE LOWER DON

Divisive tendencies are observed in church building. There are 2 periods of church building in Armenian communities of the Don: 1) since the foundation of the city till the middle of the 19th century; 2) since the 2nd half of the 19th century to the early 20th century.

During the first period, six churches were built united by a distinct belonging to the style of classicism. The Saint Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral (1783), located on the main square became a dominating structure. In 1786-1792, a stone church of the monastery of Surb Khach (located outside the city) was built in the style of classicism.

The first and failed attempt of building temples with the recognizable features of national architecture was in 1846. However, the project of the Armenian Church for Nakhichevan was not approved because of the "unattractive front" [5].

Since the mid-nineteenth century political and economic situation in Armenian community is changing. The Armenians lost most of tax benefits and autonomy, granted them during the migration. During the last quarter of the 19th century Nakhichevan and its rural districts were attached to the region of the Don Cossack Host. There have been attempts to classify the Armenians to the Cossack caste but they were against of it. The city of Nakhichevan lost its former leadership and became an "additional part" of neighboring Rostov-on-Don.

During this period, the society of Armenian colony was particularly concerned about the preservation of national culture. They desired to keep a closed social system for the preserving cultural identity. Various companies and organizations began to appear everywhere to maintain the Armenian culture and language. The center of education and preservation of national culture, as before, remains the Church.

At that time was the second period of church building, characterized by the construction of churches in the national style. The Church of St. Karapet (1875 -1881) was built on a municipal cemetery and Amenaprkich in the Crimea (1895-1902), both in recognizable forms of the "Armenian style".

During the thorough overhaul, the parish Church of St. Nicholas was rebuilt and has undergone significant stylistic changes: the dome and the bell tower is made in the "Armenian style".

V. CONCLUSION

The basis for the formation of the world view of the Armenians in the middle and modern ages was their

existence in terms of national identity loss. Moving to the territories of other peoples, they demonstrated a high degree of adaptation to a foreign culture and the ability to adapt the city to their needs and culture. When the Armenians found themselves in a favorable political and socio-economic conditions, they gradually began to lose their ethnic identity, but as soon as they felt the increasing external pressure, the situation immediately changed. They demonstrated similar protective mechanisms living in the territory of the Crimean Peninsula and after resettlement on the Lower Don.

On one hand, the city development plan of Nakhichevan reflected the desire of the Russian authorities to give the grounding of a new world view of immigrants and, on the other hand – spatial pattern of the migrants. These are the reasons why the system of the cardinal directions was different from other cities in the region and the city was never tended to the river.

The original houses of the Don Armenians were built the same way as in the Crimea, but after a few decades they were constructed in accordance with the principles dominated in the Russian architecture. By the mid-19th century plan and artistic solutions for public and residential buildings in Nakhichevan didn't differ from such buildings in other cities of the South of Russia.

In the New era, scientific and artistic worldview began to displace religious one and the Armenians desired to "use" the old mechanisms of self-preservation of the ethnic group referring to recognizable ethnic forms of religious architecture. However, the modernization processes undergone by the Armenian colony of the Lower Don were associated with the Russian culture as the bearer of new information and their appeal to the national style in architecture of the second half of XIX century is the evidence of integration into the Russian cultural space, but with a conscious desire to preserve national identity. We can assume that the search for a new national identity together with the same search but in Russian architecture was simultaneously stimulated by the phenomenon of Russian culture and opposed to it.

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