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The Iconographic Tradition of Prienisei Siberia: Notes on the History of Formation and Regional Specifics

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Abstract. This article examines an element of the religious landscape of Prienisei Siberia in the 18th and 19th centuries as the decoration of Orthodox churches. During this period, the Russian Orthodox population was more than twice as large as the indigenous population. The indigenous population is the Khakasses, they are the most ancient inhabitants of the Khakass-Minusinsk territory. The iconostasis was the main ornament of an Orthodox church. The iconostasis is a wall with three doors, on which several rows of icons were placed; it separates the altar from the central part. The icon was the most convenient and understandable part of the religious cult. The Orthodox of Siberia only knew about 40 of the huge majority of the saints. In the pre-revolutionary period, several centers of iconography were formed in Siberia. The authors pay special attention to the formation of the Krasnoyarsk iconography school and the influence of the South Russian style, the St. Petersburg and Moscow art schools on it. Archive materials allow us to note the rise of folk icon-painting in the second half of the 19th century; the authors link it with the migration movement after the abolition of serfdom. An analysis of the sources leads to the conclusion that the religious landscape of the southern Prienisei region changed during this period. The need of the big region for a large number of temple and house icons was caused by the spread of Orthodoxy. This led to the emergence and development of the art of church decoration in Siberia. A regional specific of the icon painting tradition of Prienisei Siberia is the “Siberian baroque”, which is characterized by borrowing themes from Central Russian and Southern Russian icons, and producing new themes with ethnic motifs of the indigenous population.

Keywords: religious landscape, the Prienisei Siberia the Khakass-Minusinsk region, the Khakass, icon-painting, icon, Krasnoyarsk school of icon painting, “Siberian Baroque”.

Research area: history.

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Иконописная традиция Приенисейской Сибири: история формирования и региональные особенности

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Аннотация. Данная статья исследует такой элемент религиозного ландшафта Приенисейской Сибири XVIII–XIX вв., как убранство церковных храмов. В указанный период русское православное население в два с лишним раза превышало коренное. Коренное население – хакасы, являются самым древним населением Хакасско-Минусинского края, в этногенезе хакасов принимали участие группы тюркского, кетского, самодийского и монгольского происхождения. Главным украшением православного храма был иконостас. Икона являлась наиболее удобной и понятной частью религиозного культа. Православным Сибири из громадного большинства святых было известно всего около 40. В дореволюционный период в Сибири сложилось несколько центров иконописания. Авторы уделяют особое внимание формированию красноярской школы иконописи, влиянию на нее южнорусского стиля, петербургской, московской художественной школ. Архивные материалы позволяют отметить подъем народного иконописания во второй половине XIX в., авторы связывают его с переселенческим движением после отмены крепостного права. Анализ источников позволяет сделать вывод об изменении религиозного ландшафта юга Приенисейского края в описываемый период. Потребность огромного края в большом количестве храмовых и домовых икон была вызвана распространением православия. Это привело к появлению и развитию в Сибири искусства по изготовлению церковного убранства. Особенность иконописной традиции Приенисейской Сибири выражается в «Сибирском барокко», которое характеризуется заимствованием сюжетов среднерусских и южнорусских икон, продуцированием новых тем с этническими мотивами коренного населения.

Ключевые слова: религиозный ландшафт, Приенисейская Сибирь, Хакасско-Минусинский край, хакасы, православие, иконопись, икона, красноярская школа иконописи, «Сибирское барокко».

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Introduction

Artistic culture in Siberia developed within the framework of traditional church art. Thanks to religious construction the Russian Orthodox Church promoted the appearance and development of stone construction in

the region, the dissemination of experience which was used in secular construction, the acquaintance of the population with the leading trends in architecture and painting, developed aesthetic needs and tastes in harmony with the time.

Theoretical Framework

“Cultural landscape” as “historically changing system of relations between society and religious communities in a certain geographical space in the context of ethnic, socio-economic, cultural and political processes” (Religious landscape of Western Siberia and adjacent regions of Central Asia, 2014) has a complex multilevel structure, part of which is a “religious landscape”. The elements of the “religious landscape” include Orthodox architecture (churches, houses of prayer, chapels).

Khakass-Minusinsk Territory as a historical and cultural area was formed in the XVII–XVIII centuries. Its specificity is determined by special geographical boundaries and natural-climatic conditions (sharply continental climate, heterogeneous landscape consisting of steppe and mountain territories). The indigenous population, the Khakasses, are the most ancient population of the Khakass-Minusinsk Territory. Groups of Turkic, Ketian, Samoyedic, and Mongolian ethnicity took part in its ethnogenesis. The appearance of Russians on the territory of the region in the beginning of the 18th century is connected with changes in the geopolitical situation in Southern Siberia. By the last third of the XVIII century, the Russian Orthodox population is already more than two times more than the indigenous (Bykonina, 1981) (Butanaev, 1997). Russian settlers were aware of themselves as Orthodox and recreated the familiar environment, carrying with them work skills and cultural traditions. A total of 88 Russian settlements emerged during the hundred years of inclusion of the Khakass lands into Russia, and 18 Orthodox churches were built.

The place of chapels and houses of prayer in the religious landscape of Khakassia we have already considered in one of our articles (Asochakova, 2016). The subject of this article is another element of the religious landscape – the decoration of Orthodox churches in the Khakass-Minusinsk territory in the XVIII–XIX centuries.

Statement of the Problem

The interior of the Church, in terms of Christian canons, embodied the image of the

world as God’s creation, traditionally it consisted of three parts: the narthex – the entrance room, in the center – the space for prayer and ceremonial activities, in the east – the altar, there were placed the throne with the cross, the Gospel and the monstrance. The iconostasis is a wall with three doors (the central ones are “royal”) on which several rows of icons were placed. It separated the altar from the central part of a church. The iconostasis was the most important decoration of an Orthodox church. The Russian type of the iconostasis was formed at the end of the 19th century, in Siberia they started to be made in the 17th century, in the Prieniseisk region – in the 18th century. At first in a decorative wooden carving elements of the South Russian style were traced, then influence of the Petersburg and Moscow art schools increased. The first woodworkers were Egor, Ivan and Grigory Busygin and Alexei Pospelov. Egor Busygin was a retired soldier from Tobolsk, an experienced master of iconostasis at the local craftsmen’s shop. Busygins often were contracted for construction work in the Siberian districts in the late 18th – first half of the 19th centuries. A. Pospelov came from Tobolsk townfolk and also often worked on iconostases.

The Krasnoyarsk iconostasis school was formed, 11 iconostases by Krasnoyarsk craftsmen were found in the churches of the Prienisei region. (Isaeva, 1996) The first iconostasis masters were Ivan Fedorov, Iakov Rostov, Stepan Belozerov. (Decrees of Tobolsk Ecclesiastical Consistory on appointments and transfers of priests, on permission to build a new church in Irbinsky village) The creation of iconostasis, as a rule, took one or two years, they were made according to “special drawings” or on the model of existing iconostases (Shumov). Ivan Fedorov made an iconostasis for Irbin Church of Catherine the Great (1783) (Decrees of Tobolsk Ecclesiastical Consistory on appointments and transfers of priests, on permission to build a new church in Irbinskii village). Its description, made by P. Sharov, an assistant of Yenisei provincial architect, is stored in the case of the closure of the church (1830). The iconostasis was transferred to the Karaulno-Ostrozhsky temple. There was an iconostasis made by Iakov

Rostov and decorated with carvings by Stepan Belozherov in Baraita church (Evtikhiev, 1894).

The esthetic needs and tastes of the Orthodox population were realized primarily in iconography. The icon was the most familiar and convenient part of the religious cult. In recent years interest to the history of the Siberian icon has intensified. In Siberia iconography has passed some stages in its development. For the third stage of the Siberian iconography (last quarter 17th century – the beginning of 20th centuries) are characteristic: “life-like” writing; since 18th century – style of baroque; since 19th century – coexistence of secular tendencies and Old Russian traditions (Prokhorova, 2012). The emergence and development of iconography in Western Siberia was examined by N. G. Velizhanina (Velizhanina, 1985) (Velizhanina, 1999), features of iconography and stylistics of iconography in Eastern Siberia were studied by H. H. Isaeva (Isaeva, 1996), Altai – Stepanskaya T. M. (Stepanskaya, 1998), Krasnotsveta L. G. (Krasnetsvetova, 1999).

The following means of expressing the sacred are distinguished in Orthodox iconography:

- 1) timelessness, or one-timeness, meaning that all the events shown in the icon take place at the very same time;
- 2) impassivity of the faces, deprivation of external human emotions;
- 3) conventionality, that is, it is not the object itself that is depicted, but its idea;
- 4) inverse perspective, which has points of convergence not in the back of the picture plane, but in the person in front of the icon;
- 5) the front and background in icons are not perspective-imaginative, but semantic;
- 6) the source of light is the figures and faces themselves (luminosity), and the color has only a symbolic function;
- 7) gold, a symbol of God’s light, is actively used, conveying the radiance of the nonvital world;
- 8) writing the name of the depicted, which is equal to its manifestation (Alekseyev, 2003).

The Orthodox people of Siberia knew only about 40 of the huge majority of saints. In the Khakass-Minusinsk territory Michael the Archangel, Nicholas the Wonderworker,

the Mother of God, especially her Kazan version, and the Trinity were especially revered. The icons were carried to the faraway land by governors, tradesmen, migrants, and Kazaks. Sometimes icons were bought together; in the liturgical practice of Siberia in remote villages, temporary settlements, and hunting lodges, a “secular” icon replaced the iconostasis, and a simple house became a house of prayer. Temple and home icons were placed in wooden caskets and were decorated with metal frames or foil.

Results

The city of Eniseisk became the center of iconography in the Prienisei region. The first iconographers appeared in Yeniseisk in 1669; in 1691 Moscow iconographers I. Vladimirov and F. Alexeyev were exiled here, and in 1693 they were relocated to Krasnoyarsk. A complex of local icons appeared in the middle of the 18th century. In the last quarter of the 18th century there were already 10 icon painters living in the city. The increase in the number of iconographers was due to large-scale church buildings and an increase in the demand for icons, which led to the development of iconography. Masters from fairly distant places began coming here: M. Pushkarev, I. Mylnikov, D. Kurochkin, the Khozyainovs, D. Pushkarev, and G. I. Rostov. The iconographers Khozyainovs were from the peasants of the Abakan village, M. Pushkarev was a peasant from the Urals city of Chelyaby who had been granted freedom.

Martyn Khozyainov was a significant figure in the history of artistic culture in Krasnoyarsk. Together with his brother Ivan, he mastered his father’s craft. His father Khozyainov was not only in charge of the family, but also among the iconographers. It was he who travelled to the Krasnoyarsk Consistory with samples of icons to present them for attestation, he decided not to go to Tobolsk because of the distance, violating the order of the Tobolsk Consistory of September 19, 1786. “He presented the icons of his son Martyn, I. Agapitov, V. Gatilov and A. Pushkarev for a certificate of skill. For more than 20 years a burgher from Krasnoyarsk Grigory Rostov and about 30 years Stephan Belozherov studied painting by Martyn Khozyainov (Velizhanina, 1995).

At first, the iconographic tradition in Siberia was influenced by folk motifs, Ukrainian, Central and Northern Russian artistic styles. As a result of the secularization of church lands in 1764, church institutions lost their staff of iconographers and had less control over iconography. During this period iconography reflected everyday religious consciousness, a folk version of Orthodoxy, and a synthesis of Christian doctrine with ethnic beliefs.

The most revered saint of the Khakasses was St Nicholas. His icons hung in almost all Khakass yurts, and churches were always full on St Nicholas Day. Sometimes, however, the icon was replaced by a tea label with a portrait of the owner of a tea factory in Irkutsk, who looked like a saint, and whom some mistook for Saint Nicholas. (Gladyshevskii, 2004)

The following features were oriented to the representations of the indigenous peoples of Siberia: semi-relief representations, transitions from the light convex parts of figures or objects to shaded ones were sharper than in the Russian iconographic canon, where a smooth multi-layered ochre image was adopted. Khakasses' images of gods were more voluminous. Another original feature of some Siberian icons was orientation on the local ethnic type of the population – on the icons there is an almond-shaped oriental cut of the eyes, and the male icons have a lop-sided Tatar mustache (Velizhanina, 1985). Icons were made on canvas and boards.

The rise of folk iconography took place in the second half of the 19th century. At that time, following the abolition of serfdom, a migrant movement rushed into Siberia. The share of folk icons in the total mass increased, and a trend in iconography oriented towards the tastes of peasants was formed.

In the pre-revolutionary period there were about a dozen iconography centres in Siberia: in Suzun, Kolyvan and others. The Suzun centre focused on the artistic tastes of peasants; the Kolyvan centre was oriented towards the townspeople. For churches of the Prieniseisk region icons were produced in Yeniseisk and Krasnoyarsk. Masters were guided by West Siberian models from Tobolsk and Tyumen. Although, as N.N. Isayeva, an art historian

from Krasnoyarsk, noted, they were heavily influenced by Ukrainian works and Central and Northern Russian artistic traditions. In the collection of the Minusinsk Museum of Regional Studies there is a unique icon of M. Khozyainov “The Scandal of Christ”, dated 1799. (Isaeva, 1996) It is possible that the Khozyainovs used reproductions of paintings by Western European masters and followed the academic direction in icon-painting. But “original” icons painted by Siberian artists were also common.

The Tobolsk Archbishop's House reviewed icons, tried to regulate the painting of icons, it began to issue certificates, work permits. In the 1780s, it was forbidden to paint icons in Russia without the permission and approval of the eparchial authorities, and Christians were forbidden to make orders for icons based on their own designs. Production of icons was reduced, with imported products partially satisfying demand. Icons could only be sold by special permission. In the 1820s, the spiritual consistory allowed the sale of icons within the Tobolsk eparchy to the peasants of Vladimir province, Fedor Erikhov, Melnikov, Tikhonov, Anton Safronov, a peasant of the landowner Kurakina, and others. In some years the income from sale of icons reached 10 thousand. This indicates an increase in the number of churches, the orthodox population, and the increased need for cult objects. (On permission for Flor Erikhov to trade in icons)

Conclusion

Siberian icon-painting was characterized by so-called “Siberian baroque”, the Ukrainian influence connected with the activities of Tobolsk metropolitans (before Barlaam), the borrowing and reproduction of new subjects and themes from Central and Southern Russia, and the ethnic motifs of the indigenous population.

Migration processes contributed to changes in the religious landscape of the southern Prienisei region. Russian migrants preserved, recreated and transmitted Russian Orthodox culture in Siberia in general, and in Khakassia in particular. The emergence and development of the art of church decoration in the region is closely connected to the spread of Orthodoxy, which caused the huge region to need a large number of temple and house icons.

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