

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES AND LOCAL IDENTITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EASTERN SIBERIAN CITIES (FROM LATE 18TH TO EARLY 19TH CENTURY)

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Abstract: This article considers the interaction of geographical and cultural landscape in identity formation of the East-Siberian cities of Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, and Kirensk in the late 18th century and early 19th century. The comparative analysis of the European city of Valga with the East-Siberian city of Kirensk revealed that, while most of the citizens of the European city were artisans, the military personnel played a significant role in the outskirts of the Russian Empire. At the end of 18th century and during the early 19th century, the Eastern Siberian cities collected taxes as revenue for the city, using the advantage of their geographical position. The author concludes that the study into the essence of the “genius loci” of a city gives insight into the origins of the local identity formation.

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Introduction

The study of a cultural landscape uncovers relationships between space and local identity, and space and culture, to understand the influence of landscape on the urban environment. The local identity in this case relates to the “essence of place.” This present work attempts to show the formation of this identity in the Siberian cities of Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, and Kirensk, in terms of the “genius loci” (the location’s prevailing character), and in developing the cultural landscape.

The natural landscape and urban plan determines the street matrix of specific “places.” This matrix generates a certain mentality of those living there. An example is the German Karlsruhe, which is a relatively young city, founded in 1715 (Plotnikova, 2013). Karl III Wilhelm, the Margrave of Baden-Durlach, ordered the design of the city of his dreams, which became Karlsruhe. The palace took center place of the 32 straight streets and alleys that radiated in a fan shape around it. It lacked fortification because Karlsruhe was designed as an open city, and remains today to represent the ideas of tolerance and liberalism. Engineers and workers, from France, Poland, Italy, Switzerland, and many German principalities and kingdoms, participated in the construction of this city. Modern views on state structure and the human person were formed in Karlsruhe. The Baden Constitution of 1818 was advanced for its time. In addition, the first German Parliament was built on the territory of Karlsruhe in 1822.

St. Petersburg (Russia) also represents an artificially built and directed city, but differs to Moscow, which exemplifies a city of circular designs with intersecting radial streets, similar to Vienna and Krakow. Such places have specific street matrices that potentially affect the spatial awareness of their citizens. Thus, city landscapes relate to urban identity and this pertains to the city planning and the “genius loci”.

Cultural Landscapes of Eastern Siberian cities Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, and Kirensk

An album containing lithographs of the landscape painter, Andrei Martynov, is a unique source to study this topic, in respect to Irkutsk and Krasnoyarsk. “Picturesque journey from Moscow to the Chinese border” was published by Andrei Martynov (1819) and included the panoramas of cities and natural landscapes of Irkutsk and Krasnoyarsk. This artist accompanied the escort of Earl Golovkin to China in 1805 – 1806. His album portraits contained descriptions, which include the words in the

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preface "painting is stronger and more pleasant for the imagination and perception when you know the history" (Martynov, 1819, p. 6). The characteristic features of his landscape paintings were the depiction of local landscapes. In addition, Martynov wrote the descriptions contemporaneously, allowing us the opportunity to examine differences among the geographical landscapes and their urban development (Figure 1 & 2).

We emphasize that Martynov (1819), described Krasnoyarsk as "the principle of place" most likely due to its great location, "as there are views worth the brush of the artist in the city and around it, reminding beautiful Switzerland" (p. 39). State councilor, Pestov (1833) wrote, "Krasnoyarsk was called a beautiful Switzerland by foreign travelers" (p. 33). Hagemeister (1854), who undertook the statistical review of Siberia, also noted the beauty of the Krasnoyarsk surroundings. In addition, Turchaninov (1914) wrote of the Asian cities of Russia and commented that the perfect location was determined by the beauty and powerful energy of the Yenisei. We emphasize that the island of Tatishev, which is also associated with the Yenisei, is a favorite modern public space in Krasnoyarsk.

Martynov (1819) noted, "due to its picturesque location Irkutsk can be viewed as the most beautiful city in Siberia and the richest in terms of trade and industriousness of the citizens. The central position of it facilitates the commercial turnover with the whole Eastern Siberia." (p. 41). He also wrote, "You will be amazed at what you saw, found in the heart of Siberia - 6,000 miles from Petersburg, such a beautiful city, a prosperous land. The features of graceful art and science are seen everywhere." (p. 42). After almost 90 years, the famous Russian writer Anton Chekhov, when traveling to Siberia in the late 19th century, almost repeated the artist Martynov's words. Chekhov (1985) wrote, "Of all Siberian cities Irkutsk is the best one. It is a great city. It's quite intelligent. There is a theater, a museum, a city garden with music, there are some good hotels" and "It is better than Yekaterinburg, Tomsk. It looks like Europe." (p. 373).

Irkutsk was a trading communication center, and the famous Moscow highway passed through it on route to Yakutsk and Kyakhta. Zagoskin (1870) wrote, "In the trade relation Irkutsk is in a very advantageous position. All goods distributed around Eastern Siberia, Baikal and the Lena pass through it" (p. 15). Irkutsk was the first storage city in Eastern Siberia for goods traded with Russia. As a result, a new type of a merchant emerged; one that distributed through Siberian trading warehouses and operations. These were dispersed across different cities with numerous clerks administering business correspondence and reports (Plotnikova, 2014). The new public space of Irkutsk, "130-quarter", highlights this aspect of the urban identity.

The Eastern Siberian city of Kirensk was not as fortunate as Irkutsk and Krasnoyarsk. This city was far from the road between Moscow and Kyakhta and further from China. However, it had become an important center in terms of the development of Eastern Siberia. This became evident when it received district center status in 1783. Kirensk was a small town, even by Siberian standards, in the early 19th century, with its population of about 648 compared to the 15 000 inhabitants of Irkutsk, 3000 of Krasnoyarsk.

Kirensk is an example of a city operating as a transit hub. Such hubs, during the Siberia development, were at risk of losing their value. For example, Kirensk developed because the neighboring town of Ilimsk gradually lost its importance with the change of the main trade route to the Moscow road. This resulted in a city court opening in Kirensk in 1807 away from the Ilim (IRSA, 1807, p. 9). The strengthening of the administrative functions of the Eastern Siberian city was an indicator of its development during the late 18th century and early 19th century.

Figure 1: View of Krasnoyarsk



Source: Martynov (1819)

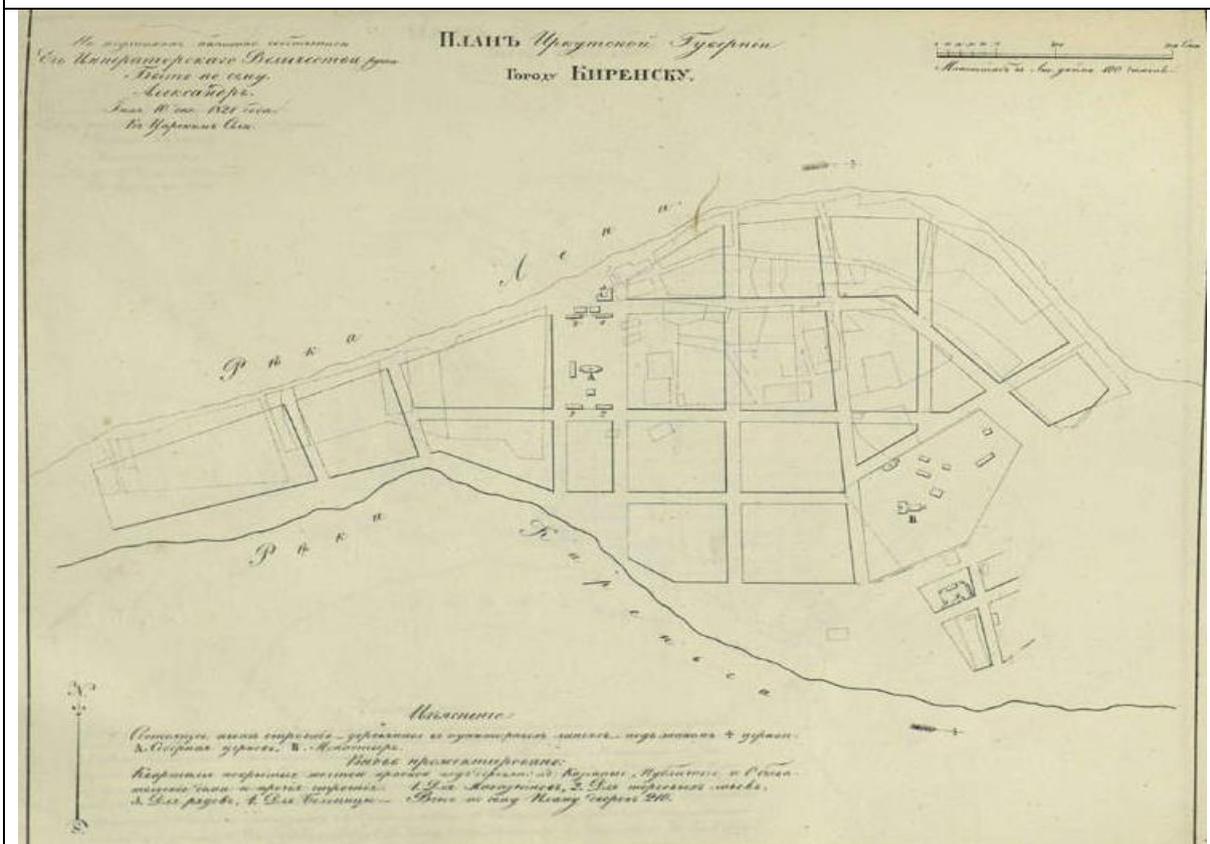
Figure 2: View of Irkutsk



Source: Martynov (1819)

Kirensk was an important commercial and transport hub for the transit trade within the Lena River basin, a geographical position that contributed to its success. Kirensk was located on the island formed by the river Kiringai, which flows into Lena (Figure 3). Kirensk held the Lenskaya raft wood fair, which specialized in trading of furs. Hence, commercial and entrepreneurial activity became a leading factor in its urban economy. The people of Kirensk obtained their food, from Yakutsk and Olekminsk, to the north.

Figure 3: Plan of Kirensk, 1821, signed by the Emperor Alexander I



Source: Complete collection of laws of the Russian Empire (1839). The book of drawings and paintings.

Comparative analysis of East Siberian Kirensk with European Valga

We gain more knowledge about the Siberian city during the early 19th century, from its comparison with the small European city, Valga. Modern Estonian city, Valga, is a suitable option for comparison. During the subject period, the city was a part of the Russian Empire and center of Valkansky yezd (district) of Livland guberniya (vicegerency). In addition, the previous work of Rosenberg (2006) provides much knowledge for the comparative analysis of this study.

Population metrics are important indicators of urban development. In the first quarter of the 19th century, 451 permanent residents lived in Valga, compared to 648 in the Siberian Kirensk. In Valga, artisans comprised most of the population, and involved two guilds: tailors and shoemakers. There were no artisans in Kirensk, though middle-class individuals, soldiers, and bureaucrats engaged in craft making. The Irkutsk publicist, N. Shchukin, wrote while passing through Yakutsk to Kirensk in 1830 “Will anyone believe that they don’t know how to make pots in Kirensk; that there is no good carpenter, shoemaker, or tailor” (Irkutsk dwellers' memoirs, 1990 p. 159-160).

A large part of Kirensk's population involved military personnel of a city regiment. Including their wives and children, these numbered 122. There was also a small detachment of Cossacks, which numbered 30 together with members of their families. In 1832, Irkutsk's civil Governor proposed to build stone barracks for the military in Kirensk. The city had to borrow 5000 rubles from the Irkutsk Department of Public Welfare (IRSA, 1838, p. 19). This was a substantial amount for a city with an entire income of an estimated as 2500 rubles. However, Valga was located on an important military route between St. Petersburg and Riga, and its citizens felt obliged to assist (Rosenberg, 2006).

In Valga, the number of traders fluctuated between 12 and 17 (Rosenberg, 2006). In Kirensk, the merchant class began emerging in the late 18th century, but became more evident in the second and third decades of the 19th century. Its local merchants had small investments and as a rule traded in furs.

Kirensk was a transit town for trading on the Lena. Such trade was carried out during two trade fairs: the summer timber rafting from 10 May to 1 July (after the end of spring fur trade and the opening of navigation on the river Lena), and the winter market from 15 November to 15 January for the fur trade.

There were no open-air markets (bazaars) in Kirensk, and the citizens purchased items, including food, in large amounts during the summer fairs to suffice the whole year. A peculiarity of Kirensk's urban development was the high cost of living, about which the Governor-General of Eastern Siberia received regular complaints.

To summarize, most of the population in the European city Valga were artisans. There were no artisans in Kirensk, but middle-class individuals, military personnel, and bureaucrats, practiced craft making. The military played a major role in Kirensk. Stone barracks were built for the military at the expense of the city. Life in Kirensk was expensive because of its remoteness from the provincial center, and the people bought items during the summer fair, once a year, in large quantities.

Geographic features of Siberian cities, contributing to the development of an urban economy

The merchant doshaniki (small ship made out of boards), and barges that sailed by Kirensk, traded in either the hospitable court or on the shore itself. There were between 300 – 500 merchants during the navigational period. In 1826, the winter fair was abolished. At the same time, the Council Chief Directorate of East Siberian allowed Kirensk to take taxes from nonresident merchants and farmers, who sold produce, in Kirensk or its surrounds (IRSA, 1844, p. 24). Thus, the remote location of Kirensk changed to a locality dependent on local tax revenue for municipal development. The value of that tax was intermittent, varying between 150 and 900 rubles per year. However, that tax, to some extent, facilitated the livelihood of Kirensk residents. A feature of the city's budget at that time in the Russian Empire was that the payment of city rates was voluntary. In 1844, the excise tax was repealed, and Kirensk's urban society had to find another "additional sum of money" (so called 'raskladka') in the amount of 152 rubles (IRSA, 1844, p. 40) to resolve the city's budget deficit. Kirensk's society paid the city's duties by collecting 150 rubles from the capital of merchants and 10 rubles from the middle-class person (IRSA, 1844, p. 44).

We emphasize that Krasnoyarsk and Irkutsk used their advantageous geographical location to develop their urban economies. The famous Moscow highway connecting Moscow to Siberia passed through Krasnoyarsk, while the Great Tea Route, connecting China to St. Petersburg, passed through both. With the development of the Russian-Chinese trade through the border town of Kyakhta, the traffic increased. In order to get into this city, it was necessary to cross the Yenisei. There was an increase of transfer charges through the Yenisei, as evidence of the Russian-Chinese trade development. In 1787,

in terms of city revenue, transfer charges amounted to 351 rubles 47 kopecks (KRSA, 1787, p. 5). In 1797, the traffic flow increased this to 628 rubles (KRSA, 1797, p. 20), i.e. in 10 years, it almost doubled, and by 1802, it reached 1779 rubles 91 kopecks (KRSA, 1802, p. 34), which meant it almost tripled. In terms of passing through the Krasnoyarsk in 1805 – 1806, Martynov (1819) wrote, "The direct road to Siberia from Russia goes through this city, because from November to February thousands of carts relentless trudge through local streets" (p. 40). In 1803, the city budget of Krasnoyarsk was 1014 rubles 60 kopecks, which, in full became revenue for the city as a result of the traffic over the Yenisei (KRSA, 1803, p. 45).

In 1797, Tsar Paul I ordered the police headquarters be based in the city. To perform this imperial decree, Irkutsk used its advantage of being the major communication hub of Eastern Siberia. To maintain the police, a special tax was introduced to collect monies from the merchants' who carted goods through Moscow, Yakutsk, and from overseas through the Krukovsky highway. In 1800, the city police expenditure was 6 672 rubles 84.5 kopeck (IRSA, 1800, p. 7). In 1817, this amounted to 11 232 rubles (IRSA, 1820, p. 21).

"Genius loci" and public capital

Irkutsk citizens were among the first in the Russian Empire to become aware of the peculiarities of their local identity and the impact of transportation on developing the urban economy. During the last quarter of the 19th century, the Tsar's government had developed the TRANS-Siberian railway project. There were several options for the city to be a key province during the building of the railway line. The people strongly campaigned for the railway to transit the city. However, while Deputy of Irkutsk city Duma, and Editor of "Eastern Eye" Popov (1989) wrote in his memoirs: "the Duma, the government and the citizens were mostly worried about the railway and feared if Irkutsk had not been left away from the highway" (p. 54). As noticed by Popov (1989), Tomsk's citizens regretted they had avoided campaigning towards building the railroad through Tomsk. Popov (1989) wrote, "you, the people, have met engineers, organized special dinners, made beautiful speeches, that these speeches were much talked about and remembered for a long time. And we, the citizens of Tomsk had missed everything. As a result Irkutsk has the road but Tomsk is 60 miles away from it." (p. 78).

However, the railway was not as stimulating as expected for Irkutsk urban development. Whereas Irkutsk was located along the right bank of the Angara River, the railway station was on the left. The connection between banks of the Angara River for 7 ½ months of a year was facilitated by a pontoon bridge, for almost 3 months (during January to March) by river ice, and the remainder, of about 2 months, by boat. The opening of the railway resulted in rapid growth of Glazkovsky, situated on the left bank of the Angara River. It greatly increased the number of people visiting Irkutsk, and the amount of transported cargoes. Twice a year, in early winter and spring, until the end of ice melting, there was a halt to transportation of agricultural products and other goods transported by railway across the river. Hence, the reason for forming stores in the railway warehouses, and subsequent price rises. The merchants had to pay extra for the storage of goods (Iszelenov, 1910). In the beginning of the 20th century, people began to understand that Irkutsk's prime position as a trading center among the cities of Siberia, before the railroad construction, was due to being on the main transit route to China (via Kyakhta), the Amur River region, and Yakutsk oblast. After the railroad construction, the recognized value of Irkutsk as a trading center collapsed, and was not restored (Iszelenov, 1910).

Irkutsk's city public authority of 1907 – 1910, headed by Iszelenov, prepared a project for constructing a permanent iron bridge over the Angara. The cost of the construction was estimated at 1 510 000 rubles (Petrov and Plotnikova, 2011). With insufficient city government funds, the Irkutsk city Duma applied to obtain revenue from freight through the railway station of Irkutsk for 24 years. To gather the required sum, the city had to release the loan for repayment by the revenue from the

established tax. Council determined the fee amount as two kopecks per two stone of goods transiting the city. Following bureaucratic formalities, the Ministry of Finance, trading and industry delivered the decision. The trade, technical, and construction Committee of Internal Affairs Ministry considered and approved the construction of a permanent bridge, with iron, on stone piers, over the Angara River. The Irkutsk city Duma also considered whether this special tax should be paid by the city people during the two years while the bridge was being built, as well as a rate for the travelers over the pontoon bridge. The Duma also decided that the rate for travelers over the pontoon bridge should be halved for goods for which the special tax had been paid at the station. In March 1910, the state Duma adopted a law whereby municipal councils could impose a levy on goods delivered into and out of the city by rail. However, that ambitious project was never implemented. At first, the construction of the iron bridge was abandoned, and a new project for urban transport developed. Then, World War I started, followed by the revolution of 1917 in Soviet Russia, which delayed the start of the construction of a permanent bridge across the Angara until 1931.

In the beginning of the 20th century, it became obvious that the city had lost, rather than won in terms of their campaign for the railway to transit the city. The city had lost its prime position as a goods-distribution center. Following this, the city's Duma began another project. In 1910, the Government decided to link the Siberian highway to the Prilensky section of the railway. Subsequently, in November 1910, a special railway Commission formed, chaired by V. M. Posokhin, and involving interested persons of the Irkutsk city Duma. The Commission decided to submit to the government, through deputies of Siberia, a petition to include Zhigalovo into Irkutsk. This was supported by the government engineers' work that assessed the route of the railway between Siberia and Lena. The Duma railway Commission collected statistical information about the location of the planned railway line, and sent an expedition to assess the economics of the area. It then decided to allocate the necessary amount of land for the purpose of the railway line. City officials were sent to St. Petersburg to lobby the Ministers. There was also support from the Governor, and the local merchant community (Petrov and Plotnikova, 2011). Nonetheless, that project did not receive approval mostly because of circumstances relating to the history of the Russian Empire.

The example of the TRANS-Siberian railway project shows us, for the first time, how the city developed because citizens took control in the urban development and became engaged in city projects. Irkutsk is one of the first cities in pre-revolutionary Russia where this happened. The aspirations and will of the people developed social capital, which complicated the development of a local identity associated with the formation of the cultural landscape.

Conclusion

This study into the essence of the "genius loci" of a city gave insight into the origins of local identity formation. This together with the research into the origins of the urban economy identified the main components of the cultural landscape, and the development of social capital, which were explored to define the course of modern urban development. This paper shows that, based on the historic examples from Siberian cities of Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, and Kirensk, the local identity, and geographical landscape relate to social communication. This involves residents' will and aspirations that add complexity to factors that act as both a collective historical memory, and a framework for orientation in the future.

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