

Some Aspects Concerning Heritage Protection Process in Estonia.

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The National Heritage Board

1. The National Heritage Board – organization and people.

1.1 Central organization.

The first legal act regulating heritage protection on Estonian territory dates back to 1666, time of the reign of the Swedish king Karl XI.

The National Heritage Board (which was established in 1993 within the framework of the Ministry of Culture on the basis of different governmental and scientific bodies) is the principal government body in Estonia, which is charged with the direction of conservation activity and state supervision and protection of properties of cultural value, also maintaining records of state cultural monuments. The Board is divided into four divisions: administration, division of expertise, division of supervision and division of export of valuable cultural objects. The total number of employees in the National Heritage Board is 40.

An independent Heritage Conservation Advisory Panel provides expert opinion on the cultural value of objects and properties makes proposals for the establishment of procedures and conditions for the use of monuments and also assesses the value of monuments. The Advisory Panel has three expert councils as its sub-divisions for archaeological, architectural and art monuments.

All Activities concerning Estonian heritage are regulated by the Heritage Conservation Act passed on 1994 (text in English is available www.legaltext.ee). It has connections with Property Act, Building and Planning Act, Nature Protection Act, Museums Act, etc.

1.2 Local authorities.

Local governments organize heritage conservation through the rural municipality governments and city governments.

Local municipalities in Estonia are very small (average number of inhabitants 5,000 – 10,000) and therefore only the capital Tallinn has its own board for conservation. There are, however, professional archaeologists and other conservation specialists working in some rural municipality governments and city governments. Local municipality governments shall observe requirements arising from the Heritage Protection Act in the performance of their tasks and duties. They may perform duties of the state in heritage conservation if such duties arise from an agreement entered into by the National Heritage Board and a local government council. In short, it can be said that decisions requiring expertise are left to the domain of the National Heritage Board, while local governments are expected to inform the Board of any activities in the locality, which may be relevant regarding to cultural monuments.

1.3 Cultural co-operation.

In order to promote heritage protection and make the policy more efficient, extensive co-operation exists between the National Heritage Board and other organizations with similar ideologies (Heritage Society, Union of Estonian War Graves Care, Estonian Museums Association, etc.). Co-operation with international heritage protection organizations like UNESCO, ICOMOS; ICOM, DOCOMOMO, Europa Nostra, The European Cultural Foundation, etc. is getting stronger every year. Since 1985 an annual heritage protection month (April 18th – May 18th) is arranged together with these institutions.

2. Some aspects of interpretation of cultural heritage.

2.1 Fusion of different cultural identities.

On Estonian territory live different communities of non-Estonian people. They are mainly non-Estonians by national origin and language. But there is still one community, which differs very strongly because of their religious background – Old Believers.

The Old Believers, who lived near Lake Peipsi, had settled down in Estonia in the 17th-18th centuries as a result of the church reform initiated by Nikon which led to their subsequent persecution in Russia (they did not accept the innovative lines of service, etc. caused by reforms). They came to this region from the principalities of Novgorod and Pskov.

They rented pieces of land and fishing gear for themselves. The men of the Old Believers were famous for being good builders. They also worked in Tallinn, Riga, St. Petersburg and Tartu. The clay soil by Lake Peipsi is sandy. Clay was fired to make the bricks used to build houses that are still standing in the communes. One characteristic feature of the community is its long, linear villages that stretch for kilometers. Here, the houses are situated only along one side of the street and have very distinguished architecture. Many churches are located in this area - in Mustvee alone there are four. In many places, local government houses built by Old Believers are more than 100 years and are still in relatively good repair.

The daily occupation of women is to take care of their garden plots that are often smaller than two hectares. Cucumbers and onions are the main vegetables grown here. The products of the whole area by Lake Peipsi are nitrate-free. During the Soviet times, extensive trading took place with markets in Russia. This provided substantial incomes for the local people. One of the problems during this time was the so-called 'informal economy', which reached its prime in 1980's. The region was relatively prosperous. In summer people worked in the fields and in winter engaged in high-quality building. The allotments still produce 3 tons of onion, beet and carrots per year and although an alternative market has not been found, there is no sign of decrease in agriculture. In earlier times the communes were more agricultural and less interested in fishing.

At present, because of changed market conditions, the situation is the opposite. During the Soviet times this area went through intensive emigration and weakening of the local social structure. The status of the minority was destroyed and regional identity disappeared. The leaders left. As in many cases, the Old Believers were not the landowners, but the renters during the first Estonian Republic. The process of collectivization under the Soviet system did not damage the agriculture of the area very much. However, this group suffered much deeper decline as a result of the damage to their social structure and their leaders' departure, than was experienced in more individualistic regions where people were used to taking care of themselves. When in the 1960-s, Estonians in some regions started to cooperate with Soviet authorities (for example, in the building of industrial complexes); the people in area of Lake Peipsi did not.

The Old Believers carried on their traditional ways of living. They did not adopt new types of production and services. Economic life here did not change and began to stagnate. There was no development of a production structure and internal growth. Even up to the present day, the area has not attracted any important investments.

The Old Believers are very religious which constantly influences their life style. What is most essential is that they had, and still have, strong control of over the social and economic life of the community. The result is that is they do not necessarily place high value on the needs or efforts of the individual person, and hence people in general have a weak sense of entrepreneurial spirit and place less emphasis on private property.

Institutional structures have not developed as highly in this area as in rich agricultural regions. A qualitative and quantitative decline in the potential of the population is taking place. This area of Lake Peipsi has gone through the largest and steepest decline of population (50%) during the last 30 years in Estonia. At the same time, the population density is high - 32 per km². The average in Estonia is 10 per km². The region has great

potentiality for tourism. The development of tourist facilities, including a restaurant that would specialize in local products such as vegetables and fish, is planned for the future.

Today, there are 11 Old Believer congregations in Estonia. The oldest ones are the congregation of Väike-Kolkja (established in 1710) and the congregation of Raja küla (established in 1740). The congregations are mainly located along the coast of Lake Peipsi, but also in Tallinn and Tartu.

As of 1 January 2000, there are about 5 000 Old Believers in Estonia and three clergymen. In 1994 the Old Believer congregations formed the Union of Old Believer Congregations.

They follow old traditions in everything. From the aspect of art history they have followed the icon painting patterns since Rubljov's time. The most famous icon painter Gavril Frolov opened in the end of 19th century in Raja village on the coast of Lake Peipsi a school for icon painting. The workshop did exist approximately until World War II. It has been said that Gavril Frolov was 20th century's Andrei Rubljov. Frolov had talented students, one of them Pimin Sofronov (1898-1973) created his icon painting school in Paris.

The Estonian Old Believers icon painting is very interesting cultural phenomenon. We can find their works as single icons or even whole iconostasis around the region. Frolov's school preferred as examples the composition schemes of Moskva school, light-colored composition schemes from Rubljov time, Stroganov school, etc.

Old Believers value more and more that particular difference of their community. They teach to schoolchildren old customs, Old Russian language, traditional chants, etc. Two small museums are established, but there is so much undiscovered treasure of spirit.

The National Heritage Board provides Old Believers assistance concerning art treasures. Almost all art treasures they have (icons, iconostasis, books, etc.) have been listed and protected as art monuments. We have main data and photos about these objects; we can provide also some help to organize the restoration and conservation work of the objects.

2.2 Interpretation of art monument after conservation.

People get first impression of the building after entering in. They notice some things, even small, but some another things stay imperceptibles. Why is so? The situation, keeping conditions, exposing place play very big role in giving of such impression. One matter, which helps to preconceive that opinion, is the state of the object.

The National Heritage Board has organized every year the conservation work of art monuments. As a result of that most of those places where the conservation work has been finished, people have discovered for themselves the restored art object. So the value of place showing attractive cultural object has risen.

3. Documentation.

3.1 Necessity for documentation process.

If we open our eyes and look around, we can see different sides and aspects of cultural heritage. Our task is to protect material and nonmaterial values. No state can be so rich to support in 100 % all owners and possessors of historical monuments. The only possibility to maintain this part of people's continuity is to document as much as possible the differently sides of cultural heritage.

3.2 Register of protected monuments.

On national level the task of keeping the register of listed and protected monuments lies on the National Heritage Board. The register is approved by the Ministry of Culture.

On regional level municipal cultural heritage departments formed by the city governments are responsible for inventories and documentation of that area.

Specialized and local museums carry out detailed inventories of objects coming from archaeological excavations or found by chance within the museums district.

Documentation (historical researches, planning material, building projects, reports of conservation, etc.) is available to the public in the archive of the National Heritage Board.

The objects of cultural value are taken under state protection by the Regulation of the Minister of Culture. The lists of monuments taken under protection are published in RIIGI TEATAJA LISA (periodical containing legal acts of Ministries, Government of Estonian Republic and local authorities). For the public are available data as location, title / denomination, old registering number (in art monuments lists the location of precious metalwork, small icons and all items from 18th century and older is not published). After publishing the monuments will be registered in the register and every monument gets its unique registering number.

3.3 Methodology of documentation concerning art monuments.

National Heritage Board has collected the best records (including photos) about art monuments (total number of art monuments – 11899). Quite similar documentation standard has been used for last 30 years. This Consist of basic data needed for descriptions and science work.

Before 1993 two levels of protection of monuments were in use: national and local level. According to new law, adopted in 1994, the different kinds of monuments will be considered with same importance.

Because of that the need for reviewing the previous lists of monuments was obvious.

The movable monuments are situating mostly in churches, less in schools, public or business institutions.

Till now the lists of movables of all counties are reviewed due to help of local inspectors. Now we continue with wider and more specific inventories in every county for controlling the listed items and describing new ones.

The registering card is very simple, but gives the main description of the item. (See Appendix)

We use the same criteria as Interpol except mentioning the price. If there is necessity to put the price, we use experts from museums, antique shops, etc.

The photos are very important. Almost every year the larcenies are committed from churches. If some items will be found from “black market”, the photos help to prove the ownership. Before we used only black-and-white photos, now the new technologies enable to use more digital photos and digitalize old ones.

For owners and possessors of all kinds of monuments, including art monuments, we compose a document called Obligation Notice in which are described the duties of both sides in ensuring the preservation of the monument. One part of this document is the description of the monument. During last years we have used the help of art historians to compose that documents to get additional and competent evaluation from art historical point of view.

4. Conclusions.

1. We need to protect our common cultural heritage as a reflection of historical development. Governmental bodies can be regulative institutions of that process.
2. All protection activity bases on wide-grounded documentation process, which gives the main basic information for researches and civil servants.

3. Objects of art are the most threatened kind of monuments because of larcenies. Well-prepared documentation material helps to prove ownership in that situation.

Appendix – Registering card

PHOTO	THE REGISTERING CARD OF ART MONUMENT	REG. NR.	
	LOCATION		
	TITLE		
	MATERIAL, TECHNIQUES		
	MAKER, AUTHOR, DATE OR PERIOD		
PHOTOGRAPHED BY	MEASUREMENTS		
NEGATIVE NR	NOTES		

SPECIFICATION (INSCRIPTION, MARKINGS, DISTINGUISHING FEATURES, ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION)	
CONDITON, RESTORATION RECORDS	
STOCK-TAKING	PRICE
INSPECTING	
TAKEN UNDER PROTECTION	