

The Cultural Landscape as a Variety of Traits

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Krajobraz
kulturowy
jako zespół
różnorodnych
właściwości

Introduction

Wstęp

The present day theory of a cultural landscape investigates culture and geographical space in their unity. According to research of J. A. Vedenin, the various artifacts (man-made forms) of a landscape are signs (traits) of historical events [Bulanin, Буланин, 2004]. Each cultural landscape has ability to amass intellectual-spiritual energy and to form a special information-symbolical environment.

The understanding of a cultural landscape as a sign system is based on J. M. Lotman's theory of semiosphere as "the synchronous semiotic space which fills the borders of culture and determines the action of separate semiotic structures along with their products" [Lotman, Лотман 2000]. According to such comprehension of interaction of culture with natural space, it is possible to speak that the natural space is "the second nature", when the artifacts are considered in the context of a landscape, and the specific traits of psychological perception influence understanding of a landscape [Lavrenova, Лавренова 2010].

People interpret the perceived spatial information in the aspect of their culture. Cultural codes are enciphered in the geographical, historical, social and intellectual factors which form the landscape. For this reason one can say that the cultural

landscape is "a text" which is read by every person in a different way. The present article concerns the Vorontsovo estate which is considered as a cultural landscape of various traits.

An outline history of Vorontsovo estate

Zarys historii posiadłości Woroncowo

The Vorontsovo estate, i.e. the residence with a park, situated in the Moscow southwest is a favorite recreation place for local inhabitants. The park reflects Russian history, its ups and downs, its blossoming and desolation periods. As a result, the cultural space of the park has the various artifacts being information-symbolical codes, in a different way interpreted by visitors.

Since 14th century the estate was a property of boyar Voronets family, in 17th century the manor was handed down to Reprin princes. Then it passed from one owner to another; now the manor with the park is the state property.

The brightest period of the park cultural landscape were 18th and 19th centuries when Vorontsovo belonged to field marshal N. V. Reprin. At this time the residential complex of a precise axial composition has been created. The estate included a big pond, a large park, and three avenues running to the central building from Old Kaluga road. During 1770-1780 years

Fig. 1. The Holy Trinity church in Vorontsovo park

Ryc. 1. Cerkiew p.w. Świętej Trójcy w parku w Woroncowie

the main entrance with guard posts was erected on the central avenue as well as the park pavilion in the end of northern avenue; the residential complex was designed presumably by the architect V.I.Bazhenov.

In 1807 one of the entertainment pavilions has been reconstructed and turned into Holy Trinity church; its restoration took place in 1990, the bell tower and one of temple walls have been built anew (Fig. 1). Today it is a part of the Moscow eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church.

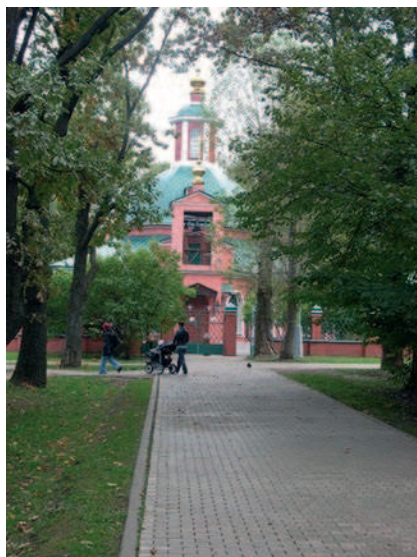
It should be pointed out that the Vorontsovo estate possesses some cultural traits as symbols characteristic for successive epochs, and each generation had put its own, specific cultural contribution into its existence. Now the estate (manor with the park) is a monument of architecture and of landscape gardening art.

Analysis of survey answers

Analiza odpowiedzi respondentów ankiety

To see how the visitors comprehend Vorontsovo estate, a survey among them was made by a group of high school students of the Moscow Educational Center. They talked to the park and manor visitors to see how they understand the cultural and natural monuments of the estate.

The answers of respondents have shown that the majority of them



considered the estate as a natural science complex. This result indicates that today the most attractive traits for people of any age are not architectural or entertaining constructions, but the nature as a special symbol. It confirms the fact that town inhabitants yearn for natural space in the city environment.

One should note that indeed, the Vorontsovo park, which is often referred to as Vorontsovo ponds, presents a beautiful, unique landscape. The cascade of ponds, created in the middle of the 19th century in the floodplain of Chara river is today restored. In the ponds the Ramenka river has its source (Fig. 2). The unique specimens of old trees, such as oaks, lindens and elms have been preserved in the park to our times; they are protected as the nature monuments. Many respondents highly appreciated the park landscape paying attention for the age of trees: "among the old trees one can understand the history", "one feels oneself here as in a fairy forest" and "these trees could tell a lot." Thus, the town inhabitants comprehend the landscape as

Fig. 2. The big Vorontsovo pond

Ryc. 2. Duży staw w Woroncowie



a cultural code, full of living history, fairy tales, the personification of nature and the approach of the natural landscape objects to a human being.

The second most important cultural trait of Vorontsov estate are the architectural constructions made in the classical style: the gate with a guard watchtowers (Fig. 3) on the main driveway and park pavilion (Fig. 4). Even visitors without knowledge of the architecture history have considered constructions as "strict", "clear", "light" and as "being a face of the park". Older people (60-80 years old) reported that buildings are the memories and the origin of the estate, and agreed with the need for their further restoration. It should be pointed out that young people (16-25 years old) most often determined the art style as classicism, and some even knew about the architect V. Bazhenov, and his alleged authorship. However the answers of the young people concerning further reconstruction of the estate are differentiated: some were convinced in the necessity of this process, but others insisted that the park is, first

Fig. 3. The gate to the Vorontsovo park

Ryc. 3. Brama prowadząca do parku w Woroncowie





Fig. 4. The garden pavilion in Vorontsovo park

Ryc. 4. Ogrodowy pawilon w parku w Woroncowie

and foremost, the zone of active recreation. This result shows that the different age groups comprehend and feel the same cultural landscape in quite other way.

Another striking cultural trait of Vorontsovo is the Holy Trinity church, which in spite of its small size, since built originally as a home church, became in recent years a spiritual center of the estate. Today, the Sunday school, as well the choral and icon painting schools exist, and the small library is opened in the vicinity. All respondents take now the Orthodoxy as a Russian cultural heritage. They all, nobody excepted, underlined the importance of the church as a symbol of cultural landscape of the estate: "the church lightens the environment", "the church naturally looks among the old trees" and "without the church the estate would be empty". People often visit this church, someone has baptized the children here, someone comes up during religious holidays. In any case, was the respondent a believer or not, they all were of the opinion that the presence of the Holy Trinity church is necessary.

A cultural trait of Vorontsovo estate is also the cross erected nearby the church in memory of the inhabitants of Moscow, died in the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident. The answers of visitors have shown that people often do not read its label and, therefore only few respondents knew what event was commemorated by the existence of the cross. Every

visitor had his own opinion; there were such answers as: "in honor of the revival of Orthodoxy" and "in memory of those killed in the war" (it was not précised which war). It is important however that in all answers the general comprehension of the cross existence was the same as it was originally anticipated, in spite that the commemorated event was named incorrectly.

And of course an important cultural trait of Vorontsovo is the entertaining function of the park, i.e. the existence of children's playgrounds, pleasure boats and swimming pools in the summer and ice skating rinks in winter, the horseback riding and sports grounds, as well as comfortable benches on shady lanes and several outdoor cafés. During holidays (e.g. New Year, Victory Day, carnival) in the park the various events and festivals take place. This feature of the park achieved a very high opinion of young people, however a lower attention was paid by the grown up respondents; they were convinced that in spite of the importance and necessity of entertainment, it is not the main cultural trait of the Vorontsovo park.

Conclusion

Wnioski

Cultural landscape accumulates the potential of intellectual and spiritual energy and forms the semantic field in which the material and spiri-

tual culture are on an equal footing. All visitors of Vorontsovo estate were unanimous in their opinion about the need to preserve this estate, but their reasons for this preservation were strongly dependent on their age. However, in spite that the Vorontsovo traits were considered by respondents of different age, and therefore their answers were diverse, the general trend of their opinions was similar, since they all recognized the importance of the cultural landscape of Vorontsovo park as a natural and historical heritage. Today the Vorontsovo estate is restored and attracts the attention of Moscow inhabitants by its landscape, cultural values and the possibility of an interesting and active recreation.

Photographs made by author.

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