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**НЕОРОМАНТИЗМ В АРХИТЕКТУРЕ: СИНАГОГИ В ЦЕНТРАЛЬНЫХ
И ВОСТОЧНЫХ ГУБЕРНИЯХ РОССИЙСКОЙ ИМПЕРИИ**

**NEO-ROMANTICISM IN ARCHITECTURE: SYNAGOGUES IN CENTRAL
AND EASTERN RUSSIAN PROVINCES**

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*«Eclecticism was a symptom of the waning influence
of nationalistic romanticism» [1].*

Rachel Wischnitzer

ABSTRACT

Повышенный научный интерес к традиционной культуре, как в зарубежных, так и в отечественных исследованиях, глубоко симптоматичен. В условиях нарастающей унификации духовной и материальной культуры становится актуальным интерес к этнической идентичности, получивший название этнического парадокса современности и затронувший население множества стран на всех континентах. Начиная со второй

половины XX века, этническое возрождение рассматривается как одна из основных черт развития человечества. Всплеск осознания своей этнической идентичности проявляется в самых разных формах: от попыток реанимации старинных обычаев и обрядов, фольклоризации профессиональной культуры, поисков «загадочной народной души» до стремления создать или восстановить свою национальную государственность.



Fig. The Synagogue in Kazan (Modernism)



INTRODUCTION

Today's heightened scholarly interest in traditional cultures is deeply symptomatic of cultural change, in both foreign and domestic research. As spiritual and material culture becomes more homogeneous, interest arises in ethnic identity. This ethnic paradox has affected all countries. Since the mid-twentieth century, ethnic revivals have been considered basic features of human development. Perception of the ethnic identity is expressed in forms varying from attempts to reanimate ancient customs and ceremonies, adding folkloric elements to sophisticated culture, looking for the mystical national soul, and aspiring to create or restore the national state system.

Characteristics differentiating a particular ethnos include language, moral values and norms, historical memory, religion, notions of the native land, myths about common ancestors, national character, and national and professional art forms. Architecture is one of the most ancient and significant arts because of its constant presence and therefore, its influence. Unlike painting or sculpture, its artistic images do not reproduce specific phenomena of reality. The figurative language of architecture reflects wide generalizations of social laws and relations, embodying not the experiences of an individual, but ideas and emotions that have general value for the group, the larger society, or the epoch. Architectural history deals with the dynamic interaction of continuous changes in cultural archetypes. In the Volga and Ural regions and Siberia, these archetypes are evident in the forms of synagogue architecture.

OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of our work is to consider some influences on the principles of synagogue architecture in the Russian empire's internal provinces in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (Most synagogues in these regions were built in this period). At this time, changes in living standards and contradictions increasing in society formed the background for noteworthy changes in the main artistic tendencies, and these changes affected synagogue design.

HISTORICAL ASPECT OF RESEARCH

The growth of national consciousness and the crisis in state ideology at that period paralleled the growth of personal and national consciousness. E. Barnavy found the Jewish national revival in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries inevitable. Jewish nationalism was an aspect of emancipation. Under the influence of religious neo-romanticism, many Jewish intellectuals tried to rescue Jewish religious culture from oblivion. M Levy defined romanticism as a protest against industrial capitalist civilization by promotion of certain values of the past.

Jews began to enter the internal provinces in large

numbers following Alexander II reforms. This was a migration of economically active and independent people. Being afraid of intensive Jewish settlement in these internal provinces, the government introduced complicated requirements before religious ceremonies could be held. Until the end of the nineteenth century, there were neither permanent synagogues nor rabbis in many cities. Moreover, the community itself was not homogeneous. It was divided between those with permission to reside permanently and those with only temporary residence permits. Permanent residence beyond the Pale of Settlement was allowed to Jewish university graduates, to merchants of the first and second guilds (i.e. not to small tradesmen), to Jews who were foreign citizens, to masters and handicraftsmen, and to retired Russian army veterans of the lower ranks. Other Jews could live in the internal provinces only temporarily, although their intensive migratory and economic activity continued, as there was constant interchange with Jews within the Pale. This inorganic construction of Jewish communities resulted in a mentality more like that of western society than of central and eastern Russia. Feelings of freedom, personal sovereignty, enhanced attention to individual uniqueness, and the cult of individuality were evident. But the uncertain communal organization made difficult the position of Jews in the local environment. Normally, Jews would have been a closed ethnic group as they were, for example, in Eastern Europe. There, Jews had more naturally formed communities. They had traditional forms of identification and consequently their own style in art and architecture. In the different environment of central and eastern Russia, there existed for Jews the risk of their dissolution in another cultural environment. This danger became aggravated because the Jews were remote from the great bulk of their co-religionists in the Pale, and they had to adapt to another culture. Besides a number of laws forbade Jews to settle in compact groups; if they were isolated, they were in danger of being absorbed in the larger society. A synagogue guaranteed cultural preservation for these enterprising and worldly Jews, who despite their activity in Russian society wanted to continue as Jews and to transmit a distinctive heritage to the following generations.

The synagogue was therefore necessary not only as an establishment for prayer but also as a symbol of preservation of group consciousness. The synagogue became the custodian of identity. It played a principal—perhaps even an exclusive—role in the rallying of Jews and the preservation of their identity. These educated Jews envisioned identity through the prism of romantic literature, and thus focused on mystical, apocalyptic, and anti-bourgeois aspects rather than rational and institutional aspects. Special attention was given to Messianism, which, according to Martin Buber (the Prague society «Bar - Kokhba»), represents the deepest and most original idea in Judaism. Messianism is the theme that comprises all aspects of «Sturm und Drang» in Judaism.



It is expressed in the aspiration for an absolute future when universal truth triumphs. This romantic Messianism explains the adherence of the Jewish intellectuals to social utopias. Music, painting, theatre and architecture convey the basic moods and tendencies of this period precisely.

Thus, in central and eastern Russia, the traditional model of Jewish self-identification does not apply. There, the Jew who wanted to enact his Jewishness, needed to connect his identity with the synagogue. We can thus safely assume that in synagogue architecture there would consequently be seen figurative-symbolic ideas and images reflected in architectural forms creating a neo-romantic idea of rescuing Jewish religious culture.

CULTURAL STUDIES APPLIED TO THIS RESEARCH

The romantic art system was based on the synthesis of art, philosophy and religion. Around the year 1900, the so-called neo-Romanticism appeared. It did not represent an integrated aesthetic system; its appearance was a result of various artistic movements. During the era of romanticism, religious architecture was thought to express, or even symbolize, national character.

At the end of the nineteenth century appeared a first phase of eclecticism in Russia, with two components—romanticism and historicism. “Romanticism” defines architecture as expressing a complex of philosophical, historical, and artistic ideas. “Historicism” is understood as orientation to certain historical prototypes, modeling modernity on an idealized historical past. Both tendencies were realized in central and eastern Russian synagogue architecture. For example, in 1895 the Jews of Saratov built a synagogue in an oriental style, while in 1903, the Choral Synagogue of Samara was more or less Moorish.

The modernist style replaced eclecticism, but modernism in Russia had only a short life, from the early twentieth century to the First World War. Under “modernist style” we include various tendencies connected by common ideological aspirations affected by national-romantic movements and by Symbolism, a separate current in West-European art in 1870-1880. However even in 1830-1880, national romanticism promoted historicism and eclecticism, and symbolism of some kind is inherent in art, particularly in architecture.

In Russia, as well as in other countries, a choice of style connoted freedom, and consequently became popular. National romanticism was generally based either on the arts of notable periods from national history and architecture or on exotic eastern styles that had attracted architects and designers since the eighteenth century. In all countries, national heritage was renewed and reinforced by the idea of a national language of architecture, a protest against the universal and supra-national classicism.

Thus, in Russia near the turn of the century, the formal language of nearly all architectural styles and epochs was introduced into building, and thus also into synagogue architecture.

CONCLUSIONS

Changes in Jewish history have led to the appearance of new forms of identification, and one manifestation is the construction of large and small synagogues in central and eastern Russia, which became symbols of the preservation of national consciousness.

Given the cultural and historical situation in Russia at the end of the XIX century we can confidently assume that neo-romantic ideas and concepts in the minds of the Jewish intelligentsia influenced the synagogue architecture of this period. Their ideas are expressed in neo-Gothic, Moorish, Russian-brick, and other styles. A synagogue is nevertheless a contradictory element of identification. On the surface, all is very simple: «The outside is for the public; the inside is my own.” But “my own” varies, depending on the specific Jewish community, the local Jewish environment, and the functional and spatial organization of the synagogue.

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