## Historical Settlements in Russia: The Socia-Cultural Aspects

t is self-evident that the formation of historical settlements is associated with the development of components of nature and landscapes. The process has gone on for several centuries, but at the turn of the 20th century it acquired new, rapidly changing forms resulting from the scientific and technological progress, the process of modernization, the expansion of the world market, etc. This, in its turn, fostered the development of mass culture inherent to the contemporary world and unifying both, regional and ethnic cultures. Such phenomena are most pronounced in cities and agglomerations and in their architectural and landscape features. The process also touched upon historical settlements and their territories, with their large-scale standard constructions, including a great number of multistoreyed panelled "bedroom" blocks of houses. Such standard buildings inundated many cities and towns in Russia, Europe and the USA, some of which are of historical value. Such blocks of houses are a materialized symbol of worldwide urbanization, commercialization and cultural unification.

Undoubtedly an important factor in the development of towns and villages is the natural landscape as a territorial complex limited by natural boundaries with a certain appearance; a locality with a uniform geological structure, relief, climate and a specific combination of hydrogeological conditions, soils and biocenoses, all of which are vital resources for human life. As we know, natural landscapes are usually divided into smaller natural-territorial complexes - localities, natural landmarks, geological facies. At present, virgin lands are practically nonexistent. Such landscapes are not yet transformed by man and are capable of natural self-development. Anthropogenic landscape differs in that its formation was crucially impacted by man's economic activities (for instance, development of farming lands, rural and urban settlements, etc.). Though created by man, they develop in compliance with the laws of nature and are a genetic series of natural landscapes. Cultural landscape is a variety of anthropogenic landscape, it has been shaped with a certain purpose and is characterised with functional and aesthetic features favourable to man.1

Cultural landscapes can be classified on the basis of different features. One of them is the degree of aggressiveness which describes, for the most part, the interaction of anthropogenic factors (industry, mining activities, housing, recreation, etc.), and the degree of stability, i.e. the interaction between natural features of landscapes. Here, one deals not only with aggressive, but also with slightly aggressive landscapes (certain agricultural lands, forest management complexes, etc.), or with non-aggressive ones (sanctuaries, protected territories, open-air museums, certain recreational zones).<sup>2</sup>

Referring to cultural landscapes as monuments of history and culture, one should not overlook their diversity, since they include agricultural landscapes, forest management, water economy, industrial, and militaristically used landscapes. Conservation of such monuments differs from the protection of, say, architectural objects.

The system of cultural landscape conservation should rely on three principles: territorial integrity, that is, preservation of certain boundaries; functionality, that is, maintenance of their socio-cultural significance; and ecological criteria, i.e. interaction with the environment.<sup>3</sup>

The analysis of the appearance and the type of development of landscapes reveals the following:

- specific features of landscape development, based on natural features of a certain historic and cultural region, on ethnic and social elements of culture;
- dependence between the type of cultural landscape and agricultural traditions and practices used in different regions and in different historical periods;
- socio-cultural and natural context of a landscape: aesthetic, i.e. affecting the well-being and moods of people; preserving and creating in people a certain perception of nature and the world, and of one's motherland;
- it is an indicator describing the quality and level of culture of people inhabiting a certain region in different periods of history.

The analysis of historical data suggests that the process of land development and expansion of anthropogenic impact on land-scapes has never been continuous and irreversible, but consisted of certain stages, –periods of development. As to the territorial aspect, each stage had its own system of settlement, and its own pattern of developed and virgin lands. The intensity and succession of such periods depended on recessions and upsurges of economic activities of the population, on climate, geography of the area and the level of advancement of technology and farming practices and the like.<sup>8</sup>

When discussing the conservation of natural and cultural originality of historical settlements, with due account of regional features, one has to comprehend the significant principles in the formation of specific historical features in the architectural and landscape environment of settlements, and mechanisms of its formation in time. They can be analysed at the regional town planning level or at the local level, - certain zones, estates or monuments. The first case can include studying the stages of colonization of natural environment, patterns of town planning and landscape formation in settlements at the level of historic and cultural regions. It is equally important to take account of the socio-cultural typology of settlements and the different impact there of on landscapes, with due account of different socio-cultural groups inhabiting them in different historical periods. The second case consists in analysing, in different architectural and landscape environments, the proportion between the objects of the past and the present, situated in special zones, blocks or parts of settlements (fig. 1).

## Regional socio-cultural investigations

It is evident that both, historical settlements existing in the context of cultural regions, and their boundaries change in the process of development. Such regions act as geographical, landscape, economic and other complexes. It is well-known that the formation of a stable cultural community requires a stable geographic environment. Geographers have established a

certain relationship between the outlines of physio-geographic and landscape boundaries and those of historical and cultural regions. Such boundaries can be revealed, among other things, through the analysis of vernacular architecture.<sup>5</sup>

The geographic environment and landscape have been an important factor in the development of agriculture, crafts, constructional skills and other region-specific occupations of the population; they were of primary importance when selecting the site and design of settlements, they affected building skills of carpenters and architectural and artistic skills of the people which will be dealt with below.

When discussing the regional analysis level, one should stress the socio-cultural typology of settlements and regions. This is an important factor which is the key to understanding the development of their architectural and landscape environment. It is suggested that such typology be discussed on the basis of the following dimensions:

Socio-functional: agricultural (farming, cattle-breeding, plant-growing, etc.); commercial; military (including settlements attached to military camps); industrial (metal-working and mining, textile, those attached to nuclear power plants, etc.); craftsmen and artisans, including artistic skills (Palekh, Kholuy, Zhostovo); settlements attached to monasteries; palace and estate complexes, owned by the government and agencies; resorts, including seaside, "dacha's" and other areas; settlements of fishermen, horse-drivers and railroadmen; tourist complexes, including museum-reserves; timber logging and machine-working sites. Settlements of mixed polyfunctional type are most widely spread. Along with the above-mentioned dimensions, one should also take account of:

- 1. Ethnic characteristics: ethnic minorities, foreign people; 2. Type of land ownership and management: state-owned; palace lands; privately owned, including landlords' lands; church; community or collectively-owned lands, etc.;
- 3. Different ecosystems: alpine, forest, lowland (riparian, lacustrine and water-divide areas), littoral, etc.

Such analysis of historical settlements and historical and cultural zones should aim at identifying major parameters to be studied, like the time of their emergence and their duration; the impact of administrative, state, political and economic decrees and acts on the conservation and formation of the architectural and landscape environment; causes of alteration and dynamics of changes of their functional components; their impact on landscapes; the quality of cultural milieu in such settlements; specific patterns of landscape development in different types of settlements associated with the prevailing types of ownership and management.<sup>7</sup>

Certain historical case studies of the above-mentioned sociocultural types of villages and settlements illustrate some regular features in the development of landscapes and in shaping of their architectural and spacial environment. Farming and cattle-breeding settlements in Russia are, as a rule, situated on banks of rivers and lakes, next to flood lands, and are surrounded by open fields, plowlands and meadows. The shape and extent of plowlands are everywhere indicative of the prevailing system of management. Those can be fields: distant, outlying or close; hay lands with various types of meadows; pastures with different modes of utilization (near the village, in the forest, special places, grazing on stubble, etc.); forests plowed or otherwise, hunting, commercial, etc.

Seasonal settlements for haymakers and hunters (for instance, v. Khornemskaya on the Pinega) were built in forests, up

to 30 km away from the main village, on the high bank of a stream. They were used as shelters for haymakers in summer, and for hunters in winter. These huts without chimneys are still used by peasants for their needs. Like the village itself, the huts were built by the community, hence, joint equitable utilization and repairs thereof, as well as the protection of the adjoining territory (fig. 2).

Market villages in Russia were, as a rule, polyfunctional which was reflected in their architectural and landscape environment. Fairs were their intrinsic feature. In certain regions the annual number of fairs reached a hundred. This can be attributed not only to cultural and economic conditions, but also to the physio-climatic characteristics of Russia. The distance between settlements spread over a vast territory reached 80-500km (while in Europe of the 19th century settlements were 10-30km apart). This fact inhibited contacts between villages, affected the quality of roads, etc. In such a situation, the peasants did not need to get to towns to do business which predetermined the development of internal markets in certain regions. This was, and still is, one of the reasons of a slow urbanization and growth of towns, as well as of the emergence of a dispersed distribution pattern of industry and trade. This also explains why many settlements still remain "half-towns - halfvillages" (like Plyos on the Volga).

The development of natural and landscape environment in such settlements has specific features. They lay at the crosssection of major administrative and trade roads or on river banks and served as mainstays of colonization. In the Russian North they became "pogosts" - administrative, religious and cultural centres of the region. Their layout was more complicated as compared with other settlements. The market square which was also the scene of public merry-making, could be situated either at the edge of the village or at the centre, which can be seen in the Ivanovo region, and sometimes they lay outside the village, like in v. Mola, Vologda province5, 11 (fig. 3). It is of interest to look at the social stratification in that village. Most peasants lived in houses lining the streets in three rows, while well-to-do peasants and merchants lived at the end of the village, near the church. Running perpendicular to the main streets were two rows of houses of the clergy (the priest, the deacon, etc.), with the parish school nearby, and then the market square with shops and stands along its perimeter. In Cherevkovo village in Archangelsk province, the market rows and squares ran along the main road in the centre of the village parallel to the river bank. Storehouses, granaries and warehouses lined both the embankment and market streets. The pier was also there. The church was the principal architectural dominant of the village.

The situation was different in *military settlements*, which existed in Russian frontier areas as early as in the 16th – 17th centuries. The first special military settlements date back to the Alexandre I period. They were widely spread before and after the war with Napoleon in 1812. After the war, Russia found itself in a difficult economic situation, and it became necessary to find a new way to staff and support a large army without bringing down its size. People living in such areas combined farming with military service at the frontier. The Emperor also made use of the West European experience when reorganizing the armed forces. However, while in Europe such settlements were organized to defend the frontiers and to train military personnel, in Russia they were polyfunctional: They also served as army's provisions and logistics base. The idea to build such set-

tlements was developed by A.A. Arakcheyev, and it was envisaged to create a belt of military settlements from the northwest of Russia (Novgorod) to the Black Sea.<sup>15</sup>

All public farming activities were done jointly in such settlements: by military settlers-farmers and their help. At first they combined farming with military training; later on drills were cancelled for periods of intensive farming work in spring, autumn and in summer. The system of military settlements was closed to strangers, in view of their attitude to the army. The settlers could also go in for trade and crafts as long as they did not interfere with farming activities.

The organization of military settlements in certain regions of the country brought forth significant changes in landscape, and a new cultural landscape was shaped as a result of their economic activities. As settlements grew, they developed virgin lands, thus increasing the extent of plowlands. In northern settlements near Novgorod, swamps were drained and unproductive forests were cleared and replaced by plowlands. Settlements also brought about changes in the development of agriculture in the south. While cattle-breeding used to be predominant there before, with the emergence of such settlements the accent shifted to land cultivation. Reforestation activities were undertaken at the Kherson military settlements.

Large-scale construction in military settlements, especially near Novgorod, changed the outlook of rural settlements, and newly-built settlements appeared on the maps. They were built on principles of regularity and compactness, with elements of town planning in rural areas. Military settlements had a better communication system than anywhere else in Russia. The roads they built were close to highways in their technical characteristics. In the Novgorod region, much attention was attached to waterways and development of water transport. Roads and river crossings in such military districts were always in good condition. Military settlements in the Ukraine had silkworm plantations. They also grew orchards and preserved monuments of garden-and-park architecture (Sofiyka – Tsarina's gardens). There was also a sheep breeding centre there.

As we see, the level of agricultural production in military settlements and territories was at that time higher than in neighbouring territories. The authorities of settlements introduced advanced experience in farming, plant-growing, etc. Due to well-organized management, the high expenses for the construction of such settlements were completely covered by their revenues. However, in 1857 these settlements ceased to exist and the reasons of their liquidation are still unknown.

The next to be considered here are monastery settlements. Monasteries appeared in Russia in the 17th century and were most widely spread in the 16th - 17th centuries. There were 76 monasteries in the Russian north in the 17th century. Many of them were built not far from towns, but later - in the woods, farther from the commotion of mundane life. Originally, monasteries had religious and cultural-enlightening functions and later - those of defense, colonization and management. Monasteries loaned money not only to peasants and city dwellers, but also to the government. Thus they became large landowners, with lands and villages all over Russia. The alternation and overlapping of monastery and state lands gave rise to conflict. Many goods produced by peasants in monasteries turned into commercial capital, and monasteries acquired a new function - trade. They had their missions (podvories) in many towns. Some monasteries became centres of fairs (Makariev monastery on the Volga). It was only during the Peter I period that they lost their lands to the state.

Speaking about cultural landscapes pertaining to monasteries, one should stress that it was only by chance that many of them lived till now without too much change (the Valaam), Solovki, Ferapont's and some others). 14 For many decades monks tried to keep them in shape, at the same time fulfilling their original functions. Many monasteries had apple orchards, medicinal herbs plantations (mint, sage, Artemisia, etc.) and grew berries. Gardening was practiced everywhere, and even in the north monks grew melons and water-melons (Solovki, Verkola). There were dendrological gardens with many varieties of flowers, coniferous and deciduous parks.

Agricultural landscapes around monasteries were shaped gradually and they reflect, in a straightforward way, the terrain features and the structure of practiced economy. On lowlands landscapes are of a larger scale, while on hill slopes they have smaller forms. Special supporting walls were built to protect the ground from destruction.

Technical-engineering landscapes can be seen both inside and outside of monastery walls. Swamps were drained, canals were made between islands (is. Solovki), roads and paths were laid. Industrial and economic activities conducted by monasteries, such as extraction of limestone, granite, etc., also affected anthropogenic landscapes. Fisheries called for the construction of dykes and dams. Inside and outside monasteries there also exist memorial landscapes: parks and alleys in cemeteries, oriented towards chapels or graves of prominent clergymen; squares and worshipping places with vow crosses.

Certain features of architecture and landscapes in and around monasteries and attached settlements demonstrate non-acceptance of some geometrical designs and their spacial arrangement. Here, one can single out two major principles: blending of architecture (temples, houses, monastery walls and towers) with nature ("natural garden") and dominance of architecture in the landscape ("architectural garden"). This case figuratively reflects relations between man and nature.

One can go on to analyse other types of settlements, such as industrial villages, settlements of fishermen (fig. 4), craftsmen and artisans, and so on. In doing so, one has to analyse how different ethnic and social groups developed landscapes. As we noticed, different groups have their own ways to develop various landscape elements, such as hills and river valleys. For instance, in Dagestan mountain areas, settlements grow from foothills upwards, while in Israel settlements step down from the top into the valley. The same specific features can be likewise discovered in the design of settlements. For instance, research shows that a free distribution of residential and agricultural buildings is observed in areas inhabited by non-Russian population: Karels, Veps, Komi, Finns, etc., while Russians living in northern lands build their houses in rows, so that façades of their houses face the river or the road and form streets. In Karelia, inhabited by Russians and Karel-Finns, one can observe both types of construction in one settlement (v. Korza).9 The village consists of the old part built in an irregular way and the new part built under the influence of Russian traditions and having a distinctly rhythmic structure.

Diagrams describing temporal variations of one's perception of vernacular architecture show changes in the degree of density of architectural space as one moves along the village street. Research workers claim that the diagram represents one's perception of a settlement as an oscillatory process. Diagrams

describing Russian settlements can be, on the whole, characterised as more regular than those of the Karel-Finns.

The analysis of archives and remaining monuments of vernacular architecture reveal the following: When different strata of population, the well-to-do or the poor, moved to a new place, they had different ways of landscape developing and formation of culture. If the migrants came from a lower social stratum, they assimilated with the indigenous culture. In the other case, they began to develop the landscape and the local environment in their own way, thus creating a cultural milieu of their own. This can be seen in historical data, for instance, during the colonisation of the Carpathians in Slovakia. The Ukrainian Lemks came together with Valakhs in the 16th century as large well-organized communities: with voivodes (military commanders), princes and clergy. They created a new

insight into formation mechanisms of architectural-landscape and cultural environment in Russian settlements. The research yielded data indicating that the formation of the settlements is in this or that way connected with the history and development of local influencial families and industrial clans. This is non-ambiguously reflected in the general plans of the village and the town and of their parts, in the interior of houses and farmsteads. Changes and transformations of family relations, way of life or the social status of, say, a peasant family, necessitated that buildings be reconstructed accordingly. This gradually altered the entire settlement: families split and moved to new places within the settlement as long as the surrounding territory permitted it.

In v. Verkola, where an in situ museum is being organized now, people first settled in the lower part ("the bottom") which

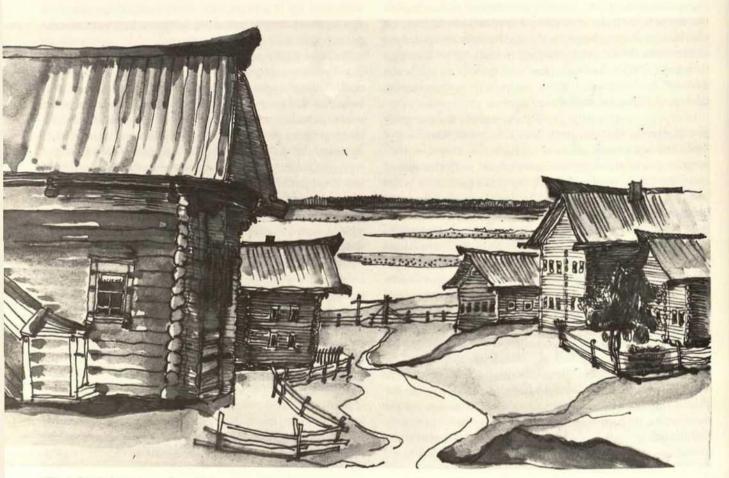


Fig. 1. Sojala village, province of Pivega, Northern Russia

economic and cultural environment in a new geographical and landscape region of the Carpathians which later became a historical and cultural zone. Thus, they retained their traditions by preserving their specific approach to landscape development and formation of the architectural and spacial structure of settlements. The research has shown that, if the poor prevail in the social and cultural milieu, after two centuries one observes a certain impoverishment of the architectural and landscape environment and monuments, including those of the upper stratum of society.

Our attempts to analyse the historical socio-cultural situation and genealogy of families in v. Verkola (Archangelsk region) and in a small town, Yelabuga (Tatarstan) provide some was most attractive in terms of landscape: lying on the south river bank, close to flood meadows, protected by the forest from the north and commanding a beautiful view of the country. Nowadays, certain zones of historical landscape have been identified here: hills, fields, paths, trees. The preserved monuments of vernacular architecture (residential houses, various accompanying buildings, farmsteads) and historical materials indicate that it was the most business-like and well-to-do families who lived there. They were named "kulaks" in the Soviet time, and in the 1930s all of them were done away with, and their houses were used for public needs: as village Soviets, kindergartens, clubs and the like. The middle and poor peasants lived at the other end of the village ("the top"). They

had come with the second wave of migrants. Land was rather scarce there and of inferior quality, being more removed from the river, etc. Until now, even though the "visible" links between generations have been severed and social stratification has been disturbed, the peasants still retain the feeling of superiority and importance towards the people who used to live and still live in the upper part of the village.

Discussing the stages in the formation of the architectural and landscape environment in towns of Russia, one must briefly describe historical stages of town planning and building.

Stage I lasts into the end of the 18th century. The most attractive feature of town planning of that period is picturesqueness. Town blocks were irregular in shape and were in tune with the landscape and relief of the country. Elements of

landscapes looked like a fortress or a monastery which was later supplemented by settlements of craftsmen.

Stage II of town planning and building – regular – began to spread in Russia in the 18th century, with the introduction of elements of classicism into the urban environment, which produced a certain effect on town planning theories and projects. The main purpose of projects at that time was to reconcile the historical landscape structure of Russian towns with new principles of town planning. 13

As one studies the spacial architectural-landscape structure of small towns of that time (like Yelabuga), one is sure to notice that different social groups had certain patterns of settling and developing landscapes. Administrative buildings, houses of nobility and clergy, estates of rich merchants stood on the embankment, in the most beautiful part of the town, having an ex-



Fig. 2. Open air museum Malye Kareli, province of Archangelsk, village sector "Mezen"

nature, such as streams, fields and hills formed part of towns. Fortresses, monasteries, churches, chapels were the principal dominants in towns. Houses were, for the most part, wooden and remain so in many towns till now. They were built at a distance one from another, with a free space between them left for vegetation and for ensuring a good view of adjacent land-scapes, streets, churches. This was stipulated in the "Town Act" in the 10th/11th centuries. The streets were typically oriented towards churches, monastery towers, belltowers. This presents a distinction from west European towns, where the market square, with the church and the town hall, seemed to be in contrast with the narrow streets entering the square. Many Russian towns at first stages of growth and development of

it to the river and open territories. Rich merchants and manufacturers set examples in the construction of estates, with gardens, flower-beds, vegetation and small architectural forms, drawing, in their turn, from the style of capital cities. The middle merchantry lived in the adjoining streets, where they also had their shops, stalls, warehouses and inns. Merchants of the third guild lived in the street which was a post road; petty bourgeois lived northward farther from the river and gradually mixed with artisans who had a lower social status. At the outskirts were peasants' farmsteads with an access to fields and arable lands.

Such pattern of settlement could be observed in many market towns of Russia in the 19th century. Town plans also reflect the

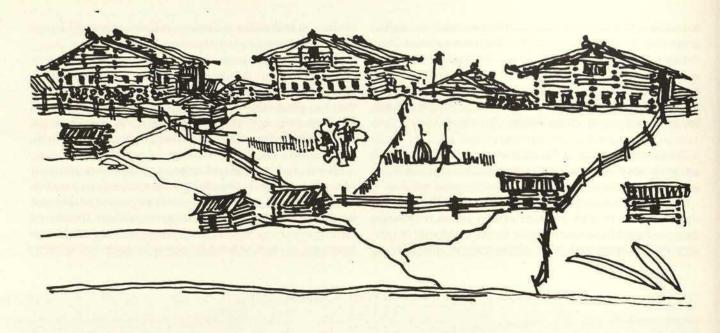


Fig. 4. Zaicevo Village, view from the river, province of Pinega, Northern Russia

distribution of ethnic groups and foreigners: Tartars, Germans, etc., who formed communities of their own. They developed territories and landscapes in their own specific ways. Such settlements had public buildings (mosques, Catholic churches, synagogues, schools (madreseh)) and residential blocks with nation-specific features. They differ from each other in the number of storeys in buildings and their density, in the design and decorative arrangement of their yards. For instance, Tartar gardens had a specific design, with a pavilion as a necessary part there of. Such buildings and monuments shaped the local stylistic pattern of the settlement, with their specific architectural and landscape forms.

Local-scale investigations into the formation of the architectural and landscape environment of historical settlements consist in analysing the development of certain parts of territories, including the building of churches, chapels and monasteries, estates of the nobility, residential and agricultural complexes both in rural and urban environment, which will be briefly discussed below.

The placement of objects of worship has a great role to play in the volume-spacial arrangement of settlements, having specific landscape-related features and diversity. They can be placed at the end of villages and towns: on the edge of a river cliff, at the cemetery, in the forest or in the field; at the end of settlements; in the row of residential houses or in the square. This depends on geographical conditions of the country, on traditions and ethnic features of the population. They were changing in different historical-cultural regions, which, among other things are dependent on landscape characteristics. For instance, in the basin of the S.Dvina they stood on open river banks, while in the basin of the Mezen, where arable lands were scarce, they were typically placed in the midst of settlements.

One should not underestimate the impact of surrounding landscape and natural and climatic conditions on the design of peasants' farmsteads. This can be illustrated in many regions of Russia. For instance, on river Mezen, due to deficit of farmlands, people had to settle in gullies and steep river banks

(fig. 2). They had to build all kinds of supporting structures to fix soils on slopes, where they built barns, bath-houses, ice-houses, wells and the like, thus forming something like an embankment.

The specific of landscapes and location of farmsteads to a great extent predetermine volume-spacial methods of their arrangement. One of them is placing auxiliary buildings next to the house and around an open yard enclosed by a hedge. Such farmsteads can be encountered in many regions of Russia. Their architectural-landscape structure protected them from strong winds and snow drifts and created a comfortable habitat commeasurable with man. Each region had their specific way to plant trees, vegetables and fruits, which made settlements and individual farmsteads look unlike any other.

Auxiliary constructions – barns, ice-houses, bath-houses, wells, gates, fences, mills, bridges, etc. – might be different by force of the geological structure of the country, its hydrogeological conditions, etc., traditional handling of landscapes, economic conditions and traditions of land-use. For instance, when designing a bridge across a river, account was taken of its velocity and other specific features of its streamflow. On the Onega, they often built bridges with starlings capable of withstanding the pressure of rapidly flowing water and ice at springtime.

The architectural and landscape arrangement of estates of the nobility, such as Kuskovo, Archangelskoye and others might be another subject for discussion, but we shall not deal with it here. Suffice it to say that natural environment there merges with man-made landscapes, parks, ponds, fountains and other architectural constructions to form an ensemble. Nowadays, museum-reserves have been organised in many of such complexes.

## Conclusions

Thus, the architectural and landscape environment is an important component of the cultural milieu of historical settlements. The characteristic and specific features of natural and historical man-made landscapes have a historical and cultural value not only because of their historical significance, but also because they are keepers of the nations' experience in dealing with nature and in developing space and territories. Destabilization of landscapes' structures and deterioration of their outlook are usually indicative of mismanagement of nature, including the construction of various architectural objects.

The conducted analysis of socio-cultural development of landscapes both at the regional and local levels allows us to make certain conclusions: A substantial role is played by natural characteristics of settlements pertaining to historicalcultural regions, which have their own cultural characteristics. The way of life of people inhabiting various socio-cultural and functional types of settlements affects and shapes the architectural-landscape environment. Ethnic, or rather, anthropological characteristics of people developing a certain territory, are important factors in the development of urban and rural environment; the social and class make-up of population, their traditions, occupations, etc. are also important; certain objects of settlements are components of the landscapes and form one architectural and landscape complex. Hence, when assessing landscape resources, one has to bear in mind all of the above-mentioned components of the socio-cultural milieu which are aesthetically and culturally valuable.

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Fig. 3. General plan of the village of Mola, Totemski region, province of Wologodskaia, Northern Russia according to records by N. Miroliubowa, 1899: 1. Church, 2. House of the workers, 3. House of the director, 4. Town hall, 5. Clergymen's houses, 6. House of the widows of the priests, 7. School, 8. Market place, 9. Shops, 10. Workshop and storehouse, 11. Booth, 12. Inn, 13. Merry-go-round.

