

Building a Common Past

World Heritage in Russia under Transformation,
1965-2000





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A Note on Transliteration and Translation

This study adheres to the system of transliteration used by the Library of Congress. Because many of the Russian names featuring in the study were transcribed differently in the referenced sources (e.g., A. G. Khalturin appears alternatively as Chalturin, Halturin and Haltourine), other more familiar English transcriptions of Russian names are not used. Differences in transcribed names and places in the sources have been retained. Citations in Russian have been translated into English with the original Russian transliteration provided in footnotes; the same procedure applies to French sources. Titles of archival sources in Russian are only provided in English translation for reader-friendly reasons.

Given the international scope of the subject-matter of this study, precise translation is often not possible because of the lack of equivalent terms in other languages. The name of institutions, legislative instruments and concepts in Russian convey connotations that differ from those of equivalent English terms.¹ Therefore, in many cases, the aim is not to arrive at an exact translation; rather it is to reveal these connotations and their embeddedness within the Russian discourse and the Soviet and Russian state systems. Russian notions (e.g., *pa-miatnik*) are deployed with an English translation in brackets upon first mention in order to avoid any confusion of the Russian discourse with the notions expressed in English (in this case *monument*). To ensure presentation of the text in a reader-friendly way, English translations of the names of institutions and programmes are provided with the original Russian name in brackets upon first mention. In the case of legislative instruments, only the English names are provided in the text, while the original Russian names of these documents can be found in Annex E titled ‘List of cited legal documents enacted by the USSR, RSFSR and RF’.

¹ See A. K. R. Kiralfy, ‘The Soviet Civil Codes and Subordinate Legislation’, in *Codification in the Communist World. Symposium in Memory of Zsolt Szirmai*, edited by Ferdinand J. M. Feldbrugge (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1975), 177–184, here 178.

The historical account of the process of inscribing sites in the UNESCO World Heritage List also entails the use of different names for the same sites depending on whether references in the study are to the names of the buildings and sites in question, the different titles of nominations submitted by the State Party and adjusted by international bodies, or to the ascribed names of the final UNESCO World Heritage sites. In order to distinguish between these different names, the official names of UNESCO World Heritage sites are provided in italics (e.g., *Church of the Ascension, Kolomenskoye*), while the names of nominated sites are set off in quotation marks (e.g., ‘Architectural-archaeological and natural complex of “Kolomenskoye”’). No distinguishing marks are used for the names of the buildings and sites in question (e.g., Church of the Ascension).

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Abbreviations

AIESEE	International Association for South-East European Studies (Association internationale d'études du Sud-Est européen)
AN SSSR	USSR Academy of Sciences (Akademiiia nauk SSSR)
BICER	Baikal International Centre for Ecological Research
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
FIJET	World Federation of Travel Journalists and Writers (Fédération Internationale des Journalistes et Ecrivains du Tourisme)
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GlavUOP	Main Administration for the Protection, Restoration and Use of Monuments of History and Culture (Glavnoe upravlenie po okhrane, ispol'zovaniuu i restavratsii pamiatnikov istorii i kul'tury)
Giprogor	State Institute for the Design of Cities (Gosudarstvennyi institut proektirovaniia gorodov)
Goskompriroda	USSR State Committee for the Protection of Nature (Gosudarstvennyi komitet SSSR po okhrane prirody)
Gostroi	State Committee for Construction (Gosudarstvennyi komitet SSSR po delam stroitel'stva)
GUOP	Main Administration for the Protection of Monuments (Glavnoe upravlenie okhrany pamiatnikov)
IASDSC	International Association for the Study and Dissemination of Slav Cultures (alternatively in sources to be found with the abbreviation of the French name Association internationale pour l'étude et la diffusion des cultures slaves (AIEDCS) or of the Russian name Mezhdunarodnaia assotsiatsiia po izucheniiu i rasprostraneniui slavianskikh kul'tur (MAIRSK))
IASCCA	International Association for the Study of the Cultures of Central Asia (Mezhdunarodnaia assotsiatsiia po izucheniiu kul'tur Tsentral'noi Azii (MAIKTsA))
ICOM	International Council of Museums
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites

ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
IFESCCO	International Foundation for Educational, Scientific and Cultural Co-operation (Mezhdunarodnyi fond gumanitornogo sotrudnichestva gosudarstv-uchastnikov SNG MFGS)
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
KASSR	Karelian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
MAB	Man and the Biosphere
NABU	German Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (Naturschutzbund Deutschland)
Narkompros	People's Commissariat for Education (Narodnyi komissariat prosveshcheniia)
RAN	Russian Academy of Sciences (Rossiiskaia akademiia nauk)
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
SSOD	Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Contacts (Soiuz sovetskikh obshchestv druzhby i kul'turnykh sviazei s zarubezhnymi stranami)
TASSR	Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VOKS	All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (Vsesoiuznoe Obshchestvo Kul'turnoi Sviazi s zagranitse)
VOOP	All-Russian Society for the Protection of Nature (Vserossiiskoe obshchestvo okhrany prirody)
VOOPliK	All-Russian Society for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments (Vserossiiskoe obshchestvo okhrany pamiatnikov istorii i kul'tury)
VTsSPS	All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (Vsesoiuznyi tsentral'nyi sovet professional'nykh soiuзов)
WDCD	World Decade for Cultural Development

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1. Introduction

1.1 Building a Common Past

Kizhi ... this word should stand in one line with such names like Acropolis and Rome, Samarkand and Paris, Novgorod and Kiev. It is here, on this tiny island, in the middle of the boundless dark forests of Zaonezh'ie that wonderful, irreproducible works of architecture stand. Wooden churches and farmhouses, made by Russian carpenters, became masterpieces of world architecture.¹

These lines appear in the opening passages of a tourist guidebook published in 1968 about Kizhi Island, which is located in what is now the Karelian Republic in Northwest Russia. Aleksandr V. Opolovnikov, the author of the text, was an architectural historian and restorer who specialised in wooden architecture characteristic of the Russian North. His restoration work in the 1950s laid the foundations for the displays of the Kizhi State Open-Air Museum of History, Architecture and Ethnography that was opened in 1966 for the purpose of preserving this architecture. In the European tradition of open-air museums, wooden buildings such as farmhouses, churches, sheds and bathhouses were disassembled and moved from the surrounding region of Zaonezh'ie to the small island complex in Lake Onega. As the only original structure located on the island, the so-called Kizhi Pogost ('enclosure' in English), comprising two churches and a bell tower that date back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, has become one of the most iconic Russian heritage sites (Fig. 1). The open-air museum on the island of Kizhi was one of several museum-reserves established during this period. It featured centrally in public discourses and institutionalisation efforts in the late Soviet Union, demonstrating the increas-

1 'Kizhi . . . Èto slovo dolzhno stoiat' v odnom riadu s takimi nazvaniiami, kak Akropol' i Rim, Samarkand i Parizh, Novgorod i Kiev. Ved' zdes', na malen'kom ostrovke, sredi bespredel'nykh sumrachnykh lesov Zaonezh'ia stoiat udivitel'nye, nepovtorimye sozdaniia arkhitektury. Dereviannye tserkvi i izby, srublennye russkimi plotnikami, stali shedebrami mirovogo zodchestva'. The Russian names of Kyiv and Samarqand have been retained in the translation. A. V. Opolovnikov, *Kizhi* (Weimar: Landesdruckerei Thüringen, 1970), 5.

ing concern of Soviet authorities relating to the protection and study of cultural heritage.

Opolovnikov's guidebook presents the structure, located on a small island on the northern Russian periphery, as a masterpiece of world architecture. In doing so, it introduces the reader and potential visitor to one of the core ideas in international heritage conservation that has prevailed from the 1960s onwards and that constitutes the subject matter of this book. Opolovnikov praises the sublime character of the site, expressed by its remoteness and the pristine nature surrounding the architectural complex. At the same time, his description transcends the boundless dark forests of the region and positions Kizhi among other well-known heritage sites located in various countries and spanning more than two millennia. Kizhi is portrayed as the tangible endpoint of an evolutionist account of world history that begins in the empires of classical antiquity. The outstanding value of the architectural complex on Kizhi dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is deemed equal to that of the acclaimed architectural structures of Ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, the Mughal Empire, the medieval metropolis of Paris as well as the medieval state formations of Kievan Rus'² and the Novgorod Republic that preceded the Russian Empire.

Until today, all of the sites mentioned by Opolovnikov have been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List and they now literally 'stand in one line', exhibiting the Convention's basic criterion of outstanding universal value by fulfilling at least one of the ten criteria determining the inclusion of cultural and natural properties.³ Among them, the Soviet sites located in Samarqand, Novgorod, Kyiv and on the island of Kizhi were only considered for inclusion in this List following the facilitation of international exchanges by the policies of *perestroika* in the late 1980s. Amidst these political changes, the three Permanent

2 Because the sources on the history of Russia are pivotal in this study, the Russian name of the period of the Kievan Rus' has been retained.

3 With the coming into force of the World Heritage Convention in 1975, the nomination of sites by the member states to the Convention and their successive inscriptions by the World Heritage Committee has been ongoing since 1978. The criteria for the inclusion of cultural and natural properties in the World Heritage List have been defined in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. In 2004, the six criteria for cultural properties and the four criteria for natural properties were combined within one set. All of the versions of the Operational Guidelines can be found in: UNESCO, 'The Criteria for Selection', in *World Heritage Centre*, Web. The sites mentioned by Opolovnikov have been inscribed as *Historic Centre of Rome, the Properties of the Holy See in that City Enjoying Extraterritorial Rights and San Paolo Fuori le Mura* (1980, extended in 1990), *Acropolis, Athens* (1987), *Kiev: Saint-Sophia Cathedral and Related Monastic Buildings, Kiev-Pechersk Lavra* (1990), *Kizhi Pogost* (1990), *Paris, Banks of the Seine* (1991), *Historic Monuments of Novgorod and Surroundings* (1992), *Samarqand – Crossroad of Cultures* (2001). Information according to UNESCO, 'World Heritage List', in *World Heritage Centre*, Web.



Fig. 1: Architectural Ensemble of Kizhi Pogost



Fig. 2: UNESCO World Heritage designation displayed at the entrance to Kizhi Pogost

Delegations of the USSR, the Belarusian SSR⁴ and the Ukrainian SSR to UNESCO submitted the ratification instruments for the World Heritage Convention in October 1988.⁵ Thus, the participation of these Soviet republics only occurred during the final years of their existence. Shortly after the ratification, all four sites in Kyiv, Novgorod and Samarkand and on Kizhi were included in the first Soviet tentative lists and were subsequently nominated and inscribed in the List in the early 1990s during the period of the Soviet Union's disintegration. Consequently, a plaque on the entrance wall of the Kizhi Pogost today identifies the ensemble as a UNESCO World Heritage site (Fig. 2).

In view of the late adherence of the Soviet Union to the World Heritage Convention, Opolovnikov's statement appeared prophetic and through its grouping of these sites, it expressed defiance of contemporary geopolitical constraints. Opolovnikov wrote the aforementioned guidebook at a time when Kizhi and the Notre-Dame de Paris were positioned on either sides of a divide induced by the systemic conflict of the Cold War. Visitors to these sites were limited, because of visa restrictions on both sides and, furthermore, because the tourism industry in the Soviet Union was strictly controlled by the state. However, this reality did not constrain an imagined alternative of these sites as belonging to one world, thus constituting parts of world heritage. This idea was expressed repeatedly over the years by Soviet experts at a time when similar ideas were popularised in the West and in countries of the so-called Global South. It ultimately found its most explicit expression in UNESCO's Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972. Against this background, Opolovnikov's writing belongs to the same discursive formation as the concurrent preparatory work undertaken for the Convention within the headquarters of the international organisation, UNESCO, in Paris. In 1968, an expert group constituted in Paris discussed the same subject matter articulated by Opolovnikov in the Soviet Union in the same year. This coincidence is not surprising given that Opolovnikov, as one of the leading experts on Russian wooden architecture, was familiar with the work of UNESCO.⁶ Therefore, during the Cold War, world heritage can be considered as a trans-systemic concept that crossed not only state borders but also ideological di-

4 This state's official designation within UNESCO was Byelorussian SSR, which was derived from the Russian term. The designation used throughout this study derives from the name in Belarusian.

5 The Soviet Union held three seats in the UN system as a compromise in response to the Soviet Union's initial demand for sixteen seats, that is, one for each of the Soviet republics. See Stanley Meisler, *United Nations. The First Fifty Years* (New York: Atlantic Monthly, 1995), 16.

6 Opolovnikov worked as an expert for UNESCO and attended the Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians held in Venice in 1964 during which the Venice Charter was drafted. See *Vserossiiskoe obshchestvo okhrany pamyatnikov istorii i kul'tury, Aleksandr Viktorovich Opolovnikov* (Moskva: Opolo, 2002).

vides.⁷ Consequently, the discursive formation of world heritage was governed by the same rules that were maintained and modified by different agents and could even exhibit incompatible elements.⁸

The subject of this study is the world heritage discourse and associated practices in Russia between 1965 and 2000. This time period contextualises the more narrowly defined transformation process described above by revealing long-term changes in international cooperation related to heritage conservation in Russia. At the same time, it considers the reform processes of *perestroika* as part of a double transformation entailing concurrent international reforms. The changes in the UNESCO World Heritage programme associated with the preparation of the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List unfolded simultaneously with the reforms and disintegration of the Soviet Union. The Global Strategy was adopted in 1994 as a response to long-standing criticism of the imposition of a Eurocentric interpretation of heritage on the rest of the world that favoured cultural over natural heritage and monumental structures over vernacular heritage, while considering living traditions only to a very limited degree. Therefore, the period between 1988, when the Soviet Union ratified the Convention, and 1994, when the World Heritage programme was adjusted in response to the changing global situation, was characterised by the double transformation prompted by the *perestroika* reforms and the preparation of UNESCO's Global Strategy. This double transformation was of particular salience for the elaboration of heritage policies in the early post-Soviet Russian Federation where experts were inspired by the concurrent international discussion to which they sought to actively contribute. Moreover, in the late Soviet Union, the international reforms resonated well with the re-interpretation of cultural policies that had hitherto been based on the ideology of Marxism-Leninism.⁹ In view of the convergence of these two transformational processes, a case study that explores the deployment of the notion of world heritage yields rich insights into the increasing internationalisation of cultural

7 For the notion of 'transsystemic' in Cold War History, see Michael David-Fox, 'The Implications of Transnationalism', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12.4 (2011), 885–904.

8 Foucault defined a discursive formation as a system of dispersion entailing a number of statements that exhibit regularity and are subjected to rules of formation that are the conditions of its existence, coexistence, maintenance, modification, and disappearance. Of particular interest for this study is Foucault's idea that two concepts may simultaneously appear within the same discursive formation as incompatible elements that 'are formed in the same way and on the basis of the same rules'. Michael Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: The Pantheon Books, 1972), 39, 65.

9 Soviet sources on cultural policy usually referred to Marxism-Leninism as 'Lenin's principles'. See, for example, A. A. Zvorykin, N. I. Golubtsova and E. I. Rabinovich, *Cultural Policy in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* (Paris: UNESCO, 1970).

policies in the second half of the twentieth century. Thus, this study seeks to answer the question of how Soviet world heritage in Russia was re-interpreted as UNESCO World Heritage and re-integrated in a changed international setting following the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Here, 'Russia' collectively denotes the Russian Soviet Federative Soviet Republic (RSFSR) (until 1991) and the Russian Federation (since 1992), as well as the pre-1991 Soviet Union with respect to international relations.¹⁰ During the period of this study, the notion of world heritage was evidently not limited to the specific context of UNESCO World Heritage, though today it is most prominently associated with the flagship programme of this international organisation. Thus, the notion has never been an exclusive designation of heritage sites inscribed by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. Moreover, the conservation of cultural heritage developed into the most widely known field of UNESCO's activities over a period of several decades and only began to be recognised as such, both in Russia and internationally, during the transformation period that commenced from the late 1980s.¹¹ Against this background, this study departs from the premise that several variants of this concept existed simultaneously in different places, forming part of one international discursive formation.

'World heritage' in this study refers to heritage sites that from the 1960s onwards have been perceived to be of value for the entire world and that have consequently prompted a proliferation of international collaborative initiatives in heritage conservation.¹² Thus, on the one hand, this concept includes internationally coordinated practices such as scientific analysis, documentation and restoration focusing on heritage sites, and on the other hand, it denotes individual sites within a global imaginary. This explains why the discourse of world heritage, though it invoked the global dimension of heritage sites, did not necessarily require the international setting for its articulation. It could equally be expressed by an individual like Opolovnikov, positioned in a remote location, thus revealing his or her global awareness. In this sense, the approach chosen in

10 The RSFSR was represented by the USSR delegation in international organisations and the Russian Federation continued these international relations as the legal successor state of the Soviet Union.

11 Several sources from the late 1980s and early 1990s attest to this new role of cultural heritage within the overall activities of UNESCO. See, e.g., USSR Permanent Delegation to UNESCO, 'Cultural Questions at the 135th meeting of the Executive Board of UNESCO (Information)'. 14 November 1990. RGALI, f. 2329; Ministerstvo kul'tury SSSR, op. 35, d. 3284, l. 186.

12 The major international organisations, tasked with the conservation and promotion of cultural heritage, were all founded between 1959 and 1965. These organisations are the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), established in 1959, and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the World Monuments Fund (WMF) that were both established in 1965.

this study follows the conceptualisation of global intellectual history developed by Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori who describe the global not only as an analytical category of the historian, or as the scale of the historian's subject matter, but also as 'a subjective category used by historical agents who are themselves the objects of the historian's inquiry'.¹³ Accordingly, the aim of this study extends beyond merely attempting to trace the global contacts of Russian experts and transfers and cooperation relating to heritage. Instead, it aims to analyse how these experts in Russia perceived heritage and actively promoted it as world heritage through their discourses and practices.

Against this background, the short passage by Opolovnikov, cited above, can be viewed first and foremost as a normative statement that invokes a high degree of valorisation of the site and consequently of the responsibility of experts like himself to present this masterpiece to the world. Thus, Opolovnikov insists on the active production of Kizhi as a site of global significance: 'And if they do not yet know much about [these wooden buildings on Kizhi]; if they are not famous and popular in such a manner as the Notre-Dame de Paris or the Taj Mahal; those are guilty of this [ignorance] who must study, preserve and propagate the heritage of our national culture'.¹⁴ In this self-reflexive statement, Opolovnikov first refers to himself as an architectural historian and restorer who studied and preserved wooden buildings and who wrote these passages in order to popularise them. His introduction of a normative dimension for his own actions indicates that he perceived this work to be the shared responsibility of Russia's architectural historians, restorers, museum employees and tour guides. This study focuses on these different kinds of experts, as well as diplomats and policy-makers, who inventoried, restored, interpreted and showcased the cultural heritage of the Soviet Union as belonging to world heritage. Their expertise evolved in relation to the heritage sites that are examined in this study within the global imaginary. Notwithstanding disagreements and misunderstandings among them, they succeeded in collectively building a network that defined Russian and Soviet culture at a given point in time within the Soviet Union as well as the international community. This double perspective can be considered central, as the development of Soviet heritage and that of global heritage cannot be understood without reference to each other. During the second half of the twentieth century, these experts were actively engaged in building a common past together with experts from other countries.

13 Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 5, 16–17.

14 'I esli o nikh eshche malo znaiut, esli oni ne stol' izvestny i populiarny, kak Sobor Parizhskoi bogomateri ili Tadzhi Makhal, to v ètom lish' vina tekhn, kto dolzhen izuchat', sokhraniat' i propagandirovat' nasledie nashei natsional'noi kul'tury'. Opolovnikov, *Kizhi* 5.