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Concept of Cultural Landscape in Russian Cultural-Geographical Tradition

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Аннотация

The article describes the historical background and trends of evolution of the cultural landscape concept in Russian cultural geography. The paper is written in developing ideas expressed in the author's article "Cultural-Landscape Studies outside Russia: National Traditions and Scientific Schools in the World Cultural Geography", published in the "Pskov Journal of Regional Studies", 2020, Vol.43, No 3, pp.73-91. Significant attention is given to rethinking of the cultural landscape phenomenon in Russian geographical science at the end of the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st centuries. The interdisciplinary linkages between cultural geography, other geographical and social sciences as well as humanities are analyzed in the context of the contemporary reinterpretations of the cultural landscape concept in Russia. The main directions of cultural landscape studies in Russian cultural geography are compared.

Ключевые слова: cultural geography, cultural landscape, cultural turn in geography, Russian geographical tradition, geographical images, local communities

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¹ **Introduction.** The landscape tradition is one of the oldest and most honorable in geography. The concept of landscape has played a stellar role in the development of the geographical science in general and physical geography in particular. At the same time, the landscape approach has gained overwhelming acceptance in human geography as well. This is particularly evident for cultural geography as a part of the human geography as a whole. Landscape as a general environment of a human being cannot be fully understood and realized outside its cultural context and be divorced from the scientific analysis of the fundamental links between local cultures and their surroundings. And it is no accident that the *concept of cultural landscape* is one of the most demanded and productive in cultural geography.

² The main purpose of the presented article is to provide a comprehensive overview of the scientific insights into cultural landscape phenomenon in the Russian cultural geography. This paper is written in developing ideas expressed in the author's article "Cultural-Landscape Studies outside Russia: National Traditions and Scientific Schools in the World Cultural Geography", published earlier in the "Pskov Journal of Regional Studies" [39]. So, the emergence and evolution of the cultural landscape concept in Russia at the end of the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st centuries is analyzed in this paper in the world-wide context, taking into account the impact of the leading foreign scientific schools upon the Russian geographical tradition of the landscape studies.

³ **Cultural Landscape in Russian Geographical Tradition: Path Dependence and New Trends.** The term "cultural landscape" has begun to be used in Russia in the early 20th century, since the publication of the famous L. Berg's article [1]. Lev Berg (1876–1950) was one of the founders of the landscape science in Russia, the follower and disciple of V. Dokuchaev. He came up with the concept of cultural landscape regardless of the scientific works of Otto Schlueter, who is considered to be a founder of the cultural landscape concept in the West-European geography [30]. The prominent Russian geographer V. P. Semenov-Tyan-Shansky (1870–1942), the contemporary of Lev Berg and the author of the outstanding work "A Region and Country", which was written in the humanistic traditions of anthropogeography [33], preferred the francophone term "paysage" as an equivalent for "landscape"; he has developed the typology of landscapes, based on specifics of their natural, cultural, settlement and economic patterns. It can be concluded that the Russian anthropogeographers were doing their cultural-landscape research in the pre-Soviet period and in the early Soviet times, in comparison with the West-European scientists (especially with German and French geographers), in the similar vein and simultaneously with them.

⁴ Unfortunately, at the cusp of the 1920–1930s, the anthropological approaches and traditions of the pre-revolutionary Russian geography were largely abandoned [38]. The few exceptions [2; 17; 31–34; et al.] could not fundamentally change the situation. Since the early 1930s, the Soviet economic geography focused primarily on the study of

settlement and territorial organization of the productive forces and, thus, largely distanced itself from the broader discussion of human and cultural issues [7].

⁵ The Russian landscape science moved away for a long time from the anthropological and cultural-geographical discourse and focused attention upon the natural landscapes, having made great strides in their studies and mapping (N. A. Gvozdetzky, N. A. Solntsev, A. G. Isachenko). After the Second World War the new term “anthropogenic landscape” was coined; it was scientifically developed by F. N. Mil’kov in the 1970s [22]. This term means the geographical landscape emerged under decisive impact of the human activity. Many Soviet geographers identified the cultural landscape with the anthropogenic one. Some other scientists interpreted the cultural landscape as a kind, a certain form, variety of the anthropogenic landscapes. According to the so-called appraisal approach, widely rooted in the Soviet and Post-Soviet physical geography, the term *cultural landscape* means the “positive”, “improved”, “harmonious”, “noble” anthropogenic landscape [11]. In spite of some differences in interpretations, all of them shared the view that cultural landscape should embrace its natural basis, transformed by anthropogenic impact, and the artificial environment including the engineering works and other man-made structures. The same point of view was supported in the Soviet economic geography [29, et al.].

⁶ The revival of Russian cultural geography at the end of the 20th century has entailed the considerable reassessment of the cultural landscape concept in Russia [24; 38]. The clear evidence of that trend was a permanent methodological turn towards understanding cultural landscape as a result of the co-creation of Man, Nature and Culture since the cusp of the 1980s–1990s. And this movement was initiated just in Russian cultural geography where the alternative paradigm of the cultural-landscape studies in comparison to the leading scientific schools of the Soviet physical geography had been developed. On the one hand, the Russian cultural geographers have turned their faces towards the scientific works of human geographers in Western countries; on the other hand, they followed the revived traditions of the classical Russian anthropogeography and methodological principles of national schools of social geography, strongly reshaped in the 1970s–1980s.

⁷ The first concept of cultural landscape developed within the Russian cultural geography was proposed by Yu. A. Vedenin [45]. According to Yu. A. Vedenin, cultural landscape is a phenomenon of noosphere, the multi-level cohesion of culture and landscape, integrated through energy and information flows under the crucial role of human activity; that’s why this treatment is known in Russian geography as the so-called “information model” (or the “noosphere model”) of cultural landscape. It is divided in interpretation of this scientist into various strata; the natural stratum and the cultural stratum are basic in this model. The cultural stratum, for its part, is divided into segments of material culture and spiritual culture, innovative culture and traditional culture, cultural heritage and living culture.

⁸ Yu. A. Vedenin played an important part in building the key scientific infrastructure for the cultural-landscape research in Russia from the point of view of the cultural geography, namely, from the epistemological attitude, alternative to that in physical geography. Thus, created in 1992, the Russian Research and Development Institute of Cultural and Nature Heritage n.a. D. S. Likhachev has established itself as a

full-fledged center of cultural-geographical and cultural-landscape research; Yu. A. Vedenin has been the head of that Institute throughout more than two decades. In 2004–2010, the Institute of Cultural and Nature Heritage published a six volume almanac called “Geohumanities” [9]. The almanac contained the works of top researchers in Russia, representing the entire spectrum of the most important research areas in the Russian human and cultural geography.

⁹ The Institute of Heritage stood at the origins of research in the field of the cultural-landscape differentiation of the Russian regions, developed significantly its concept, methodology and practice [43; 47, et al.]. It also provided a strong impetus to studies in the area of geography of arts and the importance of spiritual factors in evolution of cultural landscapes [8; 46, et al.], and promoted the applied scientific works focused on practical tasks associated with inclusion of cultural landscapes in the World Heritage UNESCO List [18; 48].

¹⁰ The other priority area of cultural-landscape research in the Post-Soviet Russia restores the scientific legacy of the “classic” cultural geography, traditions of Carl Sauer [28, et al.]. This scientific direction gives the interpretation of cultural landscape as a locality, the appearance of which shall be determined by a certain local social group; the specific features of cultural landscape reflect the cultural peculiarities of local communities. This scientific approach is presented in Russia, first of all, in writings of V.N. Kalutskov [14; 15] and his disciples; it is also focused on ethnic geographical patterns in cultural landscape and can be regarded as one of the most significant for Russia, taking into account the ethnic and cultural diversity of this country.

¹¹ The followers of this scientific direction give primacy in their studies to the cultural patterns of local communities in conjunction with natural landscapes, ethnicity and specifics of traditional land use. Some works of A. Sokolova, the geographer from Saint Petersburg, are also close to this scientific direction, being focused on multiple links between cultural landscape, ethnic groups, folk languages and local dialects [35]. Ethnic and cultural-geographical issues of landscape studies are also explicitly addressed in the monograph of M. V. Ragulina [25]; the author conceives the cultural landscape as an organic synthesis of locality, human activity, natural and cultural environment and geographical imagination. The second part of the same book is devoted to methods of the cultural-geographic regional synthesis and their approbation on example of Siberia.

¹² Cultural turn in contemporary human geography towards phenomenology, being extremely typical for the concepts of cultural landscape in the Western countries at the end of the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st centuries, has received in Russia less recognition [36]. The social geography in Russia, particularly in the Soviet times, experienced not so much influence from the human geography in Western countries, including the newest directions of cultural geography with its variety of alternative theoretical attitudes and scientific paradigms. The famous and fundamental works of Yi-Fu Tuan [40–42], D. Cosgrove [3; 4], E. Relph [26; 27] and other leaders of Western humanistic and critical cultural geography were not well-known to a broad circle of Russian geographers. The situation has changed at the end of the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st centuries; the phenomenological approach began to be used in

Russian cultural geography (in a different way and predominantly in local aspects). But nevertheless, the attempts to use it in cultural landscape studies have been up to now rather fragmented and scattered. So, for example, V. L. Kagansky is positioning his works devoted to cultural landscapes as “a landscape phenomenology of culture” [13], although some of his opponents argue that the respective point of view is quite uncertain. According to V. L. Kagansky, the distinction of “natural landscapes” and “cultural landscapes” is counterproductive; in his concept, each land plot, being the social milieu for a sustainable group of people, is a cultural landscape, if this plot is not only used practically, but also perceived as its own, native space for this group semantically and symbolically [12]. Phenomenological perception of landscape implies recognition of the intrinsic value and uniqueness of each site of the land surface. Cultural landscape is like text; its semantic field embraces both natural and socio-cultural elements; its decryption allows, in general terms, comprehension of meanings.

¹³ **Cultural Landscape as a Research Subject in Geohumanities.** Cultural landscape has become an important research topic since the end of the 20th century in the Post-Soviet Russian “*gumanitarnaya geografiya*” — the interdisciplinary subject area at the interface between geographical science and humanities. This term has been mainly used in Russia, with a variety of differing meanings. Some Russian geographers equate it with the *human geography* in general [10; 16]. A different interpretation was proposed by the Russian cultural scientist and geographer D.N. Zamyatin, his followers and colleagues, who regarded “*gumanitarnaya geografiya*” as a research direction focused on space representations, modeling and interpretations of geographical images, literature text’s and artworks’ analysis [9; 19; 23; 49; 50, et al.]. Understood in that way, “*gumanitarnaya geografiya*” can be translated in English as “*geohumanities*” [21]. Geohumanities don’t cover the total subject area of cultural geography, but, at the same time, their several research tasks are rather related to the fields of cultural anthropology, history, literature and arts, but not to the geographical science itself.

¹⁴ *Cultural landscape* is regarded in Russian geohumanities as one of the basic concepts, along with *geographical image*, *spatial (regional and local) identity* and *local myth*. But the research approach to the landscape studies in geohumanities is special and specific. The emphasis is placed here on images of landscapes, their interpretations and representations, concept of *Genius Loci*, landscape mythology, landscape palimpsest, landscape semantics, sanctuaries and other sacral loci in landscape. Finally, in semiotic concepts cultural landscape is represented as a system of matrices and codes of culture, expressed in signs and symbols which are directly connected with localities and local communities [20].

¹⁵ The relatively new agenda for cultural-landscape studies in Russia has been outlined due to the growing interaction between mass culture and landscape. This research area has become very popular in cultural geography in Western countries since the end the 20th century [5; 6, et al], but in Russia and other Post-Soviet states it is taking only the first steps in geohumanities and in geography. The term “mass culture” conveys the idea that such kind of culture emerges spontaneously from the masses themselves like popular art did in more recent times, before Modernity. But the impact of mass culture on landscapes is extremely controversial and insufficiently explored [44]. On the one hand, the radical changes in everyday life practices strengthen the

landscape mosaics in space and place; on the other hand, they often entail deformation and degradation of landscapes as a consequence of the growing anthropogenic load and break of historical tradition under pressure of the consumer society.

¹⁶ **.Conclusion.** Concept of cultural landscape is one of the drivers and growth poles in the contemporary cultural geography. The cultural-landscape studies have great practical value and applied importance. The results of scientific research and publications in that area provide feedback on trends in public opinion about the role of cultural landscapes in shaping regional and local identities, human creativity, preservation of historical heritage, natural and social environment.

¹⁷ The expansion of geography into the subject areas of humanities and social sciences (including, for example, social and cultural anthropology, sociology, ethnology, social psychology, etc.), as well as the introduction of models and methodological paradigms from social sciences and humanities into geography are directly reflected in evolution of scientific views on cultural landscape and variety of its concepts. Of course, that in itself is positive. However, this kind of interdisciplinary interaction is not without serious implications for geographical science. It means, first of all, the threat for cultural geography to dissolve into related sciences and to lose, to some extent, its scientific identity. The cultural landscape is increasingly becoming the subject of anthropological and socio-cultural studies while the previously traditionally reviewed landscape links with natural environment are slowly fading into the background. In this regard, not surprisingly, the newest cultural geography revives the traditions of the old anthropogeography and deals with the complex land studies in the thinking about geographical images and characteristic features of different countries, regions and localities.

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