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**“FORGETFULNESS” IN PETRINE ARCHITECTURE:
THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY OF THE VIRGIN
IN THE VILLAGE OF PODMOKLOVO**

Flagrant neglect of the historical cultural tradition that can be traced in different spheres of Russian social life was characteristic of the Petrine period. Such attitude implying that things modern and western were better than something customary, time-honoured and traditional was sanctioned by the State as represented by Peter the Great. In other words, it was justified ideologically and realised as a sociocultural mechanism primarily in the new and old capitals of the Russian Empire.

After the triumphant Battle of Poltava, when the stress of the wartime burden gradually subsided, St Petersburg architecture, like litmus paper, manifested the above tendency. New urban space was organised according to the regular principle, which was not characteristic of the Russian urban development tradition. Residential houses had layouts, façades and even construction technology (timber-framing) that were unusual for that period. Last but not least, the church – an architectural structure of prime importance in the medieval world outlook – not only ceded ground to secular commissions for the construction of residences and public buildings, but acquired a fundamentally new image.

The ability of architecture to manifest the major cultural development tendency is confirmed by events well known to students of the Petrine period. In the first quarter of the 18th century Russian reality was swept by an avalanche of changes engineered from above: the state machinery, appearance, environment and lifestyle were all transformed. Starting in the two capitals, that process spread throughout the Russian Empire in the post-Petrine period.

Setting sights on things new and the mechanisms of attaining them were for Peter the Great a conscious choice of social and cultural strategy. They

enabled his country to get a positive historical perspective – not only to survive in the political situation existing in Europe by the early 18th century, but also to occupy a worthy place on the contemporaneous scene. The ubiquitous “forgetfulness” that we observe in Russian culture of the Petrine period did not presuppose or lead to the historical oblivion of one’s roots. The head of state demonstrated that in public festivities, military triumphs and his first coronation, all of which took place in the urban space of Moscow, the old capital of the land. “Loss of memory” can be viewed as a special cultural mechanism of accelerated renovation and assimilation of a cultural code that helped implement the main government project – the shaping of a renewed image of the Russian State as an active participant in contemporary European life. Feofan Prokopovich, too, stated that in the ornate form of a baroque panegyric: when paying tribute to Peter I in 1725 he said that the Russian monarch was “the author of our innumerable advantages and joys, who resurrected Russia as if from the dead and raised it to such power and glory...”¹

Studies of the applications of that strategy in the architectural practice of the Petrine period, especially based on material unrelated to the programmatic precepts implemented from scratch on the Neva banks in St Petersburg, are of great scholarly interest.

How was tradition abandoned in the conditions of Moscow, the historical capital of the state, and its environs?

In the first 15 years of the new century Moscow saw the building of structures whose features spoke of the desire of certain clients to distance themselves from the existing tradition, even in its late, “Naryshkin” incarnation. Church architecture accounts for most of the representative series of structures of novel design². They were city churches commissioned by all sorts of clients, among them *slobodas* (the Church of SS Peter and Paul in the Captains’ *sloboda*, 1705–19) and private clients (the Church of Archangel Gabriel in Alexander Menshikov’s city mansion, 1707–9). Private churches raised on the estates of noble boyars outside Moscow: the Church of St Nicholas in Troekurovo (1699–1705, commissioned by Ivan Troekurov³), the

¹ Feofan Prokopovich. *Slovo na pogrebenie Petra Velikogo* (Word on the Burial of Peter the Great) // Prokopovich Feofan. Writings. Ed. I.P. Eremin, Moscow-Leningrad: USSR Academy of Sciences, 1961, p. 26.

² Alongside churches built in Moscow and its environs, secular structures of new models were built as evidenced by the few surviving landmarks (e.g., the Lefortovsky Palace rebuilt by Menshikov) and written sources (see Aronova A., *Arkhitekturnaya praktika nachala 18 veka v svete gollandskikh vpechatlenii Velikogo posolstva* (Architectural Practice of the Early 18th Century in the Light of the Dutch Impressions of the Great Embassy) // *Iskusstvoznanie*, 1/02. Moscow, 2002, pp. 356–67). However, the ratio of secular to church construction remained the same in Moscow in the early 18th century, with church construction in the lead.

³ Prince Ivan Borisovich Troekurov (1633–1703), who founded the St Nicholas Church on his estate outside Moscow at the end of the 17th century and had the lower sanctuary consecrated before his death in 1703, was closely associated with Peter the Great’s retinue, even though he belonged to the older generation of Russian nobility. (For details see Kuptsov, I.V., *Knyaziya Troekurovy* (Princes Troekurov), Volgograd, 2011).

Church of St Nicholas in Poltevo (1706, commissioned by Feodor Apraksin¹), the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin in Marfino (1701–7, commissioned by Boris Golitsyn²), the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin in Podmoklovo (1714–23, commissioned by Grigory Dolgoruky³), made up a noteworthy group of landmarks.

What were the hallmarks of the latter four churches?

Every one of these structures had a unique artistic design and lacked any traditional features in both composition and decoration. This is evidence of the variative nature of the model chosen by the clients to replace the old type church with a new one.

What do they have in common?

Orientation to the western model and disregard for tradition. No doubt the latter fact, too, was dictated by the clients.

They were Peter's associates of noble birth who unconditionally sided with him in his struggle for power. Among the aforementioned four clients, Feodor Apraksin might have been party to the Most Comical All-Drunken Council formed of members of Peter's select "company". The court game based on "Bacchic Mysteries", according to the American

¹ Count Feodor Matveevich Apraksin (1661–1728), who commissioned the Poltevo Church, was Peter's brother-in-law. His sister Marfa was the second wife of Peter's elder half-brother, Tsar Theodore Alexeevich. (For details see Bespalov, A.V., *Bitvy Severnoi voiny, 1700–1721* (Battles of the Northern War, 1700–21), Moscow, 2005; *Severnaia voina* (Northern War) 1700–21, Collected documents, vol. 1, Institute of Russian History, Russian Academy of Sciences, 2009; *Bumagi Petra Velikogo* (Papers of Peter the Great) ed. A.F. Bychkov // *Russkii vestnik 1841*, Book II, p. 214; Belavenets, P.I., *General-Admiral Feodor Matveevich Apraksin*, Revel, 1899; Verkh V.N., *Zhizneopisaniye General-Admirala grafa Feodora Matveevicha Apraksina* (The Life Story of General-Admiral Count Feodor Matveevich Apraksin), St Petersburg: N. Grech printing house, 1825; Dmitriev, S.I., *General-Admiral graf F.M. Apraksin. Spodvizhnik Petra Velikogo* (General-Admiral Count F.M. Apraksin. Peter the Great's Associate), 1761–1728, Petrograd: K.A. Chetverikov electrotyping printing house, 1914; "Feodor Matveevich Apraksin: Galereia rossiiskikh flotovodtsev" (Feodor Matveevich Apraksin: Gallery of Russian Naval Commanders) // *Morskoi sbornik*, No. 10, 1990, p. 32).

² Prince Boris Alekseevich Golitsyn (1652–1714), Peter's tutor and so-called *diad'ka*, was largely responsible for the monarch's western leanings. (Kurakin, B.I. "Historia o Petre I i blizhnikh k nemu liudiakh (History of Peter I and his Associates). 1682–95" // *Russkaia starina*, 1890, vol. 68, No. 10, p. 247). Golitsyn, together with Troekurov and other nobles, sided with Peter in his conflict with Tsarevna Sophia and actually took over all efforts to mount resistance to the Regent Tsarevna at the Trinity Monastery. Later on he took part in the battles of Azov and Narva, although he was well advanced in age (see Kobeko, D.F. *Sheremetevy i kniazia Urusovy* (The Sheremetevs and Princes Urusov), St Petersburg: Leshtukovskaia Steam Printing House of P.O. Iablonski, 1900; *Samye znamenitnye dinastii Rossii* (The Most Famous Families of Russia), Moscow, 2001).

³ Prince Grigory Feodorovich Dolgorukov (1657–1725) was one of the four Dolgorukov brothers who actively supported Peter and took part in his transformations. (For details see Kolegov, S.S. *Postoiannye diplomateskie predstavitelstva Rossii v Evrope vo vtoroi treti XVII – nachale XVIII vv.* (Permanent Diplomatic Missions of Russia in Europe in the late 17th – early 18th centuries. Extended Abstract of Dissertation for the degree of Cand. of Sciences (History), Yekaterinburg, 2011).

researcher Ernest Sitser, became "a true embodiment of the general processes of 'secularization' and 'westernization'"¹. The others, too, might have attended Council "sessions".

Let us consider in greater detail the personality of one of them, Grigory Feodorovich Dolgorukov, through whose efforts a church was founded on his Serpukhov estate in the year when a law banning stone construction was enacted all over Russia², the church that was to go down in the history of Russian architecture under the name of Podmoklovskaja Rotunda.

As mentioned above, Grigory Dolgorukov embarked on his career at 14 when he was hired as cup-bearer at the palace; he later became captain of the boy-soldier Preobrazhensky Regiment of the young tsarevich and, together with his commander, took part in the Battle of Azov. From 1696 he was in Italy, Venice in particular, where he stayed until 1699. In Venice architectural training could be obtained either at the studios of practicing architects or at the Department of Hydraulic Works, which was in charge of the construction and maintenance of all engineering systems in the city³. A certain Dolgorukov might have attended that establishment because the volunteers of the Great Embassy sent to Venice had to study seamanship⁴. Indirectly, this is corroborated by the fact that the given reference book was written by a certain Cashpor Vecchia, "mathematician and architect", who apparently never built anything⁵.

Dolgorukov's subsequent career had to do with diplomacy, further proof of his extraordinary abilities. Between 1700 and 1714 he intermittently served as the Russian ambassador to the Polish court. During his brief stay in Russia in 1714–7 the Prince started building the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin in the village of Podmoklovo, work on which was mostly completed in 1723, when Dolgorukov finally returned to Moscow⁶.

One of his descendants, Pavel Vasilievich Dolgorukov (1755–1837), gave a pithy description of his ancestor, saying that "Prince Grigory Feodorovich, a man of great mind, fine and sharp, and of most elevated soul, [...] was one of the most remarkable Russian diplomats"⁷.

¹ Zitser E. *Tsarstvo Preobrazhenia: Sviashchennaia parodia i tsarskaia kharizma pri dvore Petra Velikogo*. Moscow: Novoie literaturnoie obozrenie (NLO), 2008, p. 181. (Ernest A. Zitser, *The Transfigured Kingdom. Sacred Parody and Charismatic Authority at the Court of Peter the Great*. Cornell University Press, 2004).

² Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, Vol. 5, No. 2792.

³ Blunt A. *Barocco & Rococo. Architecture & Decoration*. London, 1971, pp. 78–84.

⁴ The Embassy volunteers in Venice studied at the Nautica school, but no Dolgorukov was among them (See Guzevich D., Guzevich I., *Velikoe posolstvo* (The Great Embassy), St Petersburg, 2003, p. 219).

⁵ RGADA. F. 181. D. 258/463. L. 1.

⁶ Kolegov, S.S. Op. cit., sheet 15.

⁷ Cit. Fedorchenko, V.I., *Imperatorskii dom. Vydaiushchiesia sanovniki. Entsiklopedia biografii* (The Imperial House. Outstanding Dignitaries. Encyclopaedia of Biographies). Krasnoyarsk: Bonus Publishers, 2005, vol. 1, p. 405.



A certain Dolgorukov is associated with one scholarly intrigue, namely, the existence of a graphic manuscript in the Archive of Ancient Acts entitled “Civil architecture chosen from paladiush the glorious architect and many other architects from mathematician and architect cashpor vecchia drawn in venice year 1699 month september while there through the study and care of lord prince dolgorukov...”¹

The question of the commissioner and owner of this manuscript has remained open. According to the architecture historian A.A. Tits, it was either Grigory Feodorovich or Vasilii Lukich Dolgorukov². The latter was party, together with his uncle Yakov Feodorovich (Grigory’s father), to the embassy to France in 1687–8. Some believe that Vladimir Mikhailovich Dolgorukov, too, might have had a hand in that document, as, together with Grigory, he was in Italy in the late 1690s, studying seamanship³.

¹ RGADA. F. 181. D. 258/463.

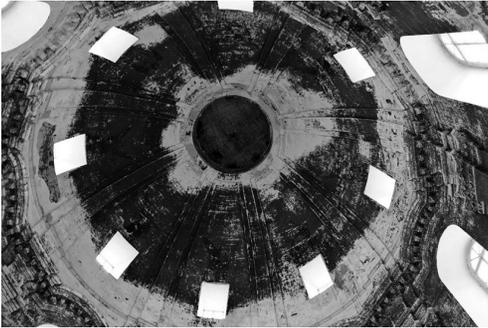
² Tits, A.A. “Neizvestnyi russkii traktat po arkhitekture” (Anonymous Russian Treatise on Architecture) // *Russkoe iskusstvo XVIII veka. Materialy i issledovaniia* (Russian Art of the 18th Century. Documents and Studies). Ed. T.V. Alekseeva. Moscow, 1968, pp. 17–31.

³ The problem will not be resolved or even raised within the present article.

Church of the
Nativity of the Virgin
in the village
of Podmoklovo
1714–23

Church of the
Nativity of the Virgin
in the village
of Podmoklovo
Fragment of balustrade





Church of the
Nativity of the Virgin
in the village
of Podmoklovo.
1714–23
Portal

Church of the
Nativity of the Virgin
in the village
of Podmoklovo.
1714–23
Dome space

Church of the
Nativity of the Virgin
in the village
of Podmoklovo.
1714–23
Interior. Corinthian
capital

Thus, childhood contact with western cultural values in his family circle, association with the pro-western tsar, studies abroad and long-time service in Warsaw, one of the notable capitals of Europe, beyond doubt determined Prince Dolgorukov’s taste preferences. His Serpukhov estate acquired a unique specimen of European church architecture, the characteristics of which still evoke scholarly interest. Today this structure has a representative base of archival sources consisting of documents stored at the Archive of Ancient Acts and other archival collections in Moscow and St Petersburg¹. Much is known, including dates, drawings, the original size of the building and its decorative details, the names of contractors, builders and foremen (the latter were exclusively foreigners), but the origin of the project itself remains an enigma because the drawings have not survived. Under the circumstances it is worth focusing on the specific features of the landmark because they may bring us closer to solving the riddle of its origin.

The church has a rotunda composition peculiar for its open external arcade. It is decorated with Corinthian pilasters and forms a wide terrace around the second tier of the church. The rotunda is topped with an egg-shaped dome with lucarnes and a huge lantern.

¹ RGADA. F. 156. Op. 1. 1716. D. 8. Ll. 38–39 ob., L. 101; F. 156. Op. 1. Ch. 1. D. 1038. Ll. 149 ob.–150 ob.; KPV. 2 otd. Kn. 32 (1717). L. 367; F. 282. Op. 1. Ch. 1. D. 1035. Ll. 166–166 ob.; F. 1239. Op. 2, D. 1732. Ll. 179–179 ob.; F. 1239. Op. 3 D. 42520. L. 283; RGIA. F. 796. Op. 1 T. 34. D. 381.

The inner space of the church extends vertically in a powerful thrust to the lantern. This dynamic effect is achieved through the use of a colossal order, the pilasters transforming into the projections of structural ribs on the dome surface, and also owing to the inner space (up to the lantern crown) being 2.5 times as high as the dome span. In the interior the entablature crowning the order composition has a cornice of intricate plasticity with modillions. Its curves over the window openings of the second tier enhance the feeling of vertical movement.

Order devices are used consistently in the architecture of the church: fluted Corinthian pilasters, archivolts and moulded impostes and panelled Corinthian pilasters in the second tier; the fluted Corinthian pilasters of the lantern and full three-part entablatures adorning the façade. Giant order Corinthian pilasters grace the interior.

The order forms are occasionally interpreted in an interesting way. For instance, the gallery order sports a modified Corinthian capital that has lost the full-fledged lower tier of acanthus leaves but has received developed middle scrolls identical to those at the corners (instead of the classical underdeveloped ones) and flower garlands connecting their middle parts. The other Corinthian capitals are interpreted in the same way. All have fortified middle scrolls, yet detailing of both the acanthus leaves and scrolls noticeably changes in the second tier: the first tier of leaves is curtailed while the second and third are full-fledged. The scrolls are not so strongly curled as in the gallery and garlands are absent. The capitals of the lantern retain the underdeveloped first tier and again have garlands.

Sculptures decorating the building are a unique feature. The gallery balustrade is adorned with 16 sculptures (12 Apostles and 2 Evangelists, SS Luke and Mark)¹ made of Miachkovsky white stone and placed on pedestals.

Decorative details are notably original. Triangular panels filled with flowers are in the upper corner segments of the arch and order units, and small rectangular plates appear in every other unit of the gallery frieze. The panelled pilasters of the second tier are ornamented with flower garlands. There is an additional decorative floral frieze with cherubim in the area of the capitals under the entablature.

Architraves and portals are a case apart. The first-tier windows are decorated with simple rectangular frames with characteristic “ears” at the corners, while the portals combine this type of ornament with a more intricate design of figured brackets and a split rounded frontal with oval cartouche. The façade decoration reaches maximum intensity in the second tier, where window openings and blind windows alternate between the pilasters. The openings have an intricate configuration: the link between the rectangle and the arch lintel is intentionally articulated by a setback. The flat contour architrave revealing the shape of the opening is emphasised by an additional frame, which accentuates the windows and niches

¹ For church sculpture decoration see Pilipenko, A.D. “Semantika skulpturnogo dekora” (The Semantics of Sculpted Décor) // *Vestnik MGUKI*, No. 6 (20), 2007, pp. 190–3.

of the second-floor façade plane. Window and niche decoration culminates in head mouldings, in which corner fringes with wings on exquisite brackets alternate with small rounded frontals with rectangular insets.

The roof lucarnes, open and blind, add the finishing touch. The former are square, framed with flower décor and crowned by triangular head mouldings with wings; the latter are oval, flanked by volutes and topped by curved moulding with a keystone.

There are no doubts about the Italian nature of the prototype, which has long been recognised by scholars¹. It remains to establish what developments in Italian architecture it can be associated with.

The rotunda composition made a comeback in 15th century architecture² and stayed within the Italian architects' field of vision for several decades. A recurrent design employed by architects of different periods was a central polygonal dome space surrounded by a wreath of chapels along the perimeter (Chiesa di Santa Maria degli Angeli, 1437, unfinished, F. Brunelleschi; Chiesa di Santa Maria dell'Assunta in Ariccia, 1663–5, L. Bernini). Fifteenth-century graphic artists³ and painters⁴ began to develop the idea of an ancient rotunda, a round building framed with a colonnade. It was implemented in architectural practice in the early 16th century (Tempietto, 1502, D. Bramante). Another variant was a rotunda or polygonal dome space surrounded by an arcade of piers (Tempio Matatestiana, 1447–1503, L.B. Alberti) or columns. In the Renaissance period the latter was represented only in graphic works⁵ and paintings⁶, nor was it actually translated into reality later.

At the end of the 17th century the composition of a round church with an open arcade unexpectedly appeared in a design by Carlo Fontana,

¹ See Mikhailov, A. "Podmoklovskaja rotunda i klassicheskie veiania v iskusstve petrovskogo vremeni" (Podmoklovo Rotunda and Classical Influences in Petrine Art) // *Iskusstvo*, No. 9, 1985, pp. 64–70; Aronova, A.A. *Arkhitekturnye sviazi Rossii s Severnoi Evropoi v poslednei chetverti XVII – pervoi chetverti XVIII vv.* (Architectural Links Between Russia and Northern Europe in the Last Quarter of the 17th – First Quarter of the 18th Centuries). Dissertation for Cand. of Sciences (Art Studies). Moscow, 1993, p. 68; Kirillov, V.V. *Klassicheskie tendentsii formoobrazovania v arkhitekture Podmoskovia petrovskogo vremeni* (Classical Form-building Trends in Petrine Architecture of the Moscow Region) // *Russkii klassitsizm vtoroi poloviny XVIII – nach. XIX veka* (Russian Classicism of the Second Half of the 18th – Early 19th Centuries). Moscow: Izobrazitelnoe iskusstvo Publishers, 1994, pp. 15–24; Pilipenko, A.D. "K semantike skulpturnogo ansambli khrama Rozhdestva Bogoroditsy v Podmoklovo" (On the Semantics of the Sculptural Ensemble of the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin in Podmoklovo) // *Vestnik MGUKI*, No. 6 (20), 2007, pp. 190–3.

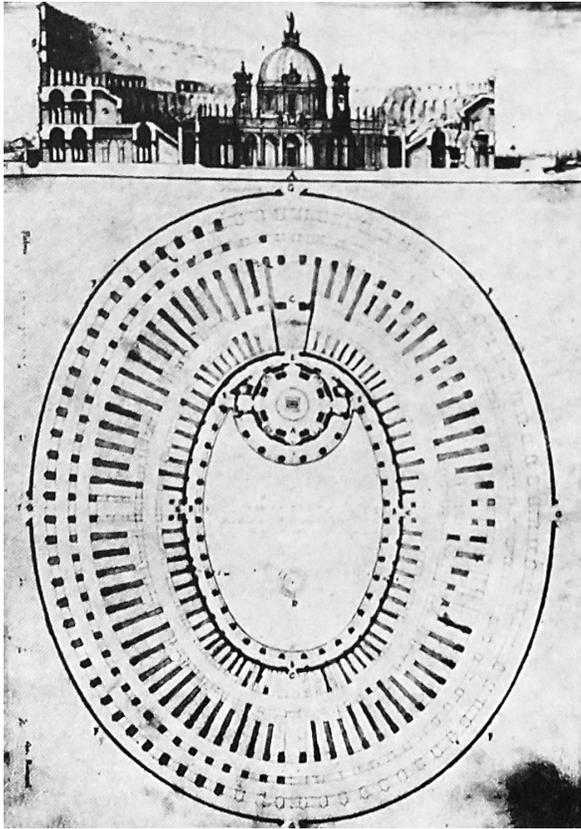
² Kuznetsov, A.V., *Tektonika i konstruksii tsentricheskikh zdani* (Central Building Tectonics and Structures). Moscow, 2013, pp. 203–68).

³ Francesco di Giorgio Martini. *Codex Saluzzianus 148. Fol. 84. Rotundas.* (Francesco di Giorgio Martini. *Tratatti di architectura, ingeneria e arte militare.* Ed. Corrado Maltese. Milan, 1967. Facsimile manuscript edition.

⁴ Unknown artist. *Ideal City*. Ca. 1470. Tempera on panel, 60x200. National Gallery, Urbino.

⁵ Francesco di Giorgio Martini. *Codex Saluzzianus 148. Fol. 84. Rotundas.*

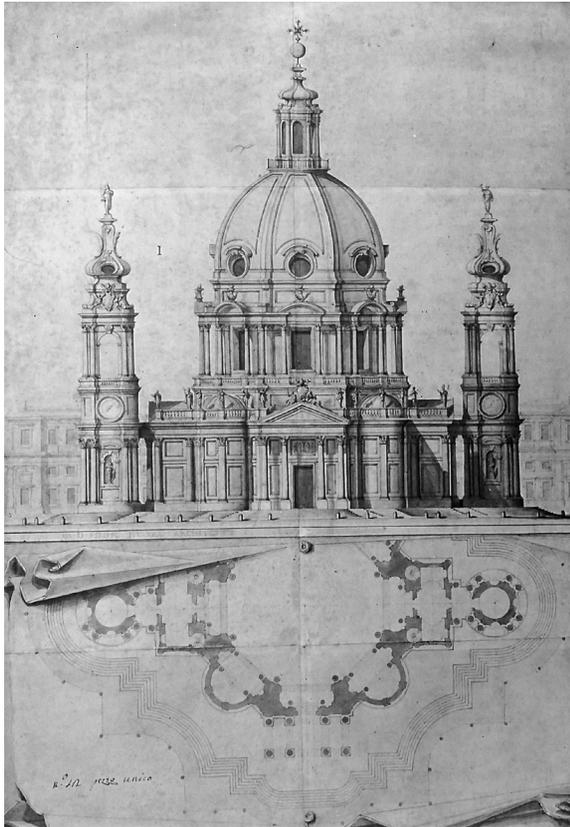
⁶ Raphael Santi. *The Engagement of Virgin Mary*. 1504. Oil on panel, 170x117. Pinacoteca Brera, Milan.



a disciple of L. Bernini and one of the most influential architects of Rome at the turn of the 18th century. In 1676–1679, Pope Innocent XI commissioned him to build a church in the Colosseum arena. The idea was to renovate the decrepit old structure and at the same time, in the spirit of Vatican’s numerous construction initiatives of the 17th century, to reiterate the idea of “Ecclesia triumphans”, the victory of the Christian Church over paganism. The idea arose in connection with the approaching Jubilee or Holy Year of 1675. Fontana’s project did not materialize because the Pope’s finances had been undermined by the war against the Turks. Twenty-five years later, when the following Holy Year (1700) was approaching, the project again came to the Pope’s attention, and again remained unfulfilled. In the early 18th century Pope Clement XI showed interest in it as a patron of architectural initiatives. He established a competition in architecture that eventually was named after him, *Concorsi Clementini*¹. Inspired by the new Pope’s patronage, Fontana had finished work on a set of drawings of a church in the Colosseum, complete with the description

Carlo Fontana
 Ecclesia Triumphans.
 1675–1725
 Project

¹ *Architectural Fantasy and Reality*. Drawing from the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca in Rome. *Concorsi Clementini*. 1700–1750. / Ed. by Susan S. Munshower. N-Y, 1982, pp. 1–8.



Filippo Juvarra
 Design of a church
 for academic degree.
 Façade. 1707

of the project, by 1707. “Unpublished until 1725, it is still without question that the Colosseum church designs were on the drawing board, literally, in Fontana’s studio...”¹

The church building was designed in the form of two superimposed shapes, with the octahedral dome space and a wreath of chapels surrounded on the west side by an order arcade gallery crowned with a parapet of sculptures. Instead of a lantern, the dome was topped with a sculptural composition. Fontana’s use of the order arcade was dictated by the artistic link with the main façade motif of the Colosseum. However, he used only Ionic pilasters (rather than Doric half columns as in the first floor of the Colosseum)². What is more, as his task was to renovate the ancient structure, he suggested that the entire arena be surrounded by an order arcade gallery along the perimeter.

¹ Architectural Fantasy and Reality. Drawing from the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca in Rome. Concorsi Clementini. 1700–1750. / Ed. by Susan S. Munshower. N-Y, 1982, p. 143.

² In Fontana’s design the capital pattern includes a garland; the same technique was used in Podmoklovo.

Of all the western church buildings or 17th- and early 18th-century designs known to date, “Ecclesia triumphans” is the model closest to the Podmoklovo rotunda.

Distinctions are in the detail. Fontana used no corner panels on the gallery façade, lucarnes or the lantern. He employed paired pilasters on the second floor. However, if we turn to his other works or projects of his disciples (the circle of architects working in his studio at the St Luke Academy in Rome), we can find some details present in the architecture of the Podmoklovo church. Fontana himself had only one structure circular in plan built: the Jesuit church and college in Loyola (1681)¹. Jointly with L. Bernini, he also took part in work on another famous 17th-century rotunda – the Church of Santa Maria dell’Assunta in Ariccia. The two structures have light tholobates and parapets. The Jesuit church is decorated with a frieze in the area of the capitals and has a similar pattern of split head mouldings.

In 1707, Filippo Juvarra, one of C. Fontana’s most successful and gifted disciples, submitted a design of a church, circular in plan, for his academic degree; he later reworked it to build the Basilica of Superga, a royal mausoleum, in Turin². Scholars have repeatedly noted similar features in Juvarra’s and Fontana’s projects³. Let us dwell on only the elements of interest to us. The lower floor has a parapet with sculptures, the shape of the dome is slightly elongated along the vertical axis and has round lucarnes with fringes, and there is a lantern.

We can add to this the motifs that persisted in Roman architecture, although they dated from the mid-17th century. These include above all window head mouldings of diverse configurations, split frontals, and oval openings characteristic of Fr. Borromini (façade of the Oratorio dei Filippini, 1637–43). Finally, the use of a second ornamented frieze under the architrave in the area of the capitals that appeared in Late Renaissance architecture also formed part of the baroque repertoire (the façade of the Church of St Ignatius of Loyola, 1626–50, Carlo Maderna, Orazio Grassi).

Going back to the Podmoklovo rotunda, let us point out a number of facts that, alongside characteristic features of architecture, suggest tentative comments on the sources of the architectural forms of this landmark.

According to a contract record of 1 May 1714, masters agreed to build a “church circular in plan in the village of Podmokloe”⁴ for Prince G.D. Dolgorukov. It follows from this document, as well as from some other papers⁵, that the church was built according to plan. All construction orders repeatedly “refer” to it (or several drawings). However, neither the drawing itself

¹ Hager H. Carlo Fontana’s Project for a Church in Honour of the “Ecclesia Triumphans” in the Colosseum, Rome // *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*. Vol. 36 (1973), pp. 319–37.

² For details see Carboneri 1979, pp. 5–9; *Architectural Fantasy and Reality*, pp. 144–5.

³ *Architectural Fantasy and Reality*, p. 143.

⁴ RGADA. F. 282. Op. 1. Ch. 1. D. 1033. L. 136 ob.

⁵ RGADA. F. 158. Op. 1. 1716. D. 8, Ll. 38–39 ob., l. 101; F. 282. Op. 1. Ch. 1. D. 1035. Ll. 166–166 ob.; D. 1036. L. 176–178.

nor the author is known today, and we may presume that they will never be known. But this does not make it impossible to trace the origin of the church design.

All of the aforementioned features in the architectural design of the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin in Podmoklovo suggest Italy as the place where such architectural techniques were common. The use of a construction plan was taken for granted in the Petrine period, as Peter had formalised that requirement in his decrees¹. The Russians "discovered" the plan and learned ways of making it during the Great Embassy², as evidenced by Dolgorukov's manuscript architectural treatise. In Russia only foreign architects could devise such a construction plan: Russian architects could hardly have achieved it, primarily because there was no professional school of the western type (it was just in the making). It is highly improbable that Prince Dolgorukov could have commissioned the project from a foreigner in St Petersburg, where all foreign architecture specialists were concentrated. First, his return to Russia from Warsaw in 1712³ had to do with his illness (the Prince most likely stayed in Moscow or in his estates outside Moscow during that time); second, in 1712–4 the only Italian in St Petersburg was D. Trezzini, who did not belong to the architectural school of Rome. The building of a church on his estate outside Moscow could have a dedicatory nature (the prince was already 57 at that time).

Apparently he had brought the plan from Warsaw. Dolgorukov not only performed diplomatic missions, but, like other envoys of the Russian court abroad, was busy hiring professionals. It was to him that Peter owed the invitation of Ch.A. Minich⁴, whom the prince recommended above all as an architect⁵. Consequently, G.F. Dolgorukov had knowledge of architecture and was familiar with the architectural commissions of the Polish nobles and their enthusiasm, including that for Italian architects. The latter regularly visited the Kingdom of Poland starting from the 15th century⁶.

In the early 18th century the situation in Italy itself was not very favourable for architectural practice: the elite was weakening politically and

¹ The decree was enacted 14 September 1715 (Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire. Vol. 5, p. 169, No. 2932).

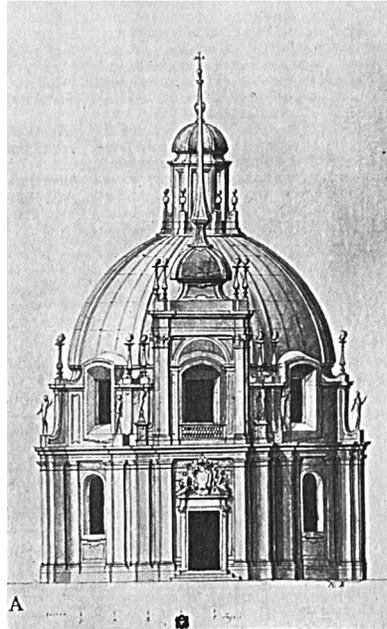
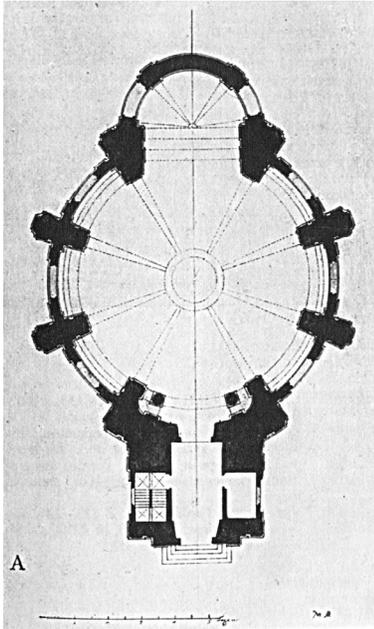
² See Guzevich D., Guzevich I. Op. cit., p. 217.

³ He is known to have started thinking about a comeback in 1710 and mentioned it in his letter to F. Apraksin (TsGAVMF. F. 233. Op. 1. D. 1. L. 240).

⁴ From 1716 Ch.A. Minich was in the service of King Augustus II of Poland and lived in Warsaw.

⁵ "...I saw in practice how the marshal of the crown did a house that was of new fashion and among the best in Warsaw", G.F. Dolgorukov wrote to Peter in 1721. See Bantysh-Kamensky, D.N. *Biografii rossiiskikh generalissimusov i general-feldmarshalov* (Biographies of Russian Generalissimos and Field-Marshal). In 4 parts. Reprint edition of 1840. Part 1. Moscow, 1991, p. 157.

⁶ For instance, during G.F. Dolgorukov's stay in Warsaw Baltassare Fontana (1661–1733), a member of the Fontana family, worked there. For details see Karpowicz M.I. *Fontana di Brusata in Polonia // Stadi sui Fontana. Una dinastia di architetti ticinesi a Roma tra Manierismo e Barocco*. Roma: Cangemi&Editore. 2008, pp. 399–410.



economically while the nobles and the Vatican lacked funds¹. As a result, the number of unrealized project designs produced under architectural competitions kept growing and professionals started leaving the country². With Italian architects looking for jobs in different parts of Europe, the well-known phenomenon of “architecture for export” arose in the first quarter of the 18th century. Along with the architects, their designs also circulated. They could be commissioned, purchased ready-made (if unclaimed), or else one could buy engraved sheets of the so-called “ouvrages”.

A few suppositions to chart the subsequent quest for proof.

1. Prince G.F. Dolgorukov most likely brought the Podmoklovo church design from Poland, which was the only country he permanently resided in during the previous ten years (from 1710).

2. The search for design sources should be confined to the studio of architect Carlo Fontana³ of Rome, since the landmark has typical features

Nicola Michetti
Design of a circular
church. Circa 1722

¹ Wittkower R. *Art and Architecture in Italy/ 1600–1750*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1999, pp. 240–4.

² *Architectural Fantasy and Reality*, pp.1–8.

³ The Italian nature of the prototype has been frequently recognised by scholars, see: Mikhailov, A. “Podmoklovskaia rotunda i klassicheskie veiania v iskusstve petrovskogo vremeni” (Podmoklovo Rotunda and Classical Influences in Petrine Art) // *Iskusstvo*, No. 9, 1985, pp. 64–70; Aronova, A.A. *Arkhitekturnye sviazi Rossii s Severnoi Evropoi v poslednei chetverti XVII – pervoi chetverti XVIII vv.* (Architectural Links Between Russia and Northern Europe in the Last Quarter of the 17th – First Quarter of the 18th Centuries). Dissertation for Cand. of Sciences (Art Studies). Moscow, 1995, p. 68; Kirillov, V.V. *Klassicheskie tendentsii formoobrazovania v arkhitekture*

of Late Baroque architecture of Rome associated with the works of precisely that master.

3. The Podmoklovo church shows that the prince had a solid knowledge of architecture. This fact suggests that additional arguments should be sought at RGADA in favour of Dolgorukov being party to the church design or its supervision.

To sum up, let it be noted that among the Moscow structures the Podmoklovo rotunda design is close to the Petersburg line of the Petrine architectural process, which C. Fontana’s disciple Nicola Michetti¹ joined in 1717. In fact, Prince Grigory Dolgorukov was ahead of his sovereign in the desire to get an “artful” piece of work from an Italian master but, unable to invite an architect, he purchased the design.

With his commission Dolgorukov graphically demonstrated the mechanism of “forgetfulness” which the Petrine elite assimilated. He did not mind that his estate was far away, that the design project could hardly be implemented to a high quality, or that the spatial organization of the project ill-suited the Orthodox church service. What mattered was the *novelty* principle, which had been approved at the recognized European centre and was in tune with contemporary policy pursued in Russia. In Dolgorukov’s case the cultural initiatives of Peter the Great fell on fertile soil cultivated by education, the environment and communication, as a result of which this unique structure came into being.

Podmoskovia petrovskogo vremeni (Classical Form-building Trends in Petrine Architecture of the Moscow Region) // *Russkii klassitsizm vtoroi poloviny XVIII – nach. XIX veka* (Russian Classicism of the Second Half of the 18th – Early 19th Centuries). Moscow: Izobrazitelnoe iskusstvo Publishers, 1994, pp. 15–24; Pilipenko, A.D. “K semantike skulpturnogo ansambliia khrama Rozhdestva Bogoroditsy v Podmoklovo” (On the Semantics of the Sculptural Ensemble of the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin in Podmoklovo) // *Vestnik MGUKI*, No. 6 (20), 2007, pp. 190–193.

¹ In 1723 Michetti submitted a competition design of a rotunda church for the cathedral to be built on the spit of Vasilievsky Ostrov [*Arkhitekturnaia grafika Rossii. Pervaia polovina XVIII veka. Nauchnyi katalog* (Russian Architectural Graphics. First Half of the 18th Century. Scholarly Catalogue)]. Leningrad, 1981, pp. 76–8.