

Cultural Styles of Provincial Towns in the 18th century, the influence of the Metropolis?

ALEXANDROPOLIS: AN ATTEMPT OF THE SECOND CAPITAL OF THE
RUSSIAN EMPIRE IN 18TH CENTURY ?

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This article is devoted to a history of town Pochep, nowadays in Bryansk region of Russia, which under a name Alexandropolis could probably become the second capital of the Russian empire in XVIII century.

The history of town Pochep opens some original features peculiar to a number of cities of the XVIIIth century Russia. For a long time it was private urban centre. In first half of the XVIII c., appeared in structure of possession of all-powerful prince Alexander Danilovich Menshikov, it went through the bright period in the history, in particular, economic rise. All these circumstances also determine interest to a history of town just in the specified period.

In conditions of late feudalism private towns could be formed from the villages, situated on land of the feudal lord. The process is investigated in detailed research by K. N. Serbina.

One more reason of existence of such type of cities in territory of Russia in XVIII c. is a preservation them on those lands, which at first were included into structure of Rzecz Pospolita, and then were found in Russia.

Thus, as will be shown below on an example of Pochep, some importance had not only traditions of possession of cities, introduced from Poland, but also special Russian conditions.

In XVII - XVIII cc. Pochep was not actually private town. It passed from hands in hands in circle of Cossacks' *starshina* (headquarters) according to the right of this or that post. On such bases it owned by hetman Ivan Mazepa. After his treason and flight from the country the destiny of Pochep appreciably has changed. On its situation and destiny

now began to render influence not, so to tell, only Ukrainian circumstances, but also number of conditions having wider importance.

Northern war (1700-1721), during which Pochev also got to Menshikov, played a significant role in destiny of many south-west districts of Russia and in any measure - part of the Ukraine. Still in XVII c. the boundary south-west Russian lands after reunion of the Ukraine and Russia became internal territories of the country. However it not at once has changed conditions inside the specified territories. Rather long time the government of the Russian state carried out here policy of so-called "of custom-made cities", in which districts the metropolitan landlords had not the right to get lands. The government consciously preserved here fine served landed property, keeping thus quota of the armed forces for struggle against two probable enemies - Poland and Crimean Tatars.

During Northern war in these "reserved" lands there were representatives of metropolitan nobility - people from the nearest circle of Peter the Great, military figures. Russian troops were concentrated on the Ukraine, preparing to Poltava battle, in cities there were carried out works on strengthening the defending structures on a case of an attack of the Swedes. There was quite enough time to look round and to estimate benefits and incomes, which promised nobles the little-known territory. The victory under Poltava (1709) was inevitable accompanied by the every possible awards, among which most valuable were land grants. Just from the first quarter of the XVIII c. in south-west districts of Russia the large here - grades have appeared, that essentially has changed an initial picture of landed property, characteristic for this outlying district of the country. Among the land owners A. D. Menshikov has appeared too. In 1709 hetman Skoropadsky, replaced Mazepa, has presented Menshikov a number of lands with two cities - Pochev and Yampol.

Except for the named cities Menshikov owned Yamburg and Koporie in Baltic region, Ranenburg in Kozlov district, Baturin and Korop in the Ukraine. In his possessions there were also 3 thousand villages. All this made more or less integrated economy, in which Pochev, the richest possession, was one of links.

As sensational "Pochev's case" (1721) has shown, the prince was not satisfied to that actually urban estate – townsmen of Pochev - has turned to his serfs. A significant

part of the townspeople were Cossacks, which also at the Menshikov request Skoropadsky has transferred to him. Working that by force, by a deceit, Menshikov has increased the area of the initial possession around Pochep in some times.

By *chelobitye* (request) of the inhabitants of Pochep, sent already after Menshikov disgrace in 1728, and addressed to Peter II, the situation of the townspeople after transformation of town in private sharply has changed to worse. Rathaus (Town Hall) management was destroyed (Pochep used the Magdebourg rights). Now burghers were used on different works and services at Menshikov palace.

The crafts, which they were engaged (hemp etc.) in, were transformed to the prince Menshikov's. The taxes for the benefit of the lord with vodka manufacturing were increased; the road taxes and fish catching taxes were entered. Arable lands of burghers were confiscated and divided in small parts, from which raise in prince Menshikov's treasury per one year with quarter till two roubles on eighty eight kopecks, except for yard salaries. The taxes with sold on urban market bread and wooden utensils were increased. The dealers from "extraneous" cities have ceased to come on the market. The economy of the townspeople experienced crisis.

The hard situation of Pochep burghers was aggravated by that Menshikov organized significant construction in town, which was served by hands of the town dwellers. In 1720 he came to Pochep on a road from Glukhov to St. Petersburg. Near Pochep he has put in pawn a fortress, which has received the name Alexandropolis. Within one week Menshikov constantly superintended the building work. By then, when Menshikov has appeared in disgrace, the fortress represented "earthen town, in it there are stone structures in 2 lines, in those lines there are inhabited chambers - 26, under those chambers there are shops - 8, cellars - 3, near that city of Alexandropolis a stone church is begun to be under construction..." Thus, within seven years (1720-1727) townspeople constantly participated in erection of a fortress, carrying out feudal service. (The parallel of St. Petersburg - Alexandropolis is quite curious).

During possession of town by Menshikov linen-sailing manufactory was based here. It worked almost quarter of century - from 1726 till 1750. Well knowing needs of the state and, hence, most profitable manufactures, Menshikov had in his possessions a number of manufactories, making a canvas. It is no wonder, that in Pochep there was

such manufacture. In south-west districts of Russia and in neighbouring to them part of the Ukraine, long since, linen and hemp were cultivated in a plenty. The hemp manufacturing was one of the most widespread crafts in these edges. Thus, here - there was a quite suitable base for manufacture of a canvas and cloth.

To begin manufacture, Menshikov has transferred a part of the workers from manufactory situated near Moscow to Pochep. It is necessary to note, that the basis of manufactory just in Pochep was determined by that the town had the status of private one. Menshikov had means for organization of the new enterprise and, that is important, had all completeness of authority in town and its vicinities. The feudal business has imposed a print on all destiny of the manufactory, while it was in Pochep.

Under Menshikov's rule the manufactory had 17 machine-tools. After his disgrace (1727) the enterprise passed in treasury and continued to work. In 1730 it was considerably integrated thanks to that manufactory from the Ukrainian village Sheptaki was transferred in Pochep. As a result of merge of two enterprises on Pochep's manufactory 37 machine-tools has appeared. In 1734 there were already 71 machine-tools.

The amount of production which is let out manufactory, also accrued. If to take a major part of this production - pieces of a canvas - that a picture of development of manufacture it turns out following: 1726 - 16, 1727 - 570, 1728 - 364, 1729 - 1244, 1730 - 815, 1731 - 1671, 1732 - 1679, 1733 - 1436, 1735 - 1483, 1736 - 1315.

Such growth of manufacture, is especial per the first years of manufactory action, is explained by a number of favourable circumstances. First of them, truth, short-term action, consist in that completely special situation, what was occupied by the manufactory owner all-powered prince Menshikov. Second consist in the person of the manufactory manager Gavriila Lukin, a vigorous man, aspired to manufacture escalating.

Important circumstance in manufactory activity was selling its production and, hence, reception of the enterprise income. Manufactory was organized by Menshikov in that time, when the vigorous construction of domestic fleet was conducted. The canvas was in sharp necessary. Selling of production and income of it were guaranteed. Later conditions has changed. The first attribute of it was the imperial decree from May 25, 1727, allowed to sell abroad linen and tow (hemp) yarn at the essentially lowered duty -

5 % vs. 37,5 % in 1724. In 1737-1738 the manufactory carried out the large order of military department and supplied Russian troops of the field marshal Minich during Russian-Turkish war. After ending military actions a canvas began to accumulate in Pochep again. In 1741 here there were 4690 pieces of a cloth - result approximately of three years of work of the enterprise. Hardly it was possible to realize a cloth to a Dutch merchant Johan Timerman in 1743.

At all artificiality of its existence the manufactory played an important role as a town-making factor: was one of the basic urban manufactures, promoted concentration of the population in town. Probably, its transfer in village Revny in 1750 in many respects promoted decline of Pochep as urban centre.

Became private again in 1760 and had being under authority of Catherine II favourite Kirill Razoumovsky, Pochep was dying and at the end of XVIII c. was called not as "*misto*" (town), but as "*mistechko*" (township), that externally expressed fall of its former importance.

The possession of cities in XVIII c. was connected to significant growth of large landed property, enormous land grants, characteristic in conditions of development of favouritism, prompt promotion at a court yard that one or other figure. Therefore it would be not quite correct to distribute to XVIII centuries a conclusion by P.P.Smirnov that private towns were entirely product of epoch of the feudal disunity.

In investigated time the separate towns could be given to the official on time of performance of the official duties. As it is well visible on an example of a history of Pochep, in Government's eyes the side between these two types of possession was rather unsteady. From given up "*na bulavu*" (on mace - that means on the temporary possession) Pochep easily turned to eternal and hereditary possession. The status of private town in a general result influenced on Pochep bad. By the end of the XVIII c. the town has come to decline. Even when, apparently, Pochep experienced rise connected to expansion of construction, basis of new manufacture, that usually stimulates development of town and its typically urban features, the situation developed rather difficulty. In Pochep during Menshikov's possession the manufactory foundation and other changes in life of town were connected and, probably, in a significant degree depended by an

exhaustion of economy of the urban inhabitants. Thus, the economic rise appeared unilateral and to a certain extent illusory.

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