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# **Role of building owners in shaping the design of newly constructed churches**

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## **Abstract**

The research objective is to reveal the role of building owners in shaping the design of newly constructed churches. The key approach was historical architectural analysis and integration of data from archives and field surveys. As a result, modern types of religious building owners are classified; the legal framework providing for public involvement in church building is examined. In conclusion, it is a peculiar characteristic of the modern South Urals architecture that the potent grassroots aspiration to revive the genius loci, deep-rooted ethnic traditions and culture, comes into conflict with insufficient professional expertise and experience.

**Keywords:** Architectural Solutions, Church Building, Features.

## **El papel de los propietarios de edificios en la configuración del diseño de las iglesias de nueva construcción**

### **Resumen**

El objetivo de la investigación es revelar el papel de los propietarios de edificios en la configuración del diseño de las iglesias de nueva construcción. El enfoque clave fue el análisis arquitectónico histórico y la integración de datos de archivos y estudios de campo. Como resultado, se clasifican los tipos modernos de propietarios de

edificios religiosos; Se examina el marco legal que prevé la participación pública en la construcción de la iglesia. En conclusión, una característica peculiar de la arquitectura moderna de los Urales del Sur es que la potente aspiración popular a revivir el *genius loci*, las tradiciones y culturas étnicas profundamente arraigadas, entra en conflicto con la experiencia y la experiencia profesional insuficientes.

**Palabras clave:** soluciones arquitectónicas, construcción de iglesias, características.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

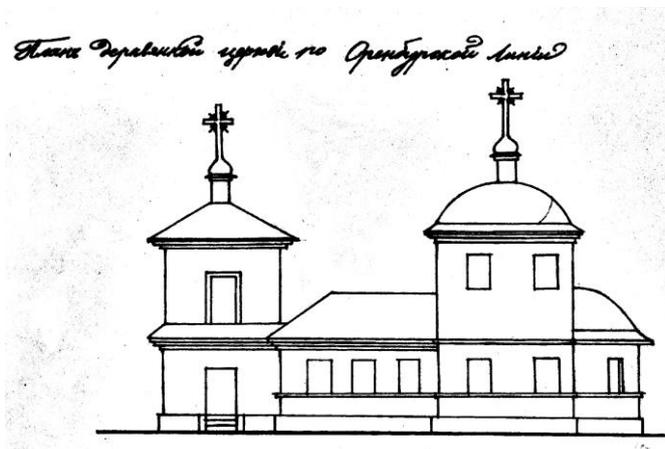
The urgency of the subject is determined by the fact that regional independence and the role of regions in Russia have been steadily growing in scope and nature, so that key findings of this study should be crucially important for preservation and revival of historical environment in various country's settlement. Another focus of the increasing interest in the cultural traditions of various population groups in the South Urals. The main source of data for the writing of this paper was the survey of territories in the geographic area today known as the Orenburg and Chelyabinsk regions, i.e. the former Russian imperial province of Orenburg, within the boundaries of 19th-century territorial division. Available materials in central and local archives and museums have been analyzed, among them documents from the Berg-Collegium (Ministry of Mining) and the Senate, the Mining Department, the Office of General Directorate for Plants and Factories, and the Mining Bureaus in the cities of Perm and Orenburg. System approach has been selected as the key methodological principle for the study. The South Urals being a multi-national region of Russia,

considerable attention is to be paid to the problem of historical architectural analysis based on the concept of social ecology. This framework entails an ethical parameter which allows ensuring the continuity of all properties and characteristics of church architecture.

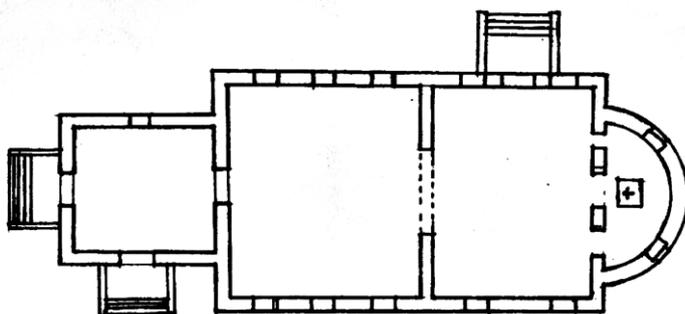
Most actively the Orenburg Diocese churches and temples were studied in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> c.; however, a growing interest in this subject is seen recently. First and foremost, two issues of Chernavsky's work titled *The Orenburg Eparchy in its past and present* dated back to the pre-Soviet period. This is an extensive and very detailed history of Russian Orthodoxy in the South Urals, along with data on the foundation and development of churches and monasteries (Chernavskiy, 1901). A book by Krechetovich (1901) is devoted to the founding, designing and describing churches based on archival documents available at that time. Important statistical data on the architecture and condition of churches at that time can be found in the works of geographers and historians of the Russian Cossack Army: Rychkov (1887), Ignatyev (1873), Starikov (1891), there were individual church and monastery descriptions by monks, for instance, by (Budrina, 1904).

Today, there are only a few studies focused on the religious heritage of the South Urals and its modern churches. These are mostly area studies not specifically concentrated on church architecture. The most interesting works are by authors Degtyarev and Bozhe (1992), Konyuchenko (1993), Olenkov (2008), and others offering materials and data on individual architectural landmarks. The study methodology

is based on the complex historical and architectural investigation of the South Urals Orthodox churches. A systematic approach involves the use of historical-genetic, architectural and urban planning analysis (typological, stylistic analysis). It is particularly important that this approach takes into account many aspects of national, religious, the ethnic identity of heritage. Peculiarities of a multi-national region's development demand more attention to historical architectural analysis based on the notion of social ecology. This approach relies on an ethical criterion that allows us to ensure continuity of ecclesiastical architecture's nature and qualities. It is important for the Southern Urals, the population of which in all historical periods was very varied. The main method of research is the historical and architectural analysis and generalization of archival materials and data obtained in situ. Many materials describing monuments, archival sources introduced for the scientific use for the first time. The analysis of modern urban settlements architecture in Russia has led us to a conclusion that currently, it is in the formative stage of its evolution. The early 21st century is a period when professional architects once again came to be aware of the role of regional tendencies in architecture. Regional architecture is none the less important than the metropolitan one because the former can be called mass architecture which reflects in itself the whole picture of the country's development.



a



b

Figure 1. Exemplary wooden church designed for the Orenburg Defence Line: a - facade; b - ground plan

## 2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The key method of the research was historical architectural analysis and wide archival studies which allowed generalization of documents, field data, ethnographic and historical materials. The

systemic approach implied using the methods of genetic history, architectural and town-development analyses (typological and stylistic). This approach allows for considering many aspects of sub-ethnic, national and confessional peculiarities of historical settlements (Arkhangelskiy, 1900; Nunung et al., 2019).

### **3. RESULTS**

The South Urals became a place for active Russian settlement movement in the middle 18th century; however, the first fortified localities appeared much earlier. The project design and erection of churches, specifically in local villages, was conducted not by professional architects having a university degree, but by crews of masons invited to form the Dalmatov Monastery or from central Russia's regions. The axial church design was very popular, with all the key rooms of the church arranged sequentially. A typical project of this type was the Draft of a wooden church for the Orenburg Defence Line (Draft...). From the point of view of its aesthetics, this is a very typical religious building made of wood in Russia's deep hinterland. Along the main axis, there were sequentially arranged: narthex superimposed by a bell-tower, refectory, the elevated main space of the church (dais), and the altar. The refectory and the main room of the church made up a single log structure (Fig. 1) (Sukhodolskiy, 1854).

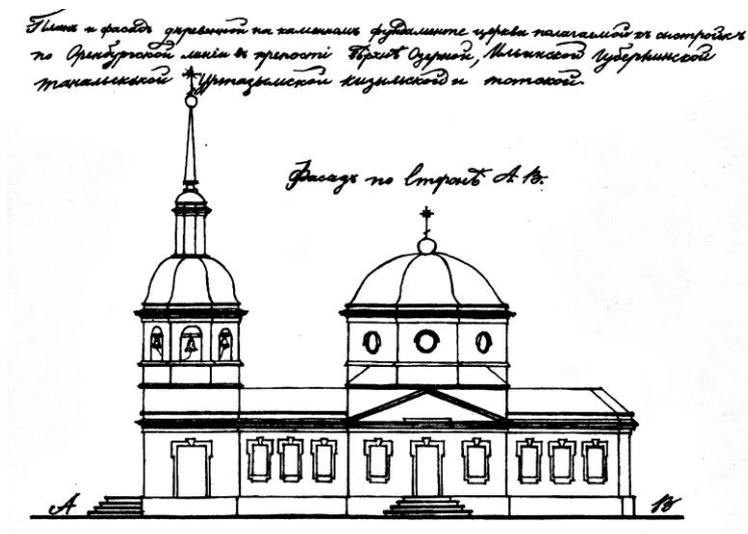


Figure 2. Exemplary wooden church for the Orenburg Defence Line, on a stone foundation: façade

Another church building project for the fortresses of the Orenburg Defence Line has a similar design. Besides the main longitudinal axis, the ground plan of the church has a transverse axis perpendicular to the former (Plan and façade...). It is formed by the northern and southern entrances to the building (Fig. 2). The entrances are adorned with large triangular pediments; the windows have surroundings with protruding, accentuated top-stones (Fig. 3).

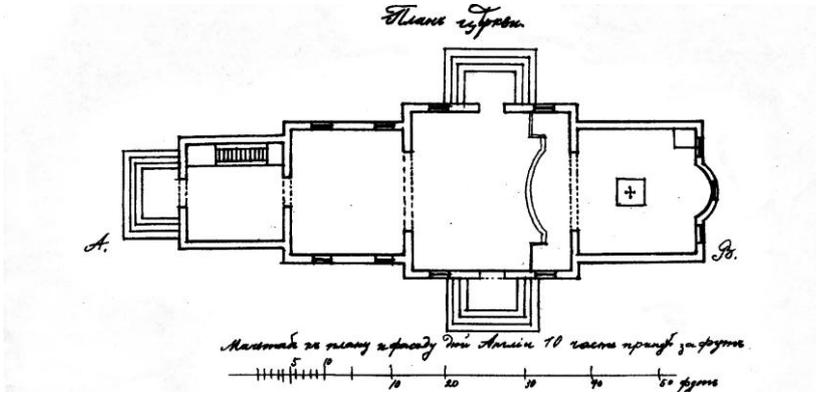


Figure 3. Exemplary wooden church for the Orenburg Defence Line, on a stone foundation: ground plan

The second quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the Southern Urals was the time when large-scale shaping of architectural and urban planning legacy of the Russian state began; at the same time regular re-planning of largest urban settlements and re-building (in stone) of their respective central architectural ensembles started only as early as the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Obviously, there had been earlier attempts at adopting and developing regular town-planning principles in the region. For instance, in commentaries to the town plan of Chelyabinsk in 1784 it was demanded to build houses in regular lines. In the centre of the town it was permitted to erect only masonry civic houses, whereas public establishments had to be built according to approved facade designs and the layout of rooms (Street map...) (Stremskiy, 1999).

Early 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked by a rising concern of governmental officials for the development of ecclesiastical architecture in the frontier regions of the country. In Sinod edicts of

1826 and 1828, it was prescribed that generally, churches and cathedrals in the country should be built according to ground plans, designs and projects in compliance with architectural rules and canons (Synod decrees...). Ecclesiastical architecture in this period came to be a symbol both expressing and asserting Russian rule and domination on its territories adjacent to the borders. A regular town/building plan and an exemplary project thereof were the key transmitters of this policy. With this purpose in mind, projects and drawings were made in the metropolis describing model church designs. One of such projects – although later reworked in situ – was the Church of the Mantle of our Lady in the village Kardailovo, Orenburg province. The church was built in 1835. Situating the building in the centre of the village and accentuating its north-facing elevation in visual perspective if viewed from a distance, was what allowed to vividly mark out the most aesthetically interesting part of the building – the rotunda.



Figure 4. The Mantel of Our Lady Church in Kardailovo village. Architect I.I. Sharmental: façade. Photograph by E.V. Ponomarenko

In the initial version of the project, the structure comprised sequentially arranged rectangular refectory and rotunda. The western façade was adorned by a four-column Tuscan portico. In 1849, a bell-tower was added to the church, with a short passage to the refectory, of the same width. A new Tuscan porch was built with columns echoing pilasters, and a two-column portico with an entrance to the rotunda at the southern facade (Fig. 4, 5).

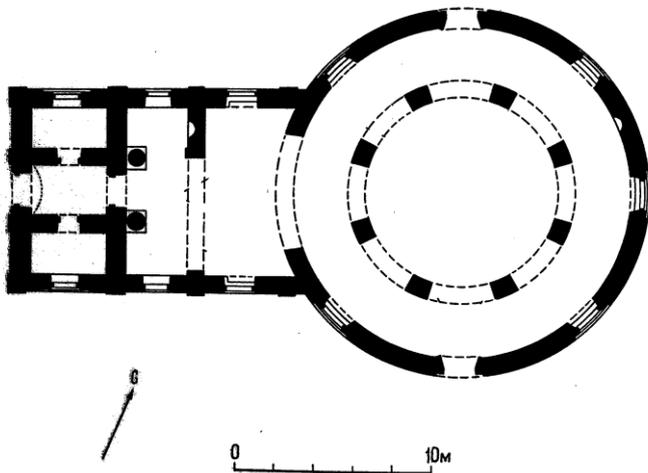


Figure 5. The Mantel of Our Lady Church in Kardailovo village. Architect I.I. Sharmental: layout. Drawing by E.V. Ponomarenko

Evolution of the regional church design in the Southern Urals was interrupted by the arrival of the Soviet rule. In this period, stylistic tendencies in architecture were determined by directives coming from

the Association of Soviet Architects, whose administration opinion was largely due to the governmental and party bodies and agencies.



Figure 6. St. Basil the Great Church in the city of Chelyabinsk. Built in 1996. Architect A.I. Kuzmin. Photograph by E.V. Ponomarenko

New churches were not built at that time. Demolition and barbaric re-planning/conversion of ecclesiastical buildings contributed to the distortion of the historic architectural environment in towns and cities. Professional architects had been gradually but steadily losing their knowledge of general norms and rules of church construction along with the traditions of regional ecclesiastical architecture. Beginning in the last decade of the 20th century, Russian society came to a revival of their interest in church architecture. This is the reason

why the architectural form of churches is today in no small degree determined by building-owner desires and requirements. It should be noted here that there has been recently a tendency to expand the memorial significance of churches. In the modern city of Chelyabinsk, it is exemplified by St. Basil the Great Church where a memorial to fallen soldiers was erected following insistent demands from local inhabitants (Fig. 6). With recent advances in architectural design and civil engineering, unconventional novel window designs are used for building new churches, along with metal frame domes and state-of-the-art solutions and materials for dome coating such as nitrite-titanium sheets, different types of spray coating, etc. Such engineering equipment and communications as elevator, telephone, and institutional heating systems are widely used, which frequently leads to changes in the historically established functional design of the building.



Figure 7. John the Evangelist Church in the village of Cherny Ostrog.  
Built in 1996. Architect S.E. Smirnov. Photograph by E.V.  
Ponomarenko

In many cases, this approach entailing the building owner's absolute control of and dominance over the process of construction, results in insufficient harmony in how the new church blends with the local urban and natural environment. For instance, the erection of the already mentioned new church of John the Evangelist in Cherny Ostrog, Saraktash district, Orenburg region, was a good example of this adverse tendency. Cherny Ostrog (Rus. for Black Stockade) is one of the oldest villages around there founded in the 18th century by Cossack fighters who had migrated from Ukraine and the southern Russian city of Voronezh. The central square of the village is surrounded by what represents a traditional historical environment of this area, formed by wooden domestic buildings with the remaining decorative elements. In 1996 this square's historical appearance was disfigured by the erection of the church in question, whose decorations were along the neoclassicism lines of the 20th century (Fig. 7). Currently, the architectural school of the South Urals which is gradually shaping itself requires for its successful evolution more research of and reliance on regional architectural and town-planning traditions in what pertains to new housing developments and, specifically, to the reconstruction of historical zones and environments within modern settlements. Insufficient continuity in architecture is what may lead to the loss of historically distinctive features by our towns and cities.



Figure 8. Church of the Icon of Mother of God Quick to Hearken in Verkhnyaya Sanarka village. Built in 2005. Architect A.N. Obolenskiy. Photograph by E.V. Ponomarenko

Today, stylization is a method most widely used in the region for the purposes of drawing on the historical architectural heritage of the South Urals in new development projects. The retrospective architectural schools and tendencies of the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century are being imitated most often. The traditional Russian wooden architecture (structures from tree logs) is also being rather widely imitated by way of stylization. A very characteristic specimen of this variety is the church of the Icon of Mother of God Quick to hearken in a settlement called Verkhnyaya Sanarka, Troitsky district, Chelyabinsk region. The Transfiguration Church in the historical village of Kizhy

was used as a model for it (Fig. 8). The main construction material used for the church of the Icon of Mother of God Quick to Hearken were pine logs cut in the Urals. The part of the building that is most close to the model/prototype is the main log structure of the church for which no nails were used. In shape it is cruciform. In the western part of the church are the refectory and the bell-tower. Basically, the church has a conical vertical structure comprising a square piece and several octagonal ones with superimposed rounded gable heads and cupolas.



Figure 9. Church of the Mantle of our Lady, Yuzhnouralsk town. Built in 2008. Architect N.S. Akchurina. Photograph by E.V. Ponomarenko

Various stylizations of the regionally peculiar three-part church design are used most frequently in wooden architecture. A characteristic specimen of that is the Church of the Mantle of our Lady

in the town of Yuzhnouralsk, Chelyabinsk region (Fig. 9). In ecclesiastical architecture using masonry, a popular area for stylization is the peculiar neo-modern stylistics:



Figure 10. Hodegetria Church in the Chelyabinsk city. Built in 2004. Architect A.V. Krasheninnikova. Photograph by E.V. Ponomarenko

The Hodegetria Church in Chelyabinsk is a very characteristic specimen of this variety. The church's vertical composition is pyramidal. All of it is directed towards the single helm-like large dome. The top part of the canopy is ornate with overlay corbels which are gradually being transformed into something reminiscent of the modernist style (Fig. 10). The new classicistic stylizations are not typical for the South Urals. In the region, we often find unrestrained stylizations – and very much so – which remind us of classicism. For

instance, it is the church of St. Michael in Efimovka village, Kurmanayevsky district, Orenburg region, or the church of the Nativity of the Theotokos in the village Varna, Chelyabinsk region. The latter is comprised of three rooms arranged successively into a nave, and the added bell-tower. Its walls are embellished with exaggerated pilasters upon which false arches reside. Despite certain free-style picturesqueness of detail and compositional schemas, the church possesses good proportions and can serve as a specimen of classicistic church design (Fig. 11).



Figure 11. Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos in the Varna village. Built in 2009. Architect M.A. Borovykh. Photograph by E.V. Ponomarenko

Of greatest interest are the projects where church construction is not initiated from above, with prescribed parameters of a pompous ceremonial style, but the building of chapels or small churches

prompted, financed and sometimes carried out by local residents of the middle class. One of the vivid examples of this sort of initiatives is the erection, in 2003, of Peter and Paul Chapel. It is situated in the Orenburg region near Pogromnoye village. Its construction was initiated by Vladimir Denisov whose own architectural expertise and experience were limited to a diploma he got at a civil engineering college.



Figure 12. Peter and Paul Chapel in the Pogromnoye village. Built in 2003. Architect V.P. Denisov. Photograph by E.V. Ponomarenko

The Peter and Paul chapel boast harmonious proportions of a one-dome main building and a powerful, square-layout bell-tower. A comparison of the above mentioned examples of church architecture demonstrates that, despite the fact that in the design of the chapel we can see no distinct regional models and prototypes, the appearance of such initiatives and their harmonic composition and forms reminiscent of the old Russian church architecture is a very interesting tendency

exhibiting people's aspiration to revive national ecclesiastic building traditions. In contrast to rather artificial ceremonial elements of churches in the classicist style, the former fit well into the *memoria loci*, i.e. the local historical environment (Fig. 12). Generally, it is possible to make a conclusion that, currently, the building owner's desire is determinative of how the concept of a particular church is designed. The striving of people of very different prosperity to build new churches is what invests the whole story with a lot of optimism because in the situation when government policies and laws on cultural heritage protection and conservation are inefficient, the building of churches and attempts to find a new regional model for ecclesiastical architecture is what contributes significantly to the elevation of moral standards and revival of cultural authenticity of the region.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

In modern research on ecclesiastical traditions, only a few studies deal with those of the South Urals and newly built churches there. In their majority, these are works by local history experts where the key focus lies not so much on the architecture of the buildings but on other things. Most interesting studies are those by Degtyarev and Bozhe (1992), Konyuchenko (1993), Olenkov (2008) and others who gathered data on individual landmarks. Most interesting and insightful are the works by clerics. This is, for instance, a book by Gorlov and Bobrov "Spiritual vineyard of the Orenburg region" Gorlov and Bobrov (2009: 19) where building designs and drawings are given.

Interesting facts are contained in the work by Stremsky Martyrs, confessors and churches of the Orenburg Eparchy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. All the considered works deal with the analysis of Orthodox ecclesiastical architectural traditions in the South Urals in terms of individual buildings' history and their physical state in this or that period. The problem of how building owners, public authorities and project authors do influence the design of modern Orthodox churches in the region – individually or in an equilibrium of their opinions – remains practically unaddressed in these works.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Generally, it is a peculiar characteristic of the modern South Urals architecture that the potent grassroots aspiration to revive the genius loci, deep-rooted ethnic traditions and culture, comes into conflict with insufficient professional expertise and experience. What we are witnessing now is a trend to restore historical architectural forms within the framework of amateurish building practices, particularly so in smaller settlements. The problems of professional church building are similar to the problems of renovation/restoration in the region: eclecticism of design caused by insufficient knowledge; the use of compositional, planning and decorative solutions improper to the functions of a particular building; involvement of construction and finishing materials that are not organic to the building; inappropriate colour layouts. The modern world view is characterized by a multiplicity of perspectives, mosaic, and dynamism. These features are

considered at the present time as a value. Especially great impact on the architectural practice of the Southern Urals has a heritage of the late 19th - early 20th centuries. Cosmopolitan pluralism leads to the popularity of eclectic and retrospective trends in architecture, oriented on the development of the modern version of the regional architecture. The present political situation is somewhat reminiscent of the period of the late 19th - early 20th centuries, when the economic, social factors and, consequently, the aesthetic attitudes in a community also changed. As then, national identity is rebuilding, which generates interest in heritage as a source of the loan. Historical architecture performs a kind of model in the new formation. An important role is played by the fact that the period of the late 19th – early 20th centuries was one of the most characteristic aspects of economic and political prosperity of the Southern Urals, and shaped the historical part of many modern South Urals settlements.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Religious buildings are currently tested site for regional characteristics of architecture formation. Through religious architecture, ethnic groups of the South Urals are aware of their cultural and religious identity. Currently, the process of forming a regional variant of religious architecture in its infancy. At the break of the tradition of temple construction, style is forming gradually. Since the churches are always accents in buildings, these searches are especially diverse. Often not regional patterns are quoted and styled,

but the world ones. Loans of Russian-Byzantine, neo-Russian and brick styles of the late 19th – early 20th century is typical. There are examples of religious buildings, the Method, the formation of which is close to the Art Nouveau style. The result of all these factors is the appearance in the region distinctive architectural style of religious architecture: neo-modern, the new Byzantine style, pseudo-Russian style, a new classicism, Neo-Baroque and other similar explorations. Further investigation of the revealed new architectural style in its development will allow characterizing the developing regional features of the new Orthodox architecture.

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