

Forming of the Church System for the Protection of Monuments in Russia

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Abstract

The paper regards the structural and functional peculiarities of the modern Russian Orthodox Church system for the protection of monuments of the Orthodox culture and art that is undergoing a boom. In spite of some work experience of the special commissions on art formed at the turn of 21th century that took control functions in recovering the operations aimed at preservation of religious heritage, the true date of the appearance of the Church-wide system for the protection of historical and cultural heritage should be considered 2010. It is time of the creation the Commission on Cooperation of the Russian Orthodox Church with Museum Community in the Patriarchal Council for Culture. Further development of this system focused on the protection of the Russian religious historical and cultural monuments will be an important step.

Introduction

In the last three decades Russia has experienced a return of interest in religion, which is accompanied by the transfer of the religious cultural sites that were closed and repurposed in the Soviet period to the use or property of the Russian Orthodox Church. But there have been many cases of damaging of the religious cultural heritage because of the improper treatment by the communities. Since 1990, the Church has been searching for the methods that can be used for conserving the religious heritage. Also, the Church has been trying to organize a system for the protection of monuments, and such system started forming in 2010. For the Russian Orthodox Church, this experience is pioneering, and the forming Church system for the protection of monuments has quite a lot drawbacks. To outline a brief history of this system, to analyse its effectiveness and its drawbacks are the main goals of this paper.

Results

In 2010, the Patriarchal Council for Culture (PCC) was established, it was the first to take over the functions of the preserving living religious heritage. Soon, a Museum Community in the PCC was created, it duplicates the functions of the PCC in relation to the heritage preservation (Table 1). In 2014, the Expert Council for the Church Art, Architecture and Restoration (ECCAAR) was created, and the position of the diocesan curators was introduced in 109 of the 197 dioceses. ECCAAR also duplicates a lot of functions of the PCC and its Community (Table 1). The responsibility of the curators turned out to be for a huge number of monuments, but not all the curators have assistants. Therefore, one curator is not enough to control all the monuments (only some churches and monasteries have their own curators), and the cases of the damage to monuments still occur, although they have decreased. The education for the clergy in the field of art and monument protection also helps to reduce these cases.

An effective system was established in the Kasimov's diocese: this diocese has the Working Group for Preservation and Use of Religious Heritage, which also includes the Church Historical Expedition, and the Diocesan Church Historical museum that unites all living religious heritage in the diocese; also there is the Commission for the Construction, Restoration and Preservation of the Living Religious Heritage under the diocesan curator. All necessary functions are clearly divided between these branches. However, such a well-established system requires the bishops to invest in its creation and functioning, to find a qualified personnel. Unfortunately such successful system is not widespread everywhere, especially on the countryside.

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Table 1. Functions of the Church branches for the protection of historical and cultural monuments

	Patriarchal Council for Culture	Museum Community in the Patriarchal Council for Culture	Expert Council for the Church Art, Architecture and Restoration	Diocesan curator
Level	Federal	Federal	Federal, regional	Regional
Functions	Educational	Control and supervision	Control and supervision	Control and supervision
	Advisory and methodological	Advisory and methodological	Advisory and methodological	Information
	Communicative	Communicative	Expert Coordination	Communicative Accounting

Conclusion

For the successful work of the Church system for the protection of monuments it is necessary to restrict a territorial and objects responsibilities of the diocesan curators. Also, the diocesan curators need some assistant, especially in the dioceses where a lot of temples are preserved. It is advisable to introduce in the most valuable temples the curators which can take some functions from diocesan curators.

Very few dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church have the effective system, but a clear system in these dioceses has proved its effectiveness, and can be reproduced in other dioceses.

Recommendations

Russian experience, despite the fact that it is specific, can be useful for some countries which have a lot of cultural and historical religious monuments but do not have a system for their protection. To make a precise vertical system, to clarify the functions and the responsibilities of each branch, and to introduce a curator in the precious temples are the main steps for keeping living religious heritage safe.