

УДК 76.01

## **Formation of the Russian Siberian Identity in the Wood Engravings of the Krasnoyarsk Craftsmen**

**Ekaterina A. Sertakova and Anna A. Gerasimova\***

*Siberian Federal University*

*82 Svobodny, Krasnoyarsk, 660041 Russia<sup>1</sup>*

Received 17.04.2011, received in revised form 6.09.2011, accepted 19.11.2011

---

*This article concerns such a topical modern problem as a loss of identity by the Russian citizens in general and by the residents of the Krasnoyarsk region in particular. Nowadays, the uniqueness of the Siberian character, local nature and life in the Siberian region is perceived differently from the way it was perceived in the past. Influence of the western cultures which change ideas about traditions, norms and values is becoming very significant. As never before, the regional culture of the Krasnoyarsk region needs models, which can vividly illustrate Siberian identity, inspire Siberian self-awareness and evoke pride for the small motherland. Work of arts, which have deep ideas and meanings in their present sensuous form, may become such models. As an example to prove this assumption we considered such a type of fine art as graphics and its form – xylography. From the graphical work of arts, which take part in the formation of the Siberian identity, the works of the Siberian school of xylography by Herman Pashtov have been chosen. The target of their analysis is to identify the mental characteristics of Siberia and Siberians, whose viewers can perceive by looking at xylography. The methodological base consists of the theoretical abstracts of the modern theory of fine art and development of the theory of art critics. As the result of their analysis it was discovered that in the works of the Krasnoyarsk craftsmen of the Siberian school of xylography, the images of Siberia in different manifestations (the city, nature, people, relationships, etc.) illustrate ideas, which contribute to the formation of the Siberian identity.*

*Keywords: Siberian identity, regional culture, culture of the Krasnoyarsk region, values, ideals, art, graphics, xylography, Siberian school of xylography, masters of wood engraving, the image of Siberia in graphics.*

*The research is done as a part of the grant of the Federal Target Programme “Social construction of all-Russian identity in the Central Siberia”.*

---

### **Point**

The results of the humanitarian and social research, conducted in the Faculty of Arts and Cultural Studies of the Institute for the Humanities of Siberian Federal University under

the direction of Doctor of Philosophic Sciences, professor N.P. Koptseva (Koptzeva, 2010, 2010a; Lomanova, 2008) illustrate, that nowadays cultural politics of the Siberian region is in a critical situation, which is, first of all, connected

---

\* Corresponding author E-mail address: sertachok@mail.ru; loshka\_vilka@mail.ru

<sup>1</sup> © Siberian Federal University. All rights reserved

with the loss of national identity by the residents of the region. According to the opinion of the scientists who work in this field, the majority of people who live in the Krasnoyarsk region, as representatives of the definite community suffer self-awareness deficiency. The population stops associating themselves with Siberians, do not consider themselves as representatives of this unique culture.

This deficiency happened due to the political, economical, social and cultural reforms, which imposed the cult of the new time in Russia: people stopped trying to reach spiritual self-improvement, to feel the need in the high esthetic values and follow them, as they give preference to the material side of life. Mostly, they started to adopt American or European culture, thus losing their national roots and reject the traditional way of life. More often we can hear the assumption, that in order to become a representative of an ethnos, it is not necessary to have the definite genetics, it would be enough to consider oneself to be the one. From this point of view, the residents of the region give preference to the European ethnic groups and nations – they actively study languages and plan their future living abroad.

Such changes are common for the whole territory of the state and Siberian region is not an exception, as through the researches of the recent years we can see high rates of loss of the cultural and national identities by the local population.

Under conditions of the deformation of the ideals and loss of the internal values in the society, the question of ethical and ethnical education of the residents of the region is becoming topical. There is a necessity to maintain to the cultural ideals and national peculiarities, which would be reachable and simple for understanding. One of the promising ways of such a cultural education of the residents of the Siberian region is art.

Art connects generations and conveys cultural heritage. For this reason artists have always been considered as chosen people, people who have an important social goal – to represent cultural values in their works and show them to the public. Orientation of the consciousness of the residents to the cultural values and ideals of their region is the necessary condition of the steady development of the Siberian region.

### **Example**

As the examples of art, which convey ideas of formation of the Siberian identity we may study the works of the Siberian school of xylography, which functions in Krasnoyarsk.

Good school of xylography has been established in the regional centre for a long time. The leading centres in this kind of art are FSBEI HPE “Krasnoyarsk State Institute of Arts” and creative shops of the branch “Ural, Siberia and the Far East” of the Russian Academy of Arts. A lot of remarkable artists, famous in Russia and other countries, are from these institutions.

For a long time the department of graphics in the Institute of Arts was headed by the Honoured Artist of the Russian Federation M. F. Gladunov, famous for his vivid and full of lyricism landscapes; from 1998 the department is headed by the Honoured Artist of the Russian Federation, professor V.P. Teplov, who demonstrates high professionalism and perfect technique in easel works.

Nowadays, the most famous and popular school of xylography in Krasnoyarsk – is the school of xylography, connected with creative and teaching work of Herman Sufadinovitch Pashtov – People’s Artist of the Russian Federation, corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Arts, professor, head of the creative workshop “The Art of Book” in the Institute of Arts and head of the creative workshop of graphics of the Russian Academy of Arts.

The workshop was founded in 1989, when G.S. Pashtov came to Krasnoyarsk in order to head the creative workshop of book graphics of the Russian Academy of Arts. He recommended himself as a talented teacher and artist. Gradually, young artists, interested in xylography, began to join him. During a short period of time (about 20 years), Krasnoyarsk school of xylography had substantial progress and gained deserved recognition. For example, in 2003 in Moscow in Ignatii Ignatievich Nivinskyi studio the exhibition of the works by the pupils of the Krasnoyarsk school of xylography took place. This fact was very important, as it indicated obvious success and consistency of the studio. The core of the school were graduates of the institute and the workshop: A.G. Pasht-Khan, T.G. Belova, E.B. Fedorova, S.V. Timokhov, N.V. Murzina, E.E. and A.V. Savochkins, A.V. Sorokin and others.

The fact of existence of this school provides a large number of works of art, connected with formation of the Siberian identity and marks the belonging to the Russian culture. On the one side, a kind of a paradox appears. In fact, creative work of the head of the Siberian school of xylography is connected with Caucasus and demonstrates, first of all, features of the Caucasus identity. Among his works, there are only few, devoted to Siberia (e.g. "Siberian rennet"). But on the other side, this true love of G.S. Pashtov to his first motherland is the example to follow for his students and followers. That is why the graphic artists, who work in this studio, very often depict images of the Krasnoyarsk region, the beauties of Siberia and characters of the local residents.

The main technique which is used in the studio is xylography, or wood engraving, which is used for the printing of images and texts. There are different types of wood engraving: oblong and edged, coloured and black-and-white, easel and book. All these types of wood engraving are

used by the Krasnoyarsk artists for visualizing of their ideas.

The choice of the material used for work displays peculiarities of the Russian culture. The wood, used for making pieces of art, reminds about abundance of forest recourses in Russia and close connection of the Siberians with nature. Another peculiar feature of the art of Russian wood engraving is its synthetical character. It is manifested in inextricable connection of the fine arts (book graphics) and literature. Print graphics was initially used for making and spread of the large number of copies of an image and meet requirements of book illustrations. Invention of the frontal xylography gave stimulus for advancement of the wood engraving. Nowadays, when it is possible to print out any amount of copies, authentic engraving as illustration makes a book especially valuable and unique, as it means limited edition. The usage of the old methods – xylography, linoleum engraving, lithography and etching – is a tribute to the formed tradition of book illustration.

Easel xylography means the possibility of this kind of art to exist by itself, independently from literature.

The members of "Herman Pashtov's Studio" create their works in a book and easel xylography. For example, among the works of book graphics we can often see illustrations for the books of the famous Krasnoyarsk writer V.P. Astafiev. A large amount of works made it possible to organize the art exhibition in the memory of the writer. The illustrations to such novels and stories as "Cursed and Killed" "Tsar-Fish", "The Theft", "Shepard and Shepherdess" and others are among them. All of them have the distinctive feature – when they clearly depict the idea of the text or one particular scene, the works may be considered as separate works of art.

Thus, illustration to V.P. Astafiev's story "The Last Bow", created by O.N. Gudwill in



Fig. 1. Gudwill O.N. "The Last Bow", 2003 Front xylography, 13,5 x 9 sm

2003 (Fig. 1) demonstrates sibling connections of generations.

The figures of the depicted heroes-Siberians are enlightened in the space of the dark wooden barn. Thus, the main accent isn't put to the definite event of the story, but to the relationships between people. The grandson hugs his grandfather with respect and love. The grandfather sees in his grandson the future provider for the family. In such a way, warm family relationships, as essential aspect of the concept of the Siberian character are depicted.

In easel works the topic of Siberia is presented widely. Artists use it as an abstract image and pay attention to the definite aspects of real life. Very often we can see images of the Siberian cities and towns (Krasnoyarsk, Achinsk, Yeniseysk, Kansk, etc.), which are depicted very peculiar, with their unique atmosphere and rhythm of life. Siberian nature, amazing views of Stolby, taiga and other places are depicted. Easel xylography demonstrates

artists' relations to Siberia and people, who live here.

For example, a graphic artist A.V. Sorokin very often devotes his works to portrayals of the Siberian cities and towns. These are such works as "Yenisey Monastery", "The Life Springs", "Yenisey India", "Old Krasnoyarsk" etc. In these works Siberia is shown differently, variously. His work of 2003 "An angel walks around Krasnoyarsk" is especially notable (Fig. 2).

Krasnoyarsk is the main character of this xylography. It is depicted very peculiar. Despite presence of the numerous electric lines, the artist depicts an old building of the city. Thus, he decided to portray not the modern megapolis, but the old image of the city – old wooden houses and narrow streets. It can be perceived as an intention to show the old city, the city which has a long and interesting history. The artist creates a sense of connection between generations, when we become the heirs of the old city and have to keep it, as people before us did.

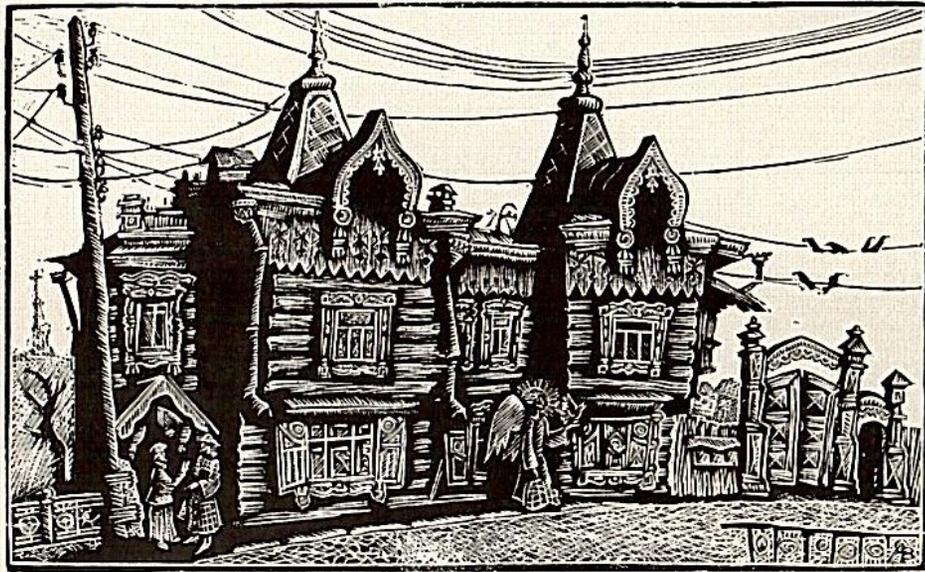


Fig. 2. Sorokin A.V. "An angel walks around Krasnoyarsk", 2003 Front xylography, 12 x 19,5 sm

The carvings of the wooden house, its gates and fence are beautiful. The city is represented as beautiful.

Rickety building and crooked electric line pole break the symmetry and a strict linearity of the space, what makes the city a more comfortable and calm place.

The size of this work (12x19.5 sm.) also matters. Such a small size implies home-like atmosphere, closeness of the viewer and a piece of work, opportunity to hold it. This feeling is extrapolated to the relation to the depicted city – caring and sincere. The model of the city, which can be hidden in hands and protected, which requires a gentle treatment, is created.

Another character of the front xylography, mentioned in the name is an angel. In the xylography the angel, on the one side, is emphasized by the circular form, thus becoming the compositional centre of the work, and, on the other side, is not very different from other two characters – inhabitants of the city. It makes his walk around the city to appear ordinary, normal and common for the public. Such a technique

makes the image of the city a special place, marked by light, chosen by God and highly spiritual.

The works of E.B. Feodorova "the Wind", O.N. Baranova "Krasnoyarsk" and many others characterize Siberian cities and towns as places, which keep their spirituality and the sincerity of faith. The rhythm of the local life is usually depicted as unrushed. Old and new, traditional and alien are represented on the same territory. Siberia considered to be a very interesting material, they can see it and memorise it the details in distinct, clear, precise pictures and compositions.

The series of the graphic lists by S.V. Tikhomirov "The Childhood on the River" depicts the topic of Siberia in a different aspect. On these engravings Krasnoyarsk is represented as a place, where the lyrical hero of a visual story spent his childhood. It gives a tingle of sadness and nostalgia. At the same time, such a technique makes the city the mythical "Golden Age", which will never returns again, but it is always remembered as the best and cherished time. Appearance of the naked boys, which is traditional for the Russian fine art, symbolically



Fig.3. S.V. Tikhomirov “Sun”, 2002 Edged xylography, 37 x 50 sm

means purity, sincerity and dreaminess. It is possible to prove it by looking at one of the works, named “Sun” (Fig. 3).

Firstly, the romantic perception appears in creation of the imaginative different beautiful world. Secondly, in the temper, which the author gives to the central character of the work: we can see courage, resoluteness and confidence of the young man. Thirdly, in the composition of the work the main character is on the edge, ready to fly, and together with the pier they make a visual line, which is directed to the upper right corner. In painting and graphics this technique is used to create the atmosphere of high spirits and victory. The boy is in the centre of the composition, like in the centre of the universe, it is stressed by the multiple circular forms around him. Thus, we can say, that in S.V. Tikhomirov’s work, Krasnoyarsk is represented as the city of dreams, the place where you always want to

return and you will never forget, and the best memories of your life are connected with this place.

**Resume** Having analyzed the image of Krasnoyarsk and Siberians in the works of the masters of the Siberian school of xylography by Herman Pashtov, we may say, that this school of graphics is ideals forming. The ideas, which are represented in the works of the masters of this school, contribute to the formation of the positive image of Krasnoyarsk (and, correspondingly, Siberia in general) as a small motherland, the city, which has interesting history, the city, good for living. In the works of “The Studio of Xylography by Herman Pashtov” Krasnoyarsk is represented as unique, chosen by God and highly spiritual city, the city which keeps its traditions. In their works the city doesn’t look industrial or technically-developed. Vice versa, it is always depicted as

old and keeping to its usual way of life. It is possible to say, that the image of Krasnoyarsk is sentimentalized and praised by the Krasnoyarsk xylographers. The image of the Siberians is similar to the environment, which brought them up. They are romantic people, with open hearts and bare souls. Their natural connection with the nature and bonds between generations are

accentuated in their image as organic part of the unique Siberian character.

In such a way, even shallow analysis of the works by the local artists confirmed hypothesis that their works are didactic; they can really transform person's thinking. By demonstrating important values of the national identity, the artists implant it to the people.

### References

N.P. Koptzeva. Cultural and anthropological problem of Social Engineering (Methodological Problem at Modern Applied Culture Studies) / N.P. Koptzeva // Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences. – V. 3. – № 1. – Krasnoyarsk, 2010. – P. 22 – 34.

N.P. Koptzeva. Indigenous peoples of Krasnoyarsk region: concerning the question of methodology of culture studies/ N.P. Koptzeva // Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences. – V. 3. – № 4. – Krasnoyarsk, 2010. – P. 554 – 562.

N.P. Koptzeva, N.A. Bachova. System of Culture in Krasnoyarsk Region: Main Subjects and Cultural Values / N.P. Koptzeva, N.A. Bachova // Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences. – V. 3. – № 3. – Krasnoyarsk, 2010. – P. 344 – 381.

T.M. Lomanova. The Krasnoyarsk Studio of Xylography by Herman Pashtov – New Occurrence in the Russian Art // Collected works of VI Siberian cultural readings. – Krasnoyarsk, 2008. PP. 38-43

Siberia as a Part of the Russian Empire / Ed. by L.M. Dashemek, A.V. Remnev. – M: Novoye literaturnoye obozrenie, 2007.

## **Формирование российской сибирской идентичности в ксилографии красноярских мастеров**

**Е.А. Сертакова А.А. Герасимова**

*Сибирский федеральный университет,  
Россия 660041, Красноярск, Свободный, 82*

---

*В настоящей статье уделяется внимание такой актуальной проблеме современности, как утрата идентичности жителями России вообще и жителями Красноярского края в частности. Уникальность сибирского характера, местной природы, жизни в Сибирском регионе стала восприниматься совершенно иначе, чем в прошлом. Слишком активно стало инокультурное влияние западных стран, изменяя в обществе представления о традициях, нормах, ценностях. Как никогда раньше региональная культура Красноярского края стала нуждаться в эталонах, способных наглядно продемонстрировать сибирскую идентичность, пробудить самосознание людей в качестве сибиряков, вызвать чувство гордости за свою малую Родину. Такими эталонами могут выступать произведения искусства, несущие в своей чувственно-явленной форме глубокие идеи и смыслы. В качестве примера, доказывающего данную гипотезу, был*

*взяты такой вид изобразительного искусства, как графика, и его разновидность - ксилография. Из графических произведений искусства, участвующих в процессах формирования сибирской идентичности, были выбраны работы мастеров Сибирской школы ксилографии Германа Паптова. Цель их анализа – выявление ментальных характеристик Сибири, Красноярска, сибиряков, которые могут быть считаны зрителями из произведений. В качестве методологии использовались теоретические положения современной теории изобразительного искусства, а также разработки теории художественной критики. В результате их рассмотрения было выявлено, что в работах красноярских мастеров Сибирской школы ксилографии образы Сибири в различных ее проявлениях (город, природа, люди, отношения и т.д.) действительно демонстрируют идеи, способствующие формированию сибирской идентичности.*

*Ключевые слова: сибирская идентичность, региональная культура; культура Красноярского края; ценности; идеалы; искусство; графика; ксилография; сибирская школа ксилографии; мастера ксилографии; образ Сибири в произведениях графики.*

*Работа выполнена в рамках участия в гранте ФЦП «Социальное конструирование общероссийской идентичности в Центральной Сибири».*

---