Urbanism and Social Transformation
in Peter the Great's Russia

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Abstract

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Few figures loom as large over the history of Russia as Peter I. From the moment he accepted the

throne as sole ruler in 1696, he embarked on an ambitious campaign of modernization, disrupting

the culture of a country mired in traditions he considered hopelessly out of date. The young

emperor's transformations of Russia's military forces, administrative structure, religious culture,

and social and political practices have been well documented. His reign also produced a dramatic

shift in the country's architectural culture towards more Western idioms. Existing scholarship has

too often permitted the architectural and urban aspects of Peter's reforms to be divorced from

social and political changes in Russian society. This study proposes that these architectural and

urban transformations might be better understood as integral parts of his comprehensive program

of reform. Following a method drawn from Spiro Kostof, this study asserts that reforms in

Russia's architecture and urbanism in Moscow and Saint Petersburg influenced other aspects of

society in turn, and thus formed a reciprocal relationship with reforms in those areas.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Transliterating from Cyrillic to Latin is a tricky business. In the following text, I have adopted a mixed approach which takes the Library of Congress system of transliteration as its basis,[1] but with several key modifications undertaken for clarity's sake. Russian names that are widely familiar in their Anglicized form will be presented in that form (Peter and Nicholas rather than Petr and Nikolai, for example). Similarly, names that are widely presented in popular literature using a spelling more natural to English-speaking readers will also be presented in those forms (Tolstoy instead of Tolstoi, Alexandra instead of Aleksandra). Names and adjectives ending in *-yi* and *-ii* will be uniformly rendered with a single terminal "y" (Dmitry instead of Dmitrii). Soft signs will also be omitted for legibility's sake (Olga instead of Ol'ga). Any translations undertaken by the author will be noted as such.

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[1] The Library of Congress system can be found online at "ALA-LC Romanization Tables," Library of Congress, last modified April 30, 2015. At the time of writing, the recommended table for Russian is dated 2012; a full set of transliteration tables was last published in print in 1997.

Architecture does not reflect the prevalent Zeitgeist, it is one of the factors that defines and informs it.

Spiro Kostof, 1967[2]

"Periodization," writes James Cracraft, "is a problem that bedevils all historical inquiry."[3] Scholars of Peter I boast an acute awareness of this problem: there lived perhaps no other figure in Russian history with whom historical periods are so often professed to commence or conclude. Indeed, the basic model for the periodization of Russia's history has long hinged upon its energetic first emperor. The historian Sergei Solovev (fig. 0.1) first elucidated this enduring model in the mid-nineteenth century: Peter's reign had inaugurated the "modern" *(novy)* period, while everything preceding his reign was to be classified as "Old Russian" *(drevnerussky).[4]* Solovev saw Peter's transformation of society as nothing short of a revolution, one that wrenched her from the mire of the Middle Ages and thrust her into the light of Western civilization. However, he also urged that this revolution be understood as a single episode within the inexorable, "organic" unfolding of Russia's history,[5] a view likely reflecting the growing

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[2] Spiro Kostof, "Architectural History and the Student Architect: A Symposium," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 26.3 (Oct 1967): 190. Kostof re-articulated this view in a more mature form in *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals* (New York: Oxford, 1985), 7.

[3] James Cracraft, "Peter the Great and the Problem of Periodization," in *Architectures of Russian Identity: 1500 to the Present*, ed. James Cracraft and Daniel Rowland (Ithaca: Cornell, 2003), 7.

[4] Sergei Mikhailovich Solovev's (1820 - 1879) greatest work was the monumental *Istoriia Rossii s Drevneishikh Vremen,* originally published in 29 volumes between 1851 and 1879.

[5] S. M. Solovev, *Istoriia Rossii s Drevneishikh Vremen* (Moscow: Socio-Economic Literature Publishing, 1959), 1:541 - 553.

influence of German Idealist conceptions of history in mid-nineteenth-century Europe. Solovev never fully reconciled these two views of Peter's reign. The tension between the two approaches reappears in the work of Solovev's most influential follower, Vasily Kliuchevsky (1841 - 1911), who nevertheless helped to cement the two-stage periodization of Russian history - Old Russian and modern - as the standard treatment. Soviet historians, working under the official Marxist-Leninist conception, would briefly complicate this periodization into three

Figure 0.1 Portrait of Sergei Solovev. Print by Lavrenty Seriakov, 1881. Courtesy of the Russian State Library, reproduced under public domain.

phases - feudal, capitalist, and socialist.[6] Much more recently, several historians have denied the impact of Peter's reign as a historical break, emphasizing instead the many continuities between Muscovite and Petrine Russia.[7]

The two-stage periodization, which in the present author's view may still be taken as the orthodox position, saddles modern historians working in the fields of art, architectural, or urban history with a difficult problem. These fields did not develop fully as independent disciplines until the twentieth century, by which time historians of Russia had largely settled the question of

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[6] The leading figure of this tendency was undoubtedly Mikhail Pokrovsky (1868 - 1932). For a detailed treatment of Pokrovsky and early Soviet historiography, see Jonathan Frankel, "Party Genealogy and the Soviet Historians (1920 - 1938)," *Slavic Review* 25.4 (Dec 1966): 563 - 603.

[7] Among the leading figures of this tendency are Russell E. Martin and Donald Ostrowski. For an up-to-date overview of the historiography of Peter I with respect to the problem of periodization, see Nancy S. Kollmann, "Divides and Ends - The Problem of Periodization," *Slavic Review* 69.2 (Summer 2010): 439 - 447.

periodization without much reference to art-historical or architectural criteria. It must have seemed convenient enough to general historians that Peter's reign indeed produced new artistic and architectural forms, and therefore developments in these fields may have been assessed as presenting no great challenge to the established two-stage periodization. When Igor Grabar, the pioneer of Russian art history, began compiling his monumental *Istoriia Russkogo Iskusstva* (History of Russian Art) in 1910, he fit his conception of Russia's architectural development neatly into the prevailing periodization developed by Solovev and Kliuchevsky. Here the old tension re-emerges: yes, Peter's architectural program constituted a revolution. But, according to Cracraft's assessment of Grabar, it also represented an "organic transition … from an indigenous 'Moscow baroque' of the late seventeenth century, which represented the crowning achievement of 'Old Russian' architecture, to the largely imported 'St. Petersburg baroque' of the earlier eighteenth century, which marked the debut of the 'new' or modern architecture in Russia."[8]

This relationship - between Moscow's seventeenth-century 'baroque' and that of Saint Petersburg in the eighteenth century - is disputed.[9] It is clear enough, however, that the historiography of Peter's reign has long been rooted in concerns other than architecture and urbanism - social, political, military, administrative, and religious concerns, for example. Architectural historians have largely fitted their studies onto this existing historiographical framework, much as Grabar did. One result of this process is that while many aspects of Peter's transformations are viewed as sweeping and interconnected, the emperor's architectural program

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[8] Cracraft, "Peter the Great and the Problem of Periodization," 8.

[9] Cracraft unequivocally rejects the idea of the 'Moscow baroque's' influence upon Saint Petersburg's architecture. See *Ibid.,* 8 - 9. Recent work by Dmitry Shvidkovsky would seem to support this position, though he offers a more nuanced treatment of the 'Moscow baroque' as in fact a series of semi-independent 'manners' reflecting the tastes of various patrons. See Dmitry Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West* (New Haven: Yale, 2007), 153 - 197.

is largely relegated to matters of aesthetic taste.[10] Only very recently have scholars begun to treat Petrine architecture and urbanism as criteria worthy of settling historiographical questions upon.[11] Additionally, the sheer importance assigned to Peter I as a historical figure has produced a massive body of scholarship in which the various aspects of Peter's reforms have often been treated separately in order to achieve adequate coverage. Even James Cracraft, a noted historian of Petrine Russia upon whose work this project relies heavily, illustrates this tendency in his decision to publish his three volumes on the "Petrine revolution" separately - on architecture, culture, and imagery. I propose instead that a country's architecture and urbanism cannot be so neatly divorced from its other fields of development. This is especially true in times of rapid, tumultuous change, and when key decisions - such as the founding of a capital - possess a necessarily architectural character. Rather than suggesting that Peter's architectural program reflected his "Western" taste for visual clarity and orderliness, and therefore provided a convenient visual "face" for his reign, I propose that Peter's urban reforms and architectural innovations be treated as an integral part of his overall package of reforms. Crucially, I assert that architecture and urbanism during Peter's reign exerted their influence upon Russian society in its social and political aspects, rather than simply reflecting changes in those arenas.

This assertion emerges naturally from a particular historical method, one for which I am greatly indebted to the pioneering architectural historian and educator Spiro Kostof (1936 -

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[10] See pages 26 - 27 of this study for a discussion of this tendency within the current scholarship.

[11] Richard Wortman, for example, has emphasized the role of architecture in shaping perceptions of the state and the monarchy in Imperial Russia. His most complete work is *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy* (Princeton: Princeton, 1995).

1991). In 1967, having recently assumed a post at the University of California at Berkeley,[12] Kostof outlined a four-point strategy for understanding buildings in their "total context." These points are worth reproducing in their entirety:

1. that the physical presence of each building will be studied in its entirety;

2. that the building will be thought of in a broader physical framework than itself;

3. that *all* past buildings will be deemed worthy of attention and study; and

4. that nonphysical aspects of any building's existence will be considered indispensable for a proper understanding of that building.[13]

Kostof's remarks should be understood first and foremost within their immediate context: a growing reaction against the deliberate removal of history from architectural pedagogy under the early Modernists.[14] His legacy has proved enduring, however, in shaping the perceived role of the architectural historian to the present day. Crucially, Kostof's method provides an interdisciplinary "bridge" that allows the integration of architectural history into other historical disciplines. It is this aspect of Kostof's thinking on which the present paper most heavily relies. I propose here the thorough integration of Peter I's architectural program into treatments of his social and political reforms (for example, the treatment of a building or of a set of urban design regulations as political tools *in themselves*, consciously undertaken to shape social and political life rather than simply reflecting changes in those areas after the fact). The third and fourth points of Kostof's strategy prove vital in this endeavor. The assertions that even ordinary buildings

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[12] For concise biographical notes on Kostof, see "Kostof, Spiro [Konstantin]," Dictionary of Art Historians, accessed November 10, 2015.

[13] Kostof, "Architectural History and the Student Architect," 190.

[14] Kostof was acutely aware of this context: "The phobia [of history] was based on the premise that since the imitation of historical styles was evil, the study of history itself had to be eschewed in the education of the modern architect if he was now successfully to withstand the temptations of revivalism." *Ibid.,* 189.

warrant close study and that buildings cannot be divorced from their social context (both fairly novel ideas in 1967) free the architectural historian from a strictly formalist study of monuments and allow penetration into other historical disciplines - social, political, or otherwise. Kostof called the resulting area of study "the urban process:"

> … that intriguing conflation of social, political, technical, and artistic forces that generates a city's form. The urban process is both proactive and reactive; sometimes the result of a collective mandate, at others a private prerogative; sometimes issuing from a coordinated single campaign, at others completely piecemeal; sometimes having the authority of law, at others created without sanction.[15]

The usefulness of this strategy for studies of Petrine Russia - a complex period of rapid, tumultuous change - is readily apparent. In this study, I do not claim to reduce the complexities of Peter's reign, nor perhaps even to sort through them with much success. Instead, I hope to suggest ways in which historians might better cope with these complexities, particularly in the integration of seemingly disparate fields such as architecture and politics.

The sources on which I draw for this project vary. As with any work of architectural history, the most notable primary sources are the buildings themselves; fortunately, several large architectural projects commissioned under Peter survive to this day. Care must be taken to recognize these buildings (as Kostof surely would have) not as static historical sources, but as documents *in time,* their physical forms and meanings steadily changing through both alterations in construction and shifts in their urban and social context. Buildings of course spawn numerous historical sources in their own right, either primary or secondary depending on the focus of the

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[15] Zeynep Çelik, et al., "Streets and the Urban Process: A Tribute to Spiro Kostof," in *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space,* ed. Zeynep Çelik et al. (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), 1.

research. These include drawings by the architect,[16] historical engravings or paintings, accounting records produced during construction or operation, written descriptions of the building or of its neighborhood (including descriptions of any rituals performed within), and photographs. Art commissioned as part of a work of architecture also tends to generate these sources; the iconostasis within the Peter and Paul Cathedral serves as an example of this tendency within this study.

Other primary sources on which I draw include graphic material that does not relate to any particular built project. Among these sources are several proposed street plans for Saint Petersburg, a pattern book of standardized building facades and plans meant for efficiently propagating Saint Petersburg's imperial style throughout Russia, and an early Russian treatise on architectural theory and practice. Written accounts from the period under study also serve as indispensable primary sources. Many of the most interesting accounts were penned by the numerous Western Europeans living and working in the new capital (though I draw on Adam Olearius's visits to seventeenth-century Moscow as well). When working with these foreigners' accounts, it must be kept in mind that Westerners arriving in Saint Petersburg had typically already heard something of Peter I's project to "civilize" a nation viewed in Europe as peripheral and barbaric. Accordingly, we must assume that a Western visitor's observations were consistently shaped by the question that most commanded their curiosity: has Peter succeeded in civilizing the Russians?[17]

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[16] In Peter's case we may also consider drawings by the patron; see, for example, his sketch for a citadel at Azov (fig. 2.1).

[17] The most complete anthology of Western visitors' accounts of Saint Petersburg during Peter's reign is Y. Bespiatykh, ed., *Peterburg Petra I v Inostrannykh Opisaniiakh* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1991).

A final written primary source upon which I rely is the complete collection of laws introduced during Russia's Imperial period (*Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*), a multi-volume work compiled between 1830 and 1843; I cite only laws introduced during Peter's reign (1682 - 1725). Peter, as an autocrat determined to effect radical societal changes, naturally valued the imperial decree as a political tool. In the collection of laws, for example, we find decrees introducing new urban design regulations such as street setbacks and prohibited construction materials. The value of these documents for an architectural study are therefore quite apparent, but their use demands careful consideration of their limitations as historical sources. A law reveals above all the intent to enact some change; its popular reception or its degree of enforcement cannot be inferred from the document alone. Inferences of this sort can occasionally be made by reference to multiple decrees; a series of repeated prohibitions on wood construction in Moscow in the 1690s, for example, would seem to indicate that the measures were either resisted or difficult to implement. I try throughout this study to avoid relying too heavily on Peter's legislative acts as exclusive sources for understanding contemporary life in Saint Petersburg.

Any writer undertaking a study of Petrine Russia must also contend with an immense stock of secondary sources. I draw here on sources from a number of overlapping fields, including architectural histories of Russia, urban studies of Saint Petersburg, general histories of architecture and urbanism, studies of Peter I's program of reforms, biographies of Peter I, and works on the political and social history of both Russia and early modern Europe. The oldest historical works consulted here are those of Russian historians Sergei Solovev and Vasily Kliuchevsky, who, as discussed above, worked in the second half of the nineteenth century to lay

the foundations for the modern historiography of Russia. While I attempt to remain sensitive to the total arc of Russian historiography, I privilege the most recent sources whenever possible in order to account for the most up-to-date developments in each relevant field.

I divide this study into three chapters of roughly equal length. The first chapter deals primarily with Moscow in the late seventeenth century. Key aspects of Moscow's architectural appearance and urban form are discussed in order to provide a background for Peter's ascension to the throne and his eventual removal of the capital to Saint Petersburg. Peter undertook a lengthy trip through Western Europe in the 1690s (becoming the first tsar to ever do so), an encounter that would provide ample material for his transformations of Russian society, and during which he recruited Western craftsmen by the hundreds. For nearly a decade at the close of the century, Peter attempted to introduce numerous urban design regulations to "modernize" Moscow along Western European lines. I attempt to demonstrate that these changes were not merely aesthetic, but that they disrupted deeply rooted notions about the Russian homestead and its role as the basic urban unit. I assign great importance to Peter's urban reforms in Moscow as potent counterweights to the enduring argument that Peter's reforms ultimately stemmed from military concerns, a position largely introduced by Kliuchevsky.

The second chapter deals with the 1703 founding of Saint Petersburg and its early architectural and urban development. I examine several proposals for the new city's street network, again with the intent of demonstrating that these plans reflected more than an aesthetic taste for order or imperial grandeur. Rather, the orthogonal street grids in these proposals deliberately countered the pattern of walled districts in Moscow and the social stratification that

these districts reified. The roles of monumental riverfront facades as a political tool, and of standardized building designs as a means of efficiently expanding the city are also discussed.

The third chapter presents detailed case studies of two monuments erected under Peter - the Peter and Paul Cathedral and the Building of the Twelve Colleges, arguably the new capital's most important religious and administrative buildings, respectively. These case studies are conceived as "punctuation marks" that compliment the overall arc of Peter's program of urbanism examined in the first two chapters. I attempt to demonstrate that the "Western" baroque forms adopted in the two structures reflect more than Peter's aesthetic preferences. Rather, the rich military and religious symbolism employed by the monuments served to articulate Peter's new vision of the Russian state, particularly his new conception of the basis of sovereignty. This symbolism had already appeared in a temporary form when Peter erected wooden triumphal arches in Moscow to celebrate his military victories.

I deliberately depart from the prevailing method for organizing a study of this sort. Commonly, key architectural monuments are treated first and serve as the primary organizational principals, while their urban context is covered afterwards as a means of stitching the buildings together into a cohesive narrative (and a cohesive image of the city). I choose to discuss primarily changes in Russia's urbanism, first in seventeenth-century Moscow, then in eighteenth-century Saint Petersburg. These are the changes that are most neglected in the existing body of scholarship, and that most thoroughly disrupt the notion that the Petrine architectural reforms were a kind of surface phenomenon that did not in turn influence other arenas of Russian society. I seek therefore to establish the upheaval in Russia's urbanism as the crucial context for the later treatment of individual monuments.

PETRINE MOSCOW:
URBAN REFORMS IN THE ANCIENT CAPITAL

1

Moscow shines like Jerusalem from without, but is like Bethlehem within.

Adam Olearius, 1647[18]

When Adam Olearius made his celebrated visits to Moscow in the 1630s to seek trade privileges for the Duke of Holstein, the city's dual nature struck him greatly.[19] On approach, he notes, the Russian capital dazzles; the gilding of its innumerable church spires "sparkles brilliantly in bright sunshine, and gives the entire city a beautiful appearance from afar."[20] (fig. 1.1) Upon entering the city, however, Olearius finds himself surrounded by a disheveled array of small dwellings, framed in timber and roofed with sod, linked by a "sea of mud" which passes for the city's streets.[21]

Olearius's impression of seventeenth-century Moscow would find echoes repeatedly in Westerners' accounts of the city. "An infinity of towers and lofty churches which from a distance make a very fine sight," writes Jan Struys, a Dutchman working as a sailmaker in Moscow between 1668 and 1669.[22] His opinion sours quickly during an attempt to brave the city's streets.

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[18] Samuel H. Baron, ed., *The Travels of Olearius in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 113.

[19] Adam Olearius (1599 - 1671) was a German mathematician, geographer, and diplomat. He is known chiefly for his written accounts of diplomatic missions into Russian and Safavid Persia.

[20] *Ibid.,* 113.

[21] *Ibid.,* 112.

[22] Quoted in James Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Architecture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 19.
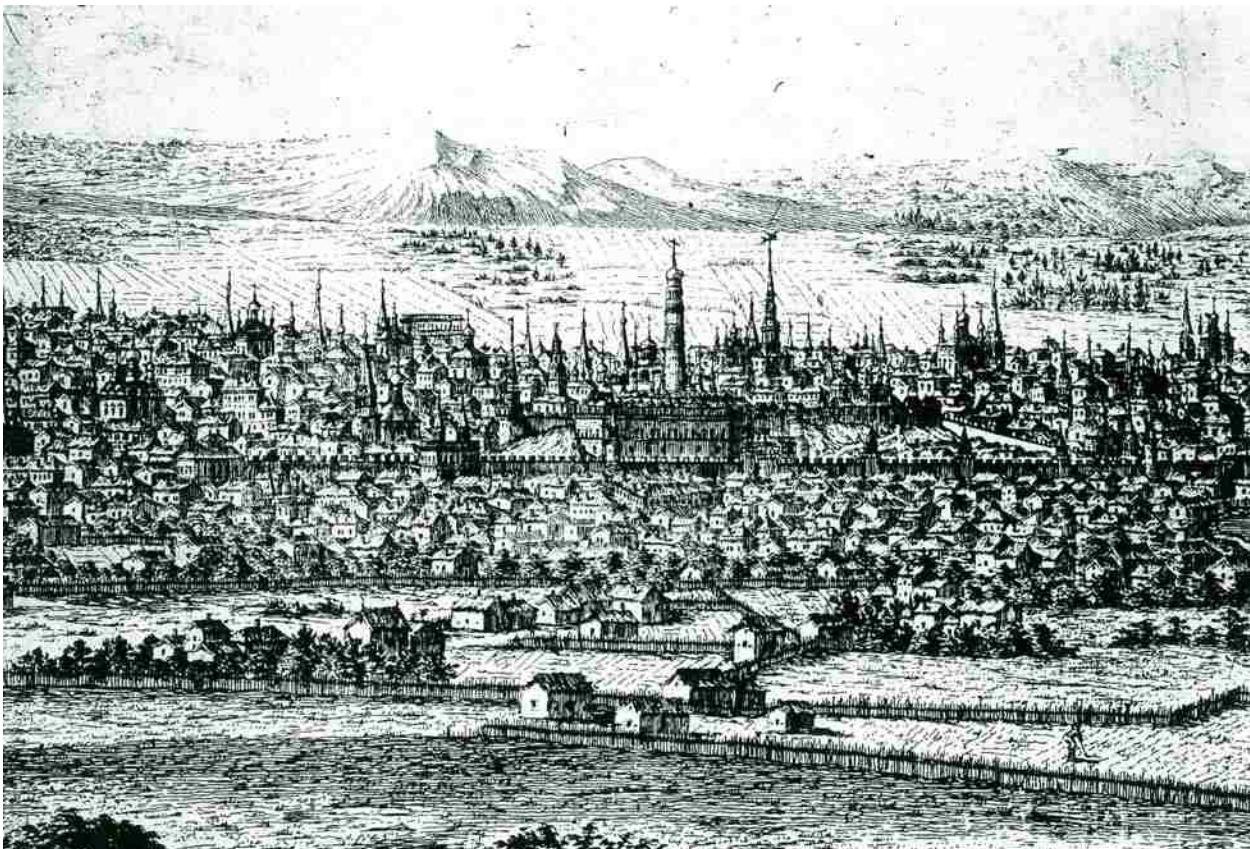
Figure 1.1 View of Moscow. Engraving by Johannes van Blicklant, 1708. Reproduced in Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West.*

"The mud reaches to one's knees, the logs and little bridges thrown here and there not-withstanding."[23] Still later, in 1687 the German traveller G. A. Schleussing provides the same assessment. "Moscow appears beautiful, indeed exquisite thanks to its numerous monasteries and churches," he notes. "But come closer and enter the town itself, and you'll see that like all Russian towns it is on the whole a mess, built without any architectural order or art."[24]

Moscow struck its European visitors not only with its disheveled appearance, but with its high incidence of fire. The city's buildings, like those of many of Central Europe's cities, were built almost exclusively of wood (fig. 1.2). A longstanding scholarly focus on monumental works

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[23] *Ibid.,* 20.

[24] *Ibid.,* 25.

Figure 1.2 View of a Moscow street. Engraving from Olearius's manuscript, c. 1640.

of architecture has left us with little data on the ordinary buildings of the period, but it has been estimated that at the dawn of the sixteenth century masonry construction accounted for less than half a percent of all of Central Europe's buildings.[25] Accordingly, Moscow was visited by frequent conflagrations. Schleussing recounts, rather sardonically, a typical exchange upon hearing the alarm bell sounded in the event of fire:

> I could never get used to [the alarm bell] and would jump from my bed and ask the servants, "Where's the fire?" But they would reply, "Oh, it's nothing, far away. Go back

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[25] Adam Milobedski, "Architecture Under the Last Jagiellons in its Political and Social Context," in *The Polish Renaissance in its European Context,* ed. Samuel Fiszman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 292. See also Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution,* 39.

to bed, German, nobody will barge in on you tonight." And then they'd laugh, saying: "Look at our German! When he goes back he'll say he saw Moscow on fire."[26]

The image that emerges of Moscow at the close of the seventeenth century, on the basis of Western European visitors' accounts, is one of a provincial village grown wildly out of scale, its wooden buildings plagued by fire and its streets caked with mud. The ease with which Schleussing's interlocutor shrugs off the latest conflagration gives some indication of how accustomed Moscow's residents were to the continual destruction and renewal of their city. Indeed, since the sixteenth century there existed in Moscow a thriving "house market," in which entire prefabricated homes of wood could be bought following a fire, transported to the buyer's lot in pieces, and reassembled in a matter of days.[27] Until Peter's reign, no sustained attempts had been made at altering Moscow's urban structure in order to reduce the impact of fire. Previous attempts had largely been limited to widening streets to provide fire breaks.[28] The most notable of these attempts did, however, lead to the creation of Moscow's famous Red Square, initially intended as a fire break between the administrative center of the Kremlin and the central commercial area of Kitai Gorod.[29]

This is the city that would provide the crucible for the young Peter's development. From its founding in 1147 through its emergence as the capital of an increasingly unified Russian state

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[26] Quoted in Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution,* 25.

[27] On Moscow's house market, see E. A. Gutkind, *Urban Development in Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Romania, and the U.S.S.R.* (New York: Free Press, 1972), 304; see also Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution,* 24-26. The scholarly literature gives little indication of precisely how the prefabricated wooden homes managed to escape consumption themselves during a fire. Olearius notes that the house market was located in Moscow's outermost district, where presumably the homes had some protection from a fire starting in the city's central districts. See *The Travels of Olearius*, 116.

[28] Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution,* 142.

[29] Kathleen Berton, *Moscow: An Architectural History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 36.

under a series of capable fifteenth- and sixteenth-century rulers, Moscow had become an "overgrown wooden metropolis," one in which "every shade of opinion was represented, from the xenophobic fundamentalism of the *streltsy* (musketeer) quarter to the transplanted Germanic efficiency of the foreign suburb."[30] The bustling, unrestrained atmosphere of the latter - Moscow's foreign quarter *(nemetskaia sloboda)* - would prove quite formative for the young Peter. This multi-lingual, multi-confessional enclave of largely German and Dutch soldiers, merchants,

Figure 1.3 Peter the Great depicted in his shipwright's clothes, likely by a Dutch artist. Reproduced in Hughes, "Russia's First Architectural Books."

and artisans had existed in some form since the sixteenth century but had been formalized under Tsar Alexis (reigned 1645 - 1676).[31] During his time spent there, the energetic young heir would indulge his curiosity in matters both technical and cultural, reveling in the liberal climate so different from the stifling, tradition-bound culture of the Kremlin.

Peter would carry this spirit of curiosity into the first trip abroad ever undertaken by a Russian sovereign - the so-called "Grand Embassy" of 1697 - 1698 (fig. 1.3). "I am a student and I require teachers," read the laconic seal he carried throughout the trip.[32] For nearly two years his

[30] James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1966), 164.

[31] On the foreign quarter, see Samuel H. Baron, "The Origins of Seventeenth-Century Moscow's Nemeckaia Sloboda," in *Muscovite Russia: Collected Essays* (London: Variorum, 1983).

[32] Quoted in Lindsey Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven: Yale, 1998), 23.

Figure 1.4 The *Czaarpeterhuisje,* the Zaandam cabin in which Peter briefly stayed while studying carpentry. Depicted on a postcard, c. 1901. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, reproduced under public domain.

retine of 250 travelled throughout Northern Europe, ostensibly to recruit allies against the Ottomans, but with the more lasting effect of gravely confirming for the tsar what he had sensed in Moscow's foreign quarter - precisely how badly Russia "lagged behind the countries of Western Europe in its economic and technological development,"[33] notes historian Lindsey Hughes. Peter spent several months in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Dutch Republic, depositing several dozen Russian students in Amsterdam to study shipbuilding and navigation (the tiny house at Zaandam where Peter briefly lived while studying carpentry is today preserved

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[33] *Ibid.,* 23.

as a museum; fig. 1.4[34]). Sailing across the channel to England on a yacht "presented to him by his hero, [the English King] William III,"[35] Peter toured London's arsenal and mint. His curiosity remained tireless:

> Peter was consumed with interest in all things technical and mechanical. … Besides his zest for gun-foundries and cartography, mathematics and astronomy, he was indefatigable in visiting and inspecting all sorts of scientific collections and curiosities, from microscopes and barometers to salamanders and swordfish. He picked the brains of all and sundry, from anatomists and botanists to mineralogists, from Dutch merchant burghers to Fellows of the Royal Society.[36]

In short, Peter confronted all those modern achievements that separated Western Europe from Muscovy. This confrontation would prove decisive for Moscow when Peter returned to the city in June 1698, canceling a visit to Venice in order to suppress a rebellion of Moscow's *streltsy.*[37] For although the Grand Embassy's stated goal was the forging of diplomatic ties, Peter clearly had in mind the wholesale modernization of his country along European lines, having recruited hundreds of specialists for this purpose during his travels. One of these recruits, the Danish diplomat Poul Heins, describes the sudden influx of foreigners upon his arrival in Moscow: "Nearly 800 people of all sorts have come, for the most part sailors, cannoneers, and others

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[34] Peter's preference for living in modestly sized homes would resurface in Saint Petersburg and likely influence the initial plans for the new capital's housing more generally. On the importance of the *domik* (little house) for Peter's persona, see Lindsey Hughes's excellent essay "Nothing is Too Small for a Great Man: Peter the Great's Little Houses and the Creation of Some Petrine Myths," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 81.4 (Oct 2003): 634 - 658.

[35] B. H. Sumner, *Peter the Great and the Emergence of Russia* (New York: Collier, 1962), 39.

[36] *Ibid.,* 41.

[37] Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great,* 26. The *streltsy* ("musketeers") comprised Russia's first standing military unit, likely introduced in the 1540s and armed with rifles. Under Peter the streltsy units were gradually disbanded or incorporated into the regular army. See Michael C. Paul, "The Military Revolution in Russia, 1550 - 1682," *Journal of Military History* 68.1 (Jan. 2004): 20 - 24.

whom the tsar took into his service in Holland." Indeed, Heins writes, Peter had hired foreign specialists in such a frenzy that many were "sent back for lack of employment."[38]

Peter had begun building a cohort of specialists not only in military and commercial affairs, but also in architecture. Although Peter himself never made it to Venice, a contingent of seventy-eight Russian students was dispatched to the maritime republic in 1697.[39] Venice's architectural ensemble dazzled Peter's students. For P. A. Tolstoy, a member of the contingent sent to study navigation, the city was "of such rich and harmonious construction as can be found in few places in the world."[40] Tolstoy and his fellow students would continue their travels, giving free reign to their fascination with the Italian peninsula's cities. Milan had "houses of marvelous masonry construction and nothing built of wood," while Bernini's recently completed plaza at St. Peter's in Rome was "of such marvelous proportions as to be hard to describe."[41] Another Russian studying in Italy, a member of the princely Dolgorukov family, busied himself compiling the first book on architecture ever written in the Russian language (fig. 1.5). This 1699 work, "Civil Architecture, Selected from the Famous Architect Palladio and from Many Other Famous Architects," essentially a primer on European architectural theory and practice, borrowed liberally from many of the major treatises on architecture produced in Italy over the preceding two and a half centuries, most notably Palladio's celebrated *Four Books on Architecture.*[42] The work would be followed in 1709 by the publication of a Russian translation

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38 Quoted in Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution,* 121.

39 *Ibid.,* 131.

40 *Ibid.,* 134.

41 *Ibid.,* 136.

42 *Ibid.,* 138.

of Vignola's *Regola delli cinque ordini d'architettura* ("Cannon of the Five Orders of Architecture").[43]

Everything was in place, then, for the reshaping of Russia's urban and architectural culture. The firsthand accounts that open this chapter provide some indication as to how seventeenth-century Moscow differed from Western European capitals, namely in its wooden construction and in the dual plagues of mud and fire. A bit more must be said on this subject before proceeding to Peter's proposed reforms. Not only were the houses and shops of a typical Western European city at the time largely
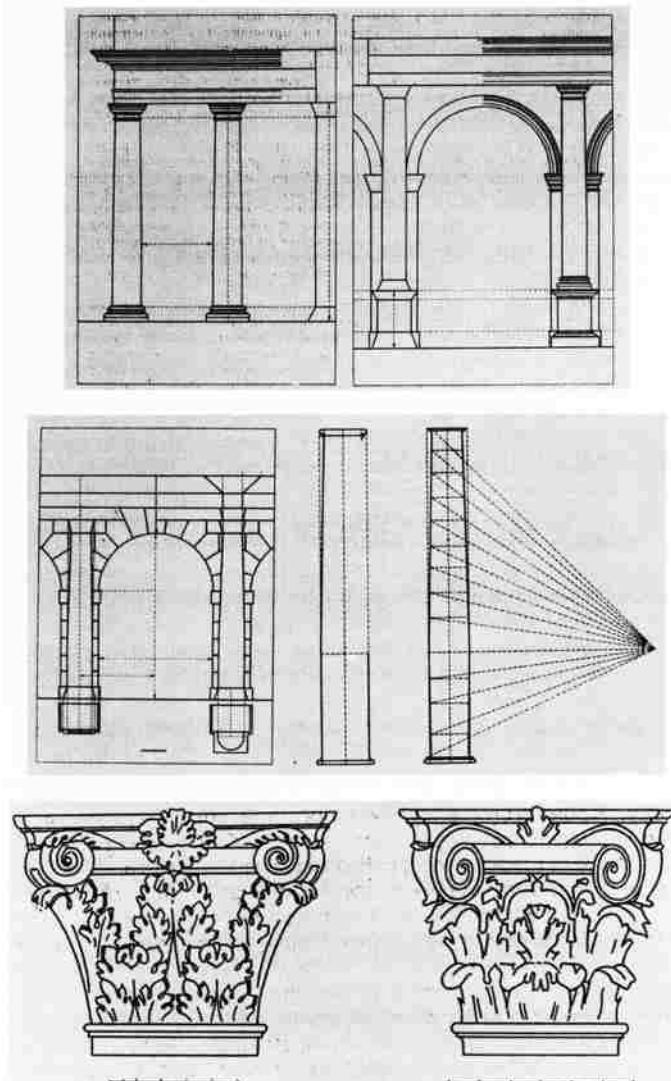
Figure 1.5 Architectural sketches from the Dolgorukov manuscript, 1699. Reproduced in Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution.*

constructed of masonry (as P. A. Tolstoy discovered in Milan), they generally faced the street directly with any appurtenances thereto confined to a rear lot. This was especially the case in Amsterdam following its celebrated canal-lined expansion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, an urban model that Peter was able to inspect first-hand. The uniform building line of

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[43] On the Vignola edition and the subsequent development of architectural publishing in Russia, see Lindsey Hughes, "Russia's First Architectural Books: A Chapter in Peter the Great's Cultural Revolution," in *Russian Avant-Garde Art and Architecture,* ed. Catherine Cooke (London: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 4 - 13.

Figure 1.6 *The 'Golden Bend' in the Herengracht,* Gerrit Adriaensz Berckheyde, 1671.
Berckheyde's omission of the quay's elm trees allows easy inspection of the consistent
building line and *piano nobile* heights.

Amsterdam's canal quays was enforced through a set of strict regulations (fig. 1.6). Lot sizes

were of fixed widths; building depths were limited to 100 feet to prevent gradual encroachment

into the rear of the lots; stair heights were fixed at seven feet so that the level of the *piano nobile*

remained consistent throughout the street; the construction of lanes and alleys between lots was

prohibited.[44] This last measure, the prohibition on alleys, owes its birth to Pope Gregory XIII

(reigned 1571 - 1585), who helped to uproot an old Roman notion of proprietorship by which

[44] Koen Ottenheym, "The Amsterdam Ring of Canals: City Planning and Architecture," in *Rome, Amsterdam: Two Growing Cities in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, ed. Peter van Kessel and Elisja Schulte (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997), 35 - 38.

building lots were isolated on all four sides.[45] This campaign eventually blossomed into an enduring movement in European city planning to privilege a unified building line over the integrity of individual holdings - a notion that strongly shaped the appearance of seventeenth-century Amsterdam.

Moscow provided a sharp counterpoint to Amsterdam and the other European cities Peter examined during the Grand Embassy. James Cracraft, the great historian of Petrine Russia, summarizes neatly:

> [Moscow's buildings] were set deep in fenced-off yards and gardens, while its meandering, largely unpaved streets and alleyways, like its irregular squares and open spaces, were crowded with countless stables and sheds, shops and stalls, and collapsible, one-room houses - cabins or even shacks, as we might call them.[46]

The street in Moscow served chiefly as a means of access, and held little importance as a unified aesthetic composition or as an arena for public life. Both of these functions had been present in some degree throughout the history of Europe's cities, but both had been the subject of renewed attention in Baroque city planning theory. Two brief examples will suffice. In 1683, only a year after Peter assumed the throne as a young boy, William Penn urged that Philadelphia's houses "be built in a line, or upon a line, as much as may be"[47] - this in a country that would for centuries insist on the individual homestead, rather than the street, as the basic urban unit.

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[45] Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 256.

[46] Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution,* 142.

[47] Quoted in Spiro Kostof, *The City Assembled* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 214.

Similarly, in the early seventeenth century, Henri IV's *voyer* Sully had begun reshaping Paris by ordering that owners of empty lots build their houses along the street edge.[48]

Russia had largely escaped the influence of these city planning ideals. The basic urban unit of Russian cities before Peter's reforms remained the individual homestead. The homes of Moscow's nobles, merchants, and artisans "were situated in a courtyard off the streets, while picket fences and perhaps outhouses and booths lined the roads."[49] The street in a Russian city, notes architectural historian Spiro Kostof, "was considered a restraint to the natural spread of the house, especially the courtyard or *dvor* which was the real focus of urban life."[50]

This arrangement was summarily disrupted through a series of decrees by Peter beginning in 1697. The first of these, dispatched to Moscow by Peter's retinue during the Grand Embassy, attempted to lower the risk of fire in the capital by regulating the use of cookstoves and recommending masonry construction.[51] These measures were applied chiefly to major civic buildings such as the new arsenal in the Kremlin. A decree issued in January 1701, however, went further, prescribing stone and masonry construction throughout the city:

> The Great Sovereign declares: […] to Moscow residents of any rank, who have lost their
> holdings to fire or who desire to build anew, that they shall build nothing of wood, but
> only houses of stone. To those who are not able to build thus, they shall build in stone and

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[48] Hilary Ballon, *The Paris of Henri IV: Architecture and Urbanism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 7. The *voyer* was an officer in charge of maintaining and beautifying a city's streets and squares. Sully (full name Maximilien de Béthune, first Duke of Sully) served as both *voyer* of Paris and *grand voyer* of France.

[49] Gutkind, *Urban Development in Eastern Europe,* 257.

[50] Kostof, *The City Shaped,* 256.

[51] *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii* (Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, hereafter abbreviated *PSZ*), first series, 46 volumes (Saint Petersburg, 1830 - 1843), Vol. 3, Nos. 1548, 1579, 1585, 1594.

brick. To those who are not able to build thus, they shall build in wattle and daub *(mazanki)* according to a specified model.[52]

The decree promised a severe penalty for those who would rebuild in wood. However, the sudden nature and sweeping scale of the pronouncement made it nearly impossible to enforce. Likely for this reason, the 1701 decree was followed by another in 1704, this one targeted specifically at the central neighborhood of Kitai Gorod (which accounted for about two percent of Moscow's registered households[53]):

> The Great Sovereign declares: to Moscow residents of any rank with holdings in the Kremlin or in Kitai Gorod, that they shall build their homes of stone […] and by no means of wood. These stone structures shall be built along the lines of the streets and lanes, and not in the middle of courtyards, and shall be built by qualified workmen. Those without the means to build in stone shall sell their lots to those possessing such means.[54]

Here the two key provisions of Peter's attempted urban reforms in Moscow emerge side by side: construction of masonry or stone, and building along the street edge. These provisions addressed the two aspects of Moscow's urban form that most distinguished it from the European capitals that Peter admired. Peter may have had Amsterdam closely in mind; that city's celebrated expansion wrapped an affluent residential neighborhood around an existing medieval core, which was to remain the administrative and commercial center. Similarly, Peter attempted to transform Kitai Gorod into a wealthy district of exclusively stone construction, one that would wrap around the ancient Kremlin, still the administrative heart of Moscow. Other urban measures introduced

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[52] *Ibid.,* Vol. 4, No. 1825. Author's own translation.

[53] Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution,* 143.

[54] *PSZ,* Vol. 4, No. 1963. Author's own translation.
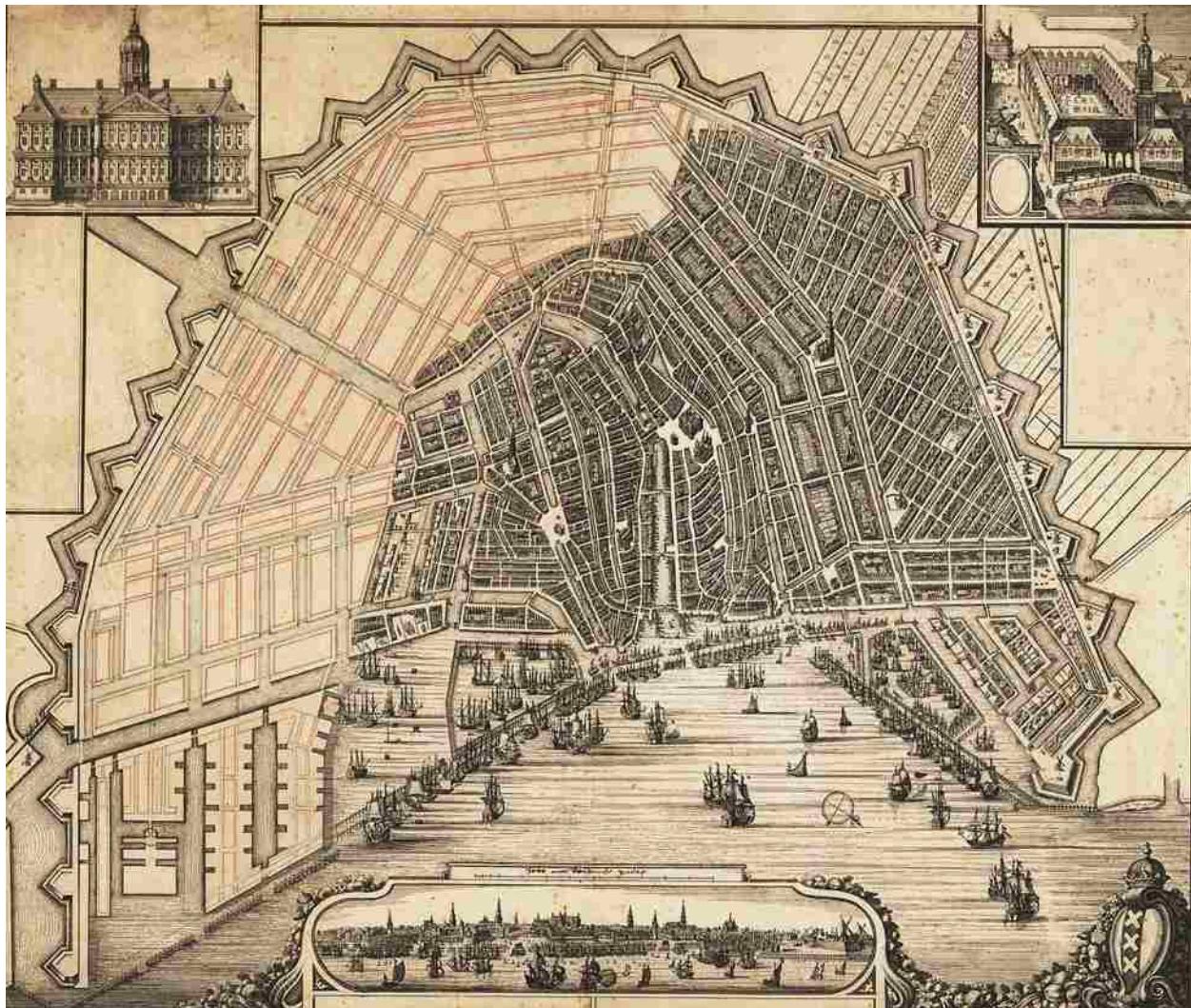
Figure 1.7 Plan of Amsterdam. The expansion of 1613 is registered in dark gray on the right (west) side of the plan. The proposed 1662 expansion is indicated in red on the left (east) side. Engraving attributed to Nicolaas Visscher, 1660s.

by Peter included the installation in 1698 of streetlights burning hempseed oil (hemp being a Russian staple) at Preobrazhenskoe, a suburban estate where Peter passed much of his childhood.[55] He also issued a series of decrees beginning in 1700 calling for the paving of Moscow's streets with cobblestones, and their regular cleaning with water.[56]

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[55] Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution,* 143.

[56] *Ibid.,* 143.

Cracraft characterizes the blend of practical and aesthetic motives behind Peter's urban reforms - "their intention at once of preventing fire and of promoting the architectural Europeanization of the city" - as quintessentially Petrine.[57] Cracraft likely has Saint Petersburg in mind as the preeminent example of this tendency - a city at once founded as a frontier fortress to secure territorial gains and as a marvelous imperial capital announcing Russia's entry onto the European stage. He stops short, however, of acknowledging that there might be social or political implications behind Peter's "aesthetic program." Here again, Amsterdam provides an illuminating comparison (fig. 1.7). The Dutch architectural historian Konrad Ottenheym notes that in seventeenth-century Holland, "aesthetics were closely connected with ethics," and that "the beauty of the city was regarded as an expression of good government as well as a symbol of prosperity."[58] He further asserts that Amsterdam's architectural program represented "an expression of an ideal of order and harmony" that went beyond purely aesthetic concerns to include social and political wellbeing.[59] Crucially, Ottenheym notes the Dutch recognition that urban order and beauty were best achieved by regulating "not architecture in detail, but the character of the new urban areas: scale of streets, squares, houses, and gardens" - precisely the types of regulations Peter began introducing in Moscow upon his return from Europe.[60]

It would hardly have been lost on Peter that Amsterdam's harmonious architectural ensemble reflected in some way the city's political and intellectual climate. After all, he visited

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[57] *Ibid.,* 143.

[58] Konrad Ottenheym, "Amsterdam 1700: Urban Space and Public Buildings," in *Circa 1700: Architecture in Europe and the Americas,* ed. Henry A. Millon (New Haven: Yale, 2005), 119.

[59] *Ibid.,* 135.

[60] *Ibid.,* 120.

the city when it represented Europe's most admirable bastion of tolerance and liberal thought, and it was this very atmosphere of open curiosity that had attracted him to Moscow's foreign quarter as a youth. There is also little doubt that seventeenth-century Moscow lacked this liberal atmosphere. The late historian Lindsey Hughes even cautions that "to declare the triumph of Western culture in the Petrine era would be premature," concluding: "we are still far from the liberal atmosphere that Western thinkers such as David Hume regarded as essential for the flourishing of the arts."[61]

Here we have reached a crucial juncture. Too often in the existing literature Peter's urban and architectural innovations are reduced to matters of "taste," aesthetic concerns with little connection to other aspects of Peter's reforms. Cracraft, for example, writes of the "Europeanization" of Russia's cities; this hopelessly broad term is rarely deemed sufficient in studies of Peter's military or administrative reforms.[62] (In this connection, we might further note that Russia's turn specifically to the West may have been more accidental than often assumed - in 1720, Peter mounted a failed campaign to recruit architects from China to work in Saint Petersburg.)[63] Lindsey Hughes devotes only four pages to architecture in her magisterial work *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (Yale, 1998), making no mention of possible political or social motives underpinning Peter's architectural innovations, but rather relying on the notion of

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[61] Lindsey Hughes, "Secularization and Westernization Revisited: Art and Architecture in Seventeenth-Century Russia," in *Modernizing Muscovy: Reform and Social Change in Seventeenth-Century Russia,* ed. Jarmo Kotilaine and Marshall Poe (New York: Routledge, 2004), 360.

[62] Evgeny Anisimov, for example, is careful to make distinctions between Swedish, Prussian, and Dutch models in a discussion of Peter's administrative reforms; see "V Poiskakh Novoi Rossii: Petr v Gollandii," in *Reflections on Russia in the Eighteenth Century,* ed. Joachim Klein, Simon Dixon, and Maarten France (Weimar: Böhlau, 2001), 4.

[63] Dmitry Shvidkovsky, *The Empress and the Architect: British Architecture and Gardens at the Court of Catherine the Great* (New Haven: Yale, 1996), 167 - 168.

singular taste: "Peter's tastes and experiences, especially what he saw abroad, were crucial."[64] The present study seeks to develop a richer analysis of Peter's architectural program, one that posits the elements of a city - the street, the house, the square - as instruments for the transformation of society, rather than simply expressions of a monarch's personal taste. Evgeny Anisimov, in his unparalleled study of Peter's reforms, asserts that the state, as Peter saw it, could be "converted into an ideal instrument for the transformation of society and the upbringing of virtuous subjects, and made into an ideal institution through which one may attain 'the common good.'"[65] This approach would place Peter perfectly in step with contemporary European thought regarding statecraft. However, European political and social theory had also emphasized the role of the urban environment in creating virtuous subjects at least as early as Plato, and any understanding of Peter's campaign to "Europeanize" his cities must take into account this reciprocal relationship between city and citizen.

However ambitious their goal, the results achieved through Peter's urban reforms were initially underwhelming. The 1704 decree reproduced above was followed by a series of similar decrees, indicating that the rebuilding of Moscow's center along European lines was proceeding very slowly. In 1705, masonry construction was prohibited in every district *except* the Kremlin and Kitai Gorod; in 1707 this decree was repeated. In 1709 Peter attempted once again to compel those who would not rebuild in stone to sell their lots. Massive fires in 1710 and 1712 prompted directives that prohibited wood construction nearly throughout the entire city.[66] Each time

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[64] Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great,* 225.

[65] Evgenii Anisimov, *The Reforms of Peter the Great: Progress Through Coercion in Russia* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), 145.

[66] *PSZ,* Vol. 4, Nos. 2051, 2052, 2232, 2265, 2306, 2534, 2531, 2591.

shortages of building material, funding, and technical expertise, as well as conservative attitudes towards property orientation and building design hindered Peter's designs;[67] in any case, the tsar spent the majority of this time away from Moscow, and accordingly oversight was minimal.

The success of Peter's urban reforms in transforming societal attitudes or behaviors (whatever the particular intent) was also understandably limited because of the sheer difficulty of the task. Hughes notes that this was indeed Peter's greatest challenge: "Reforming the army, the taxation system, and the Church, creating new administrative institutions, and building a new capital were simple and straightforward in comparison with transforming people."[68] Hughes's argument is clear: a new tax code or administrative structure could be conjured up in a matter of weeks and enacted with a single piece of paper; changing people, on the other hand, would prove much more difficult in a reign that spanned hardly more than a generation.[69] Peter, likely recognizing this difficulty and hoping to achieve success in reshaping Russian society before his death, resorted to compulsion as his chief means of action:

> Peter […] acted on the assumption that all of his innovations would be resented and resisted. This was one of the main reasons why we do not find in Peter's acts […] a set of laws or decrees endeavoring to produce a new pattern of behavior in the operations of *existing* aspects of public, economic, and social life. In Russia we have the direct

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[67] Resistance to the urban reforms was likely fueled by more than conservatism in architectural taste. It has even been suggested that the directive to build along the street had a financial motive - to keep multiple householders from building behind a single gate and thereby reducing their tax burden; see T. M. Sytina, "Russkoe Arkhitekturnoe Zakonodatelstvo Pervoi Chetverti XVIII Veka," in *Arkhitekturnoe Nasledstvo* 18 (1969), 68.

[68] Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great,* 203.

[69] In some cases, such as Peter's injunction that women emerge from their former seclusion and participate in public life, the shift from Muscovite to Petrine rule was felt as a traumatic break between an old and new life; see, for example, Daniel Schlafly, "A Muscovite *Boiarynia* Faces Peter the Great's Reforms: Daria Golitsyna Between Two Worlds," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 31.3 (Fall 1997), 249 - 268.

command that introduces and orders something altogether new under threat of dire punishment. Old patterns of behavior were forbidden outright, without any suggestion of alternate paths, while new ways were commanded without regard to whether the presuppositions existed for them or not. Little wonder that so much of this kind of legislation of Peter's proved stillborn.[70]

Marc Raeff, quoted above, is quite justified in characterizing much of Peter's legislation as "stillborn." The ceaseless series of nearly identical decrees governing masonry construction discussed above suggests the difficulty Peter faced in achieving rapid change through his pronouncements. However, the degree of success Peter enjoyed in reshaping his country's urban forms, social attitudes, or public life ought not to prevent us from interpreting those efforts as essentially linked - both in the sense of expressing the same central concern for order and regimentation, and in the sense of continuously influencing one another.

A final, cautionary note might prove wise regarding Russia's wooden architecture. The two centuries preceding Peter's reign are often styled as the "national" period of Russian architecture, that is, architecture at its most Russian moment - emancipated now from its Byzantine model, but not yet jerked into line with Western European currents.[71] There can be little doubt that wood as material and axe as implement (for the saw was one of Peter's countless

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[70] Marc Raeff, *The Well-Ordered Police State: Social and Institutional Change Through Law in the Germanies and Russia, 1600 - 1800* (New Haven: Yale, 1983), 206. Emphasis is my own.

[71] Arthur Voyce, for example, treats the period spanning from the mid-fifteenth century to the late seventeenth century as the "National Period." See Arthur Voyce, *The Art and Architecture of Medieval Russia* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1967). Lauren M. O'Connell, in a discussion of Russia's nineteenth-century National Revival architecture, notes that indeed, "Russia's national history could only be said to have begun in the fifteenth century," with her Kievan prehistory constituting an "unwieldy, geographically fragmented amalgam." See Lauren M. O'Connell, "Constructing the Russian Other: Viollet-le-Duc and the Politics of an Asiatic Past," in *Architectures of Russian Identity: 1500 to the Present*, ed. James Cracraft and Daniel Rowland (Ithaca: Cornell, 2003), 92.

unsung innovations[72]) were crucial aspects of the architectural culture of the Muscovite period (fig. 1.8). Wood was also the material of choice for the implements of everyday life, including those of a specifically Russian character, such as handheld shovels for collecting berries - a favored pastime to this day in some areas of the country (fig. 1.9). Foreign visitors to Moscow might have described the sprawling courtyard homes of the city's nobility as lacking "architectural order or art," but we might note that scholars have occasionally treated

Figure 1.8 Carved wooden window surround on a house in Gorka, Archangel Province. Reproduced in Opolovnikov, *The Wooden Architecture of Russia.*

this unique Russian type in a more favorable light. Arthur Voyce writes of these homes: "although [the Russian builder] evidently had little feeling for formal symmetry, he was endowed with a surpassing sense of balance. […] He never suppressed his love for romantic composition,

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[72] On the importance of the axe, see Igor Grabar, "Dereviannoe Zodchestvo Russkogo Severa," in *Istoriia Russkogo Iskusstva* (Moscow, 1910 - 1915), Vol. 1, 341.

play of light and shade, and vivid colors."[73] One scholar has even gone so far as to suggest that Moscow's site was dictated less by its location at the intersection of two major trade routes, but by its position between the pine forests to the north and the oak forests to the south - these woods being the choice materials for ordinary construction and fortifications, respectively.[74]

Figure 1.9 Carved wooden shovel for collecting berries, Karelia. The tines are designed to strip the berries from their stems. Reproduced in Opolovnikov, *The Wooden Architecture of Russia.*

Given the unique, "national" character of Russia's wooden architecture on the eve of Peter's reign, it is no surprise that these buildings have received renewed attention by architectural historians in the last few decades; see, for example, William Craft Brumfield's coda to the second edition of his magisterial *A History of Russian Architecture,* which contains a photographic essay on Russia's wooden tradition, or the recent work by photographer Richard Davies in documenting these buildings.[75] We must be very careful, however, to understand this renewed interest as a product of increasing concern for distinct regional traditions during a

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[73] Arthur Voyce, *The Art and Architecture of Medieval Russia*, 174.

[74] Gutkind, *Urban Development in Eastern Europe,* 323.

[75] William Craft Brumfield, *A History of Russian Architecture,* 2nd ed., (Seattle: University of Washington, 2004), 501 - 520. Davies's most complete work is *Wooden Churches: Traveling in the Russian North* (London: White Sea, 2011).

twentieth century that saw the rapid global homogenization of architectural culture. Peter I, acting in a preindustrial world, would certainly not have felt the same concern for preserving and understanding Russia's wooden architectural traditions.[76] We must be willing to see his demand for masonry and stone construction as he himself would have seen them - as modernizations. It is instructive to remember that only decades ago, when Russia was almost wholly absent from the pages of architectural history textbooks, most Western architectural historians would have agreed unhesitatingly with Peter's assessment of Moscow - that it was backwards.

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[76] In a curious irony of architectural history, Russia's greatest work of wooden architecture - the Church of the Transfiguration at Kizhi - was quietly completed during Peter's reign.

Russia's First Gridiron: Urban Planning in the New Capital 2

Geometry has appeared,
land surveying encompasses everything.
Nothing on earth lies beyond measurement.

Poem by Saint Petersburg's official corrector of books, early 18th century[77]

In 1712, Peter I received a letter from the great German philosopher Leibniz, whom he had met the previous year during a visit to Hanover. "It seems to be God's will that the sciences encircle the earth and now arrive in Russia, and that Your Majesty is now chosen as the instrument," Leibniz writes. "Since almost everything concerning the sciences in your Empire is new and blank, as it were, innumerable mistakes that have gradually and in an unnoticed way gained currency in Europe may be avoided."[78] The renowned thinker concludes by offering to serve under the tsar, reasoning that the "blank" quality of Peter's Russia would allow him to achieve more there than in his native Saxony.[79]

In Leibniz's letter we find anticipations of some of the most intoxicating notions in the historiography of Peter the Great. Here is pre-Petrine Russia as a *tabula rasa;* here is Peter as the titan who wrenches Russia from her medieval dormancy and thrusts her into the light of modern European civilization; here also is a clear indication that Russia was rapidly earning recognition

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[77] Quoted in Billington, *The Icon and the Axe,* 184.

[78] Quoted in Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution,* 8.

[79] Vasily Kliuchevsky notes: "Leibniz maintained that the more ignorant a country, the easier it would be to educate it." See *Peter the Great* (London: MacMillan, 1958), 55.

as a power on the European stage. These ideas found their most powerful expression in the founding of Saint Petersburg. This new capital, founded by fiat in 1703 on the swampy islands of the Neva River delta, quickly became a powerful symbol for Peter's supposed creation of a civilized Russia from nothing. Much scholarship has been devoted to the motivations for the city's foundation; it will suffice here to review some of the major arguments in their connection with Peter's aims for social transformation.

There can be no doubt that Peter sought, above all, to endow his country with a port to supplant the remote White Sea harbor at Archangel. Mercantilism had taken hold as the prevailing economic theory in Europe, and accordingly Peter could hardly have hoped to transform Russia into a European power without access to maritime trade. This campaign led Peter to the capture, in 1696, of the Turkish port of Azov, situated on the sea of the same name (fig. 2.1). Ottoman control of the series of straits separating Azov from Mediterranean trade, however, eventually compelled Peter to abandon the site and his proposed city of 'Petropolis.'[80]

After failing to recruit allies against the Ottomans during the Grand Embassy, but instead finding eager partners for a war against Sweden in Denmark and Saxony,
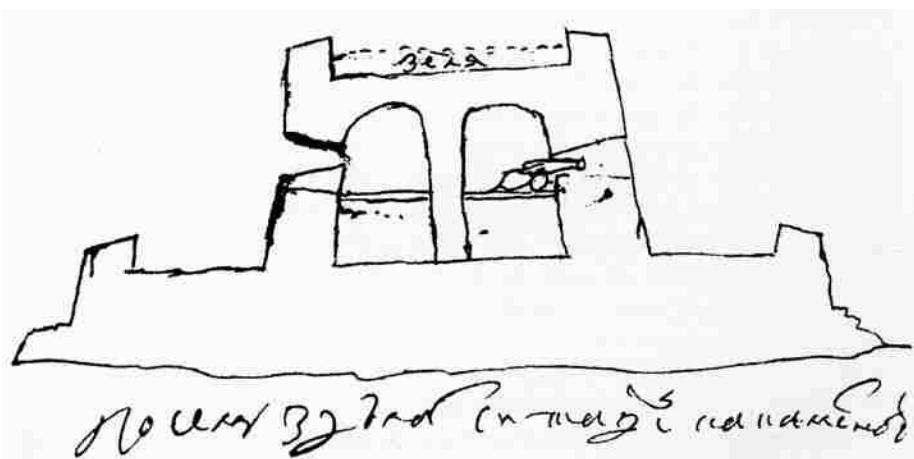
Figure 2.1 Design by Peter I for a new citadel at Azov. Reproduced in Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution.*

[80] On the Azov campaign, see Graeme Herd, "The Conquest of Azov," in *Peter the Great and the West,* ed. Lindsey Hughes (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 161 - 176.
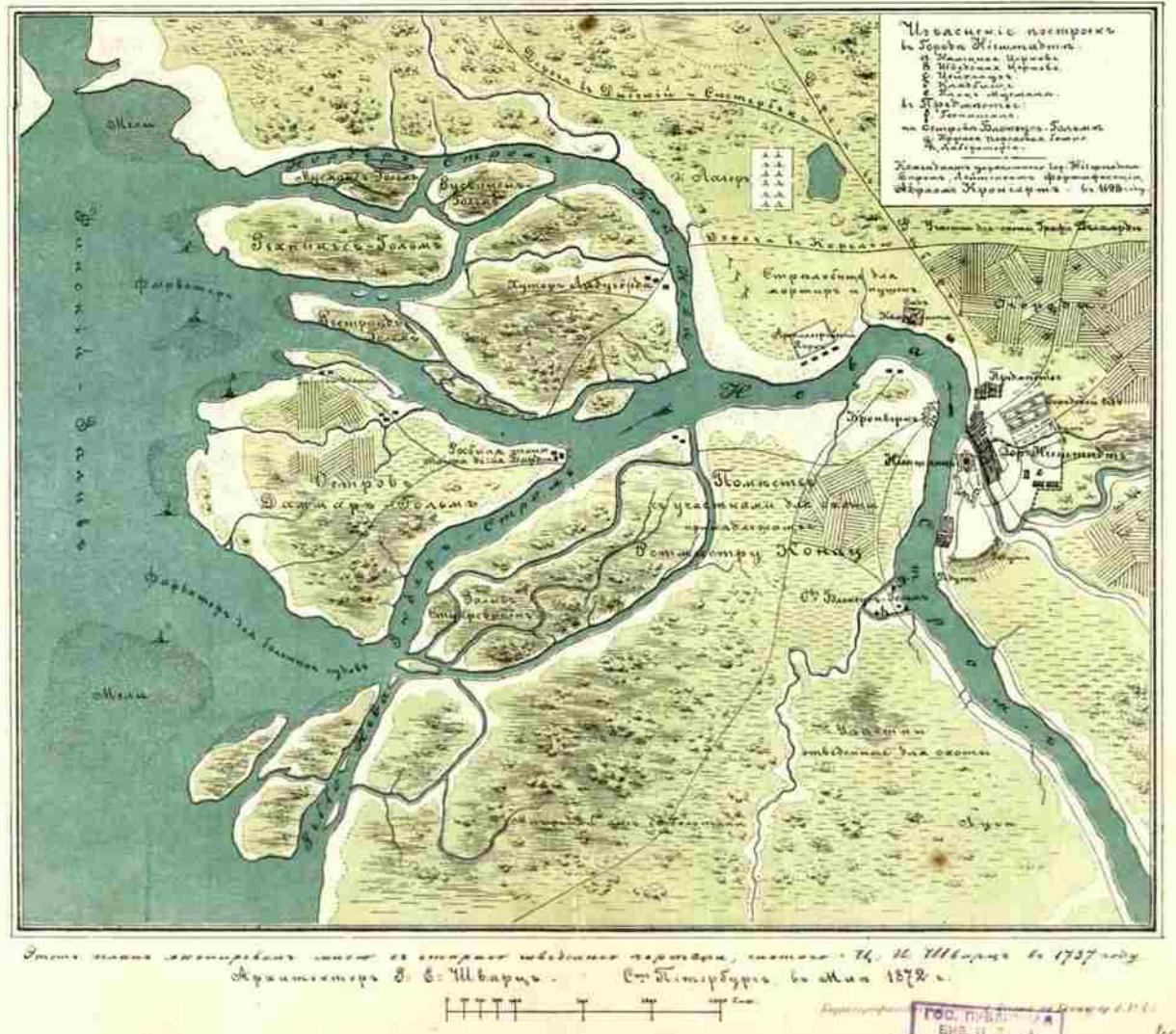
Figure 2.2 Map of the Neva River delta in 1698. The existing Swedish fortifications at the confluence of the Neva and Okhta Rivers can be seen at the far right. Map produced by R. E. Schwartz, 1872. Courtesy of the Russian State Library, reproduced under public domain.

Peter shifted the focus of his military campaigns to wresting the Baltic coastline from Sweden. In 1710 he acquired three ports on the Baltic - Narva, Reval (modern-day Tallinn), and Riga. These ports all suffered from the same disadvantage, however: they could not be accessed from Russia's vast network of rivers, most notably from the Volga. The Neva River, eventually chosen

as the site for the new capital despite its icy and inhospitable delta (fig. 2.2), could be easily connected to the Volga's tributaries by canal. Historian Robert E. Jones notes, however, that Saint Petersburg's site provided only a *commercial* advantage, not an administrative one. "Geography can explain why Peter created a seaport on the delta of the Neva," he explains. "It does not, however, explain why he made that seaport his capital."[81]

It is tempting to view Peter's decision to designate Saint Petersburg his capital as a military expedient. Certainly, administering a 21-year war would prove far simpler from a capital near the site of the conflict.[82] This interpretation accords with one of the most enduring notions in the study of Peter I, championed most famously by the great Russian historian Vasily Kliuchevsky: that war provided the impetus for nearly all of Peter's transformative acts. War, asserted Kliuchevsky, "decreed the order of the reforms, determined their tempo and the very methods of reform. Reforming measures followed one another in the sequence called forth by the needs of the war."[83] This interpretation is undeniably attractive; Saint Petersburg's founding act was the erection of a fortress on Hare Island in the Neva delta (fig 2.3), so indeed the "needs of the war" prompted the city's earliest architectural ensemble (although we might temper this claim by noting that Russian cities had long been founded through the erection of a fortified citadel or *kremlin* in a strategically important location).[84]

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[81] Robert E. Jones, "Why St Petersburg?" in *Peter the Great and the West,* 198.

[82] The Great Northern War, Russia's campaign against Sweden, lasted from 1700 to 1721.

[83] Quoted in James Cracraft, "Kliuchevsky on Peter the Great," in *Major Problems in the History of Imperial Russia*, ed. James Cracraft (Lexington: Heath, 1994), 101.

[84] On the foundation of Russian cities before Peter, see Gutkind, *Urban Development in Eastern Europe,* 257 - 281; see also Hans Blumenfeld, "Russian City Planning of the 18th and Early 19th Centuries," *Journal of the American Society of Architectural Historians* 4.1 (Jan 1944): 22 - 23.
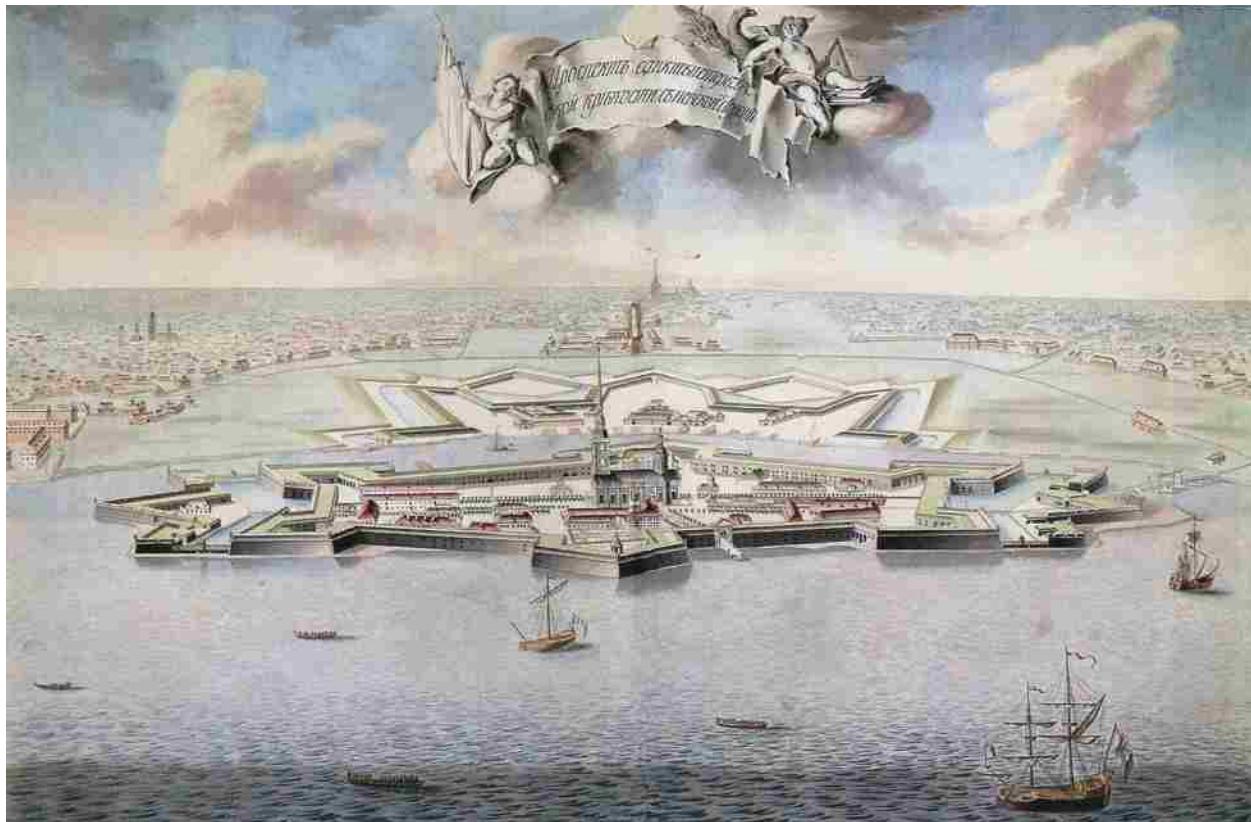
Figure 2.3 The Peter and Paul Fortress on Hare Island, view from the southeast. The Peter and Paul Cathedral is visible at the center of the fortress. Watercolor by unknown artist, 1780. Reproduced in Cantini, *Domenico Trezzini.*

This study, however, positions itself as a mild challenge to Kliuchevsky's thesis. Naturally, Peter's efforts to modernize his military and to construct a bureaucratic apparatus capable of functioning smoothly during the sovereign's absence would have been provoked by the exigencies of war. But other aspects of Peter's reforms cannot be explained so easily as the products of military campaigns. Why move the capital to Saint Petersburg in 1713, when, as Marc Raeff notes, "after [the 1709 Russian victory at] Poltava, eventual success could be taken for granted?"[85] Raeff continues by noting that Peter's program of reforms was too coherent, too dramatic, and too impetuous to be "accounted for as a mere sequence of ad hoc measures taken

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[85] Raeff, *The Well-Ordered Police State,* 198.

to meet military contingencies and day-to-day fiscal needs."[86] We might also add that the reforms were too comprehensive to be accounted for in this way; what of Peter's attempted urban reforms in Moscow discussed in the preceding chapter? Architectural improvements to Moscow cannot have been intended to satisfy military demands, especially as Peter's military campaigns were of a largely offensive, rather than defensive character.

Instead, Peter's architectural program - including, of course, the foundation of Saint Petersburg - should be interpreted as a crucial gesture announcing the tsar's sweeping new vision for society, one deeply imbued with symbolic content. Peter's project of modernization, explains E. A. Gutkind, "demanded a symbol, a stimulating focal point, and a tangible proof that a new era was dawning." A new capital offered the perfect opportunity, he notes: "What could be more convincing than to shift the capital from ancient Holy Moscow to a virgin site, and demonstrate to the living generation that they were capable of doing it through their own efforts, in a spirit and in a language of form expressive of a new age!"[87]

For an understanding of Saint Petersburg as symbol, we must be careful not to seek analogs in Washington, Canberra, Brasilia, and other modern capitals famously created by fiat, as these cities were intended only as administrative centers, not cultural and commercial capitals. Robert E. Jones reminds us to look more distantly - to Constantinople. This city, which Jones even hazards as "quite possibly the inspiration for Saint Petersburg," stands nearly alone in its parallels to Petersburg's foundation: "two cities founded by eponymous emperors who also

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[86] *Ibid.,* 198.

[87] Gutkind, *Urban Development in Eastern Europe,* 294.

wanted to shift the political, cultural, and economic centers of their realms."[88] Jones strengthens

his case by noting that upon conclusion of the war with Sweden in 1721, Peter adopted three new

titles: *otets otechestva* (father of the fatherland), *imperator vserossiisky* (emperor of all Russia),

and *Petr Veliky* (Peter the Great), neatly replicating the Latin titles *pater patriae, imperator,* and

maximus, conferred on Roman emperors by the Senate.[89] Positioning Jones's analysis alongside

Gutkind's, we can begin to interpret Saint Petersburg not only as a symbolic gesture that Russia

was entering the modern European world, but also as striving for a status even more profound -

that of an imperial metropolis, a world-city of international renown and deep historical

significance.

We are here at risk of assigning rather sweeping philosophical forethought to a ruler who

was famously plain in speech and straightforward in thought. Could Peter, the humble "carpenter

tsar,"[90] really have formulated such a grand symbolic vision for his new capital? This question is

arguable, but it is a simple enough matter to position Saint Petersburg's founding within a series

of acts that demonstrate Peter's appreciation for the importance of symbolic gestures, especially

those that manifest in outward appearances. Denis Shaw explains this phenomenon neatly:

"A tsar who had shaved off the beards of the *boyars* [nobles], insisted on their wearing

European dress, and who reformed the calendar and clock, seemed unlikely to rest

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88 Jones, "Why St Petersburg?," 200. Jones also notes that, even more distantly, we might look to
Alexander the Great's 331 BC foundation of Alexandria for parallels to Saint Petersburg.

89 *Ibid.,* 200.

90 Peter's time spent in Holland during the Grand Embassy provided the basis for much subsequent myth-
making about the "carpenter tsar," a persona that would eventually earn Peter a large statue
commissioned by Nicholas II and later destroyed by the Bolsheviks, in which the tsar is depicted as a
shipbuilder. See Lindsey Hughes, *Peter the Great: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale, 2004), 43 - 44.

content with Moscow, whose religious and traditional orientation was visible to all and which could never be made to look European."[91]

Figure 2.4 Illustration of a Russian official forcefully removing an Old Believer's beard. Based on a peasant woodcut.

Indeed, many of Peter's most famous reforms, such as the demands that his nobles adopt European clothing and clean-shaven faces (fig. 2.4), possess a symbolic, rather than practical character. But we can go further still in illustrating Peter's deep appreciation for the power of symbolism. After his 1696 victory at Azov, Peter staged an advent on the classical Roman model. Accompanied by his army, he rode into Moscow through a wooden triumphal arch erected at his command and decorated with inscriptions evoking ancient Rome (fig. 2.5), most prominently Julius Caesar's famous proclamation, "I came, I saw, I conquered."[92] Richard Wortman's recent study of royal ceremony in imperial Russia offers a simple truth that Peter had likely registered: that "symbolic change was anterior to political and social change: Peter redefined the meaning of his rule, and presented a new image of monarchy before he embarked on his reforms."[93] Peter's triumphal procession,

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[91] Denis J. B. Shaw, "St Petersburg and Geographies of Modernity in Eighteenth-Century Russia," in *St Petersburg, 1703 - 1825,* ed. Anthony Cross (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 12.

[92] Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power,* 1:43. Wortman notes that Peter may have been inspired less by classical Roman ceremony, and more by Renaissance political spectacle in the manner of Charles V and Henry IV.

[93] *Ibid.,* 44.
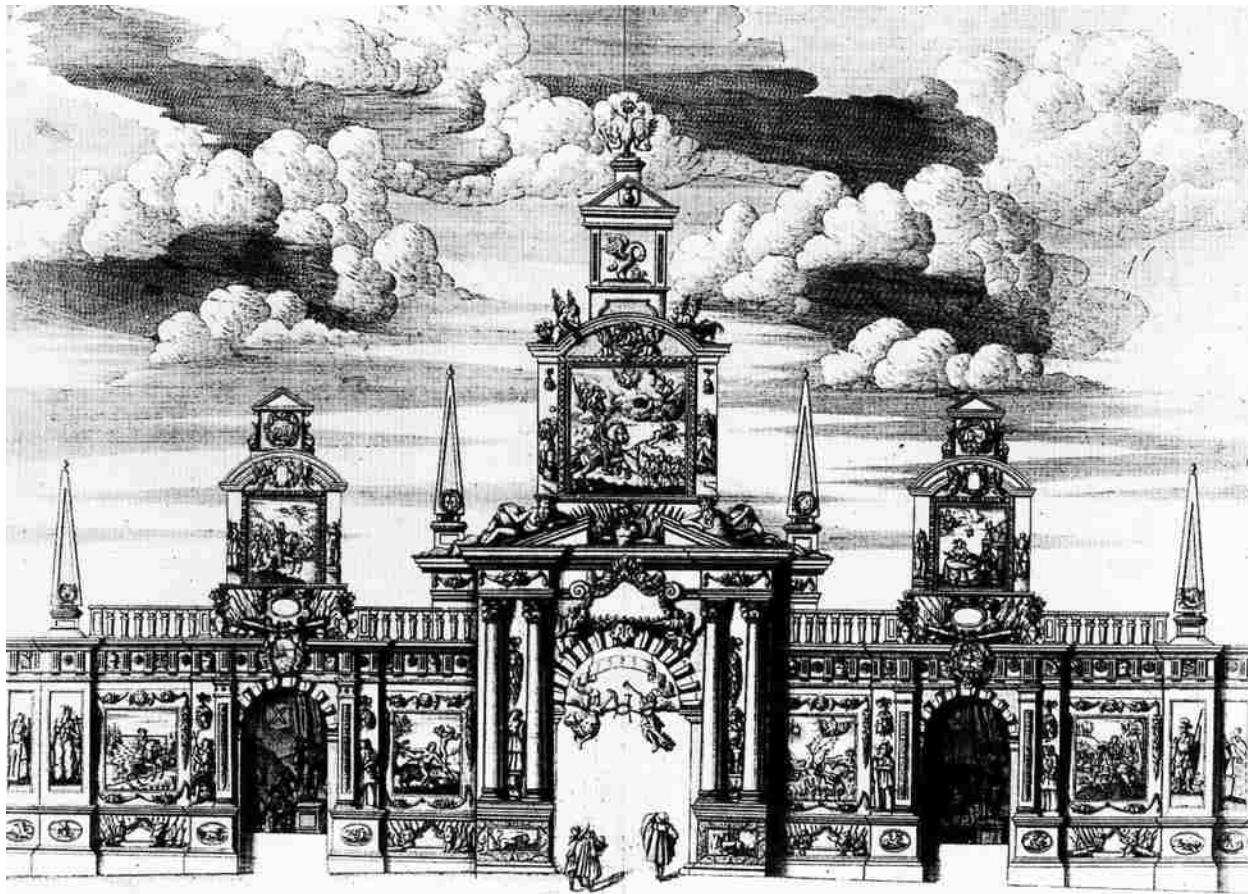
Figure 2.5 Triumphal arches erected in Moscow to celebrate Peter I's 1709 victory at Poltava. Designed by Ivan Zarudny, 1709. Etching by Henryk de Witte, c. 1710. Reproduced in Shvidkovsky, "The Founding of Saint Petersburg."

with its celebration of wartime success, might indeed be interpreted as an effort to establish the tsar's legitimacy on the basis of military conquests rather than hereditary succession.[94] We can then link Peter's interest in architecture and ceremony with a major administrative reform of his reign - his 1722 decree that the sovereign was free to designate a successor. In this case, the symbolic act preceded the associated act of reform by twenty-six years.[95]

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[94] Curiously, by this period the privileging of military ability over hereditary prestige had already begun to determine who had personal access to the tsar. Since childhood, Peter had regularly orchestrated mock military maneuvers at the suburban Moscow estate of Preobrazhenskoe; participation in these exercises influenced the composition of Peter's retinue by "shifting the emphasis away from pedigree to professional experience." See Ernest Zitser, "Politics in the State of Sober Drunkenness: Parody and Piety at the Court of Peter the Great," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 51.1 (2003): 8.

[95] For an English translation of Peter's 1722 decree on succession, see "Statute on the Succession to the Throne," in *Major Problems in the History of Imperial Russia*, 115.
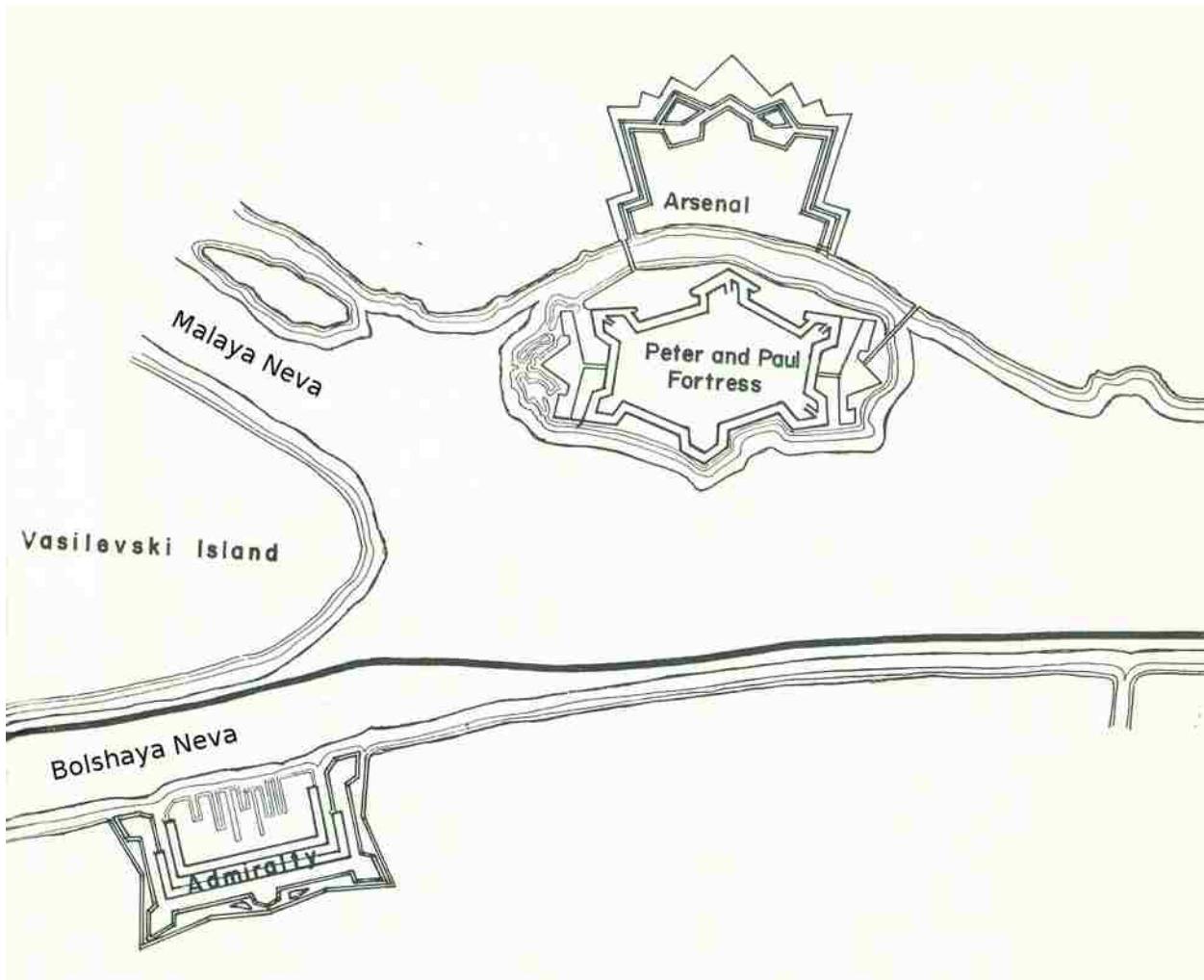
Figure 2.6 Diagram showing part of the Neva delta with the locations of the Peter and Paul Fortress and the Admiralty. The thick black line indicates the Neva's navigation channel. Reproduced in Egorov, *The Architectural Planning of St. Petersburg.*

Saint Petersburg's site, then, had been chosen: a bleak slice of Baltic coastline at Russia's periphery, "far from the inertial influence of the old capital."[96] The great task remained of deciding what form the new city would take. As mentioned briefly above, the city's earliest architectural ensemble took shape in response to the demands of the war. In May of 1703, Peter's troops captured the Swedish fortress of Nienschanz, located at the confluence of the Okhta and

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[96] Shaw, "St Petersburg and Geographies of Modernity," 7.

Figure 2.7 View of central Saint Petersburg looking northeast. The Admiralty's spire is visible in the foreground, while the spire of the Peter and Paul Cathedral is visible to the rear.

Neva Rivers.[97] The most economical solution for securing the Neva River delta from Swedish reprisal would have been to appropriate the existing Swedish fortifications for Russian use. However, Peter's sailors promptly surveyed the delta and discovered that only one of the Neva's branches was deep enough to allow navigation by seafaring vessels into the Baltic Sea - the Bolshaya Neva (fig. 2.6).[98] Armed with this information, Peter founded his fortress - the Peter and Paul Fortress - further downstream, confident that warships from the Baltic could not flank the fortress from both sides by reaching the Neva from the upstream Bolshaya or Malaya Nevka

[97] Yuri Egorov, *The Architectural Planning of St. Petersburg* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1969), 6.

[98] *Ibid.,* 6.

branches. Shortly thereafter, he established his Admiralty - a combined shipyard and fortress -

across the river from the Peter and Paul Fortress, at the mouth of the navigable Bolshaya Neva.

Together, these two structures provided a powerful architectural centerpiece that has endured into

the twenty-first century; the two soaring, gilded spires of the Admiralty and of the fortress's

cathedral remain the tallest structures in the central city to this day (fig. 2.7).

Strategic considerations certainly influenced the siting of the Admiralty and the Peter and

Paul Fortress. However, aesthetic and political motives on Peter's part should not be discounted.

The fortress's location on Hare Island commands a sweeping panorama of many of the delta's

islands and tributaries, showcasing a geographical arrangement similar to the one that Peter

admired in Amsterdam and that his students exalted in Venice. Peter wasted little time in

transforming this panoramic setting into the monumental 'face' of his city (fig. 2.8). The two

imposing military installations, soon joined by a series of stately residences along the Neva

embankments, produced an ensemble that Yuri Egorov asserts was "above all calculated to

impress foreign visitors approaching […] from the direction of the Gulf of Finland."[99] Egorov

explains, "Peter I was well aware of the likelihood that sailors and merchants visiting Saint

Petersburg would soon spread the news of its phenomenal growth and magnificence throughout

Europe."[100] Maria Di Salvo, a historian specializing in Italo-Russian relations, has indeed noted

that Italian visitors to Saint Petersburg in the eighteenth century often recorded their appreciation

of the splendid view of the city from the river, which, as she qualifies, "apparently contrasted

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[99] *Ibid.,* 9.

[100] *Ibid.,* 11.
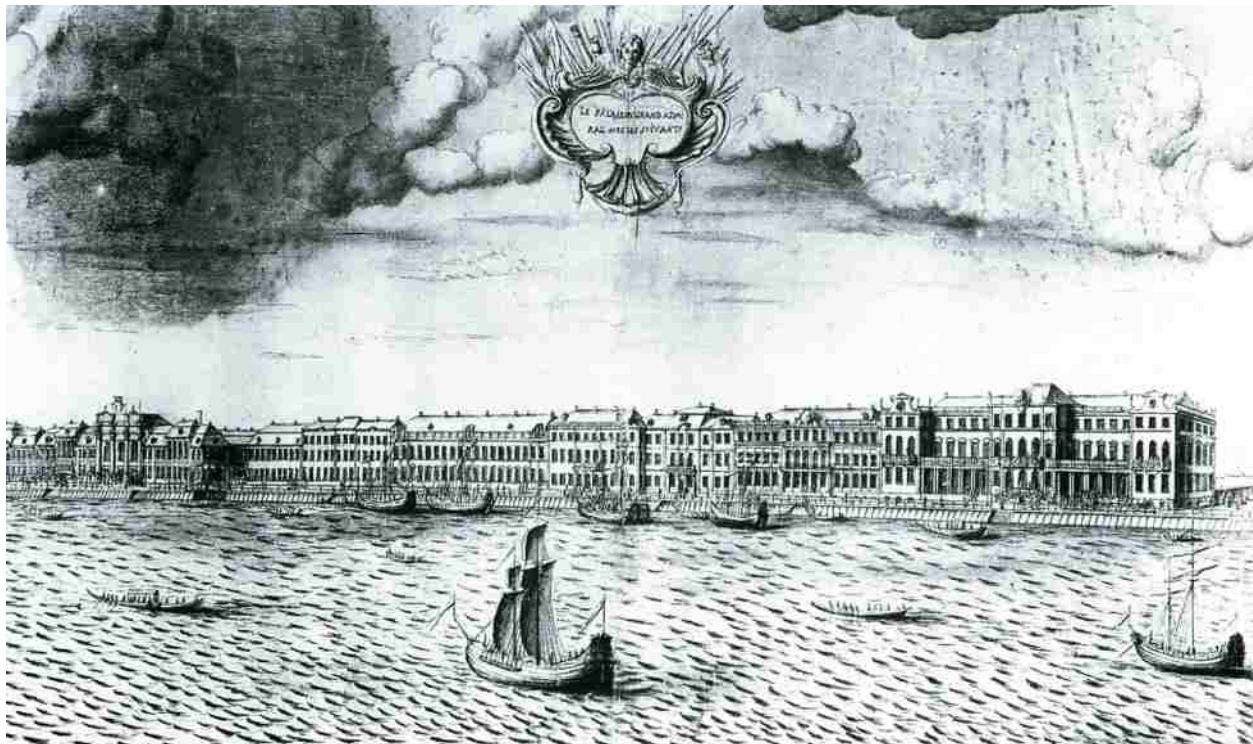
Figure 2.8 View of the Palace Embankment in Saint Petersburg. Drawing by Christophor Marselius, 1725. Marselius, a Polish architect who arrived in Saint Petersburg in 1724, produced a series of drawings of the city's embankments before his death in 1725. Reproduced in Cantini, *Domenico Trezzini.*

with the shabby and chaotic appearance of the rest of the town.[101] The architecture of Saint Petersburg's embankments was thus harnessed for the political purpose of increasing the city's prestige throughout Europe. Peter made repeated attempts to tidy the "shabby and chaotic" quarters of the city by ordering the demolition of the private wooden homes and garden plots that invariably sprang up behind the monumental residences of the embankments,[102] but there can be little question that the tsar prioritized the appearances of the riverfront properties. An axonometric drawing produced in the 1760s indicates that well after Peter's reign, the imposing

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[101] Maria Di Salvo, "A Venice of the North? Italian Views of St Petersburg," in *St Petersburg, 1703 - 1825,* 74.

[102] Anthony Cross, "The English Embankment," in *St Petersburg, 1703 - 1825,* 52.
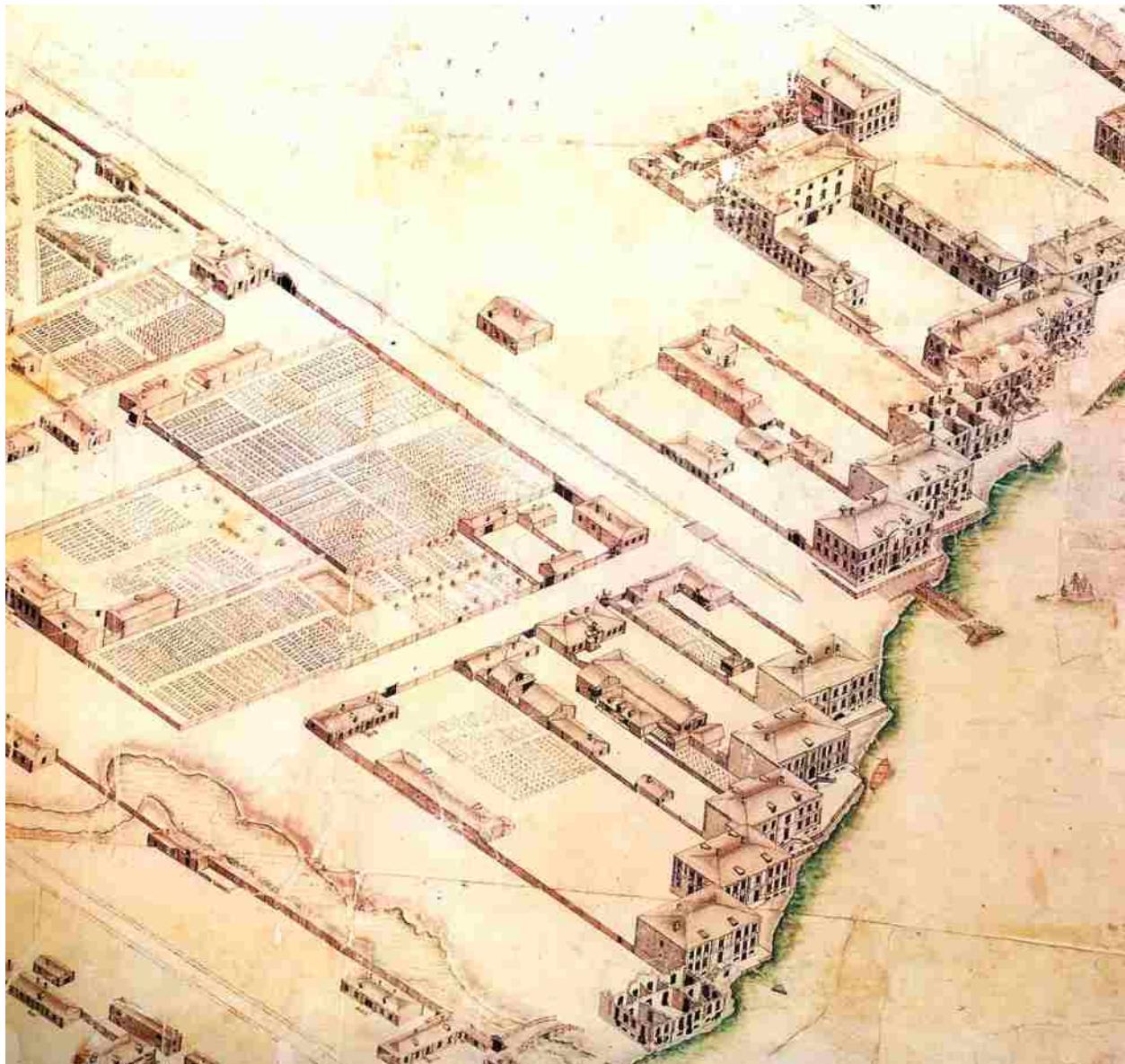
Figure 2.9 View of an embankment in Saint Petersburg. From a series of axonometric drawings by P. de Saint-Hilaire, I. Sokolov, Gorichvostov, 1765 - 1773. Reproduced in Cantini, *Domenico Trezzini.*

buildings along the embankments contrasted sharply with the low-density plots hidden behind them (fig. 2.9).

However, it was not architecture, but rather urban form that remained Peter's focus. Just as he had endeavored in Moscow to regulate not architecture in detail, but the character of the urban environment (street setbacks, construction materials, road paving), his most impactful
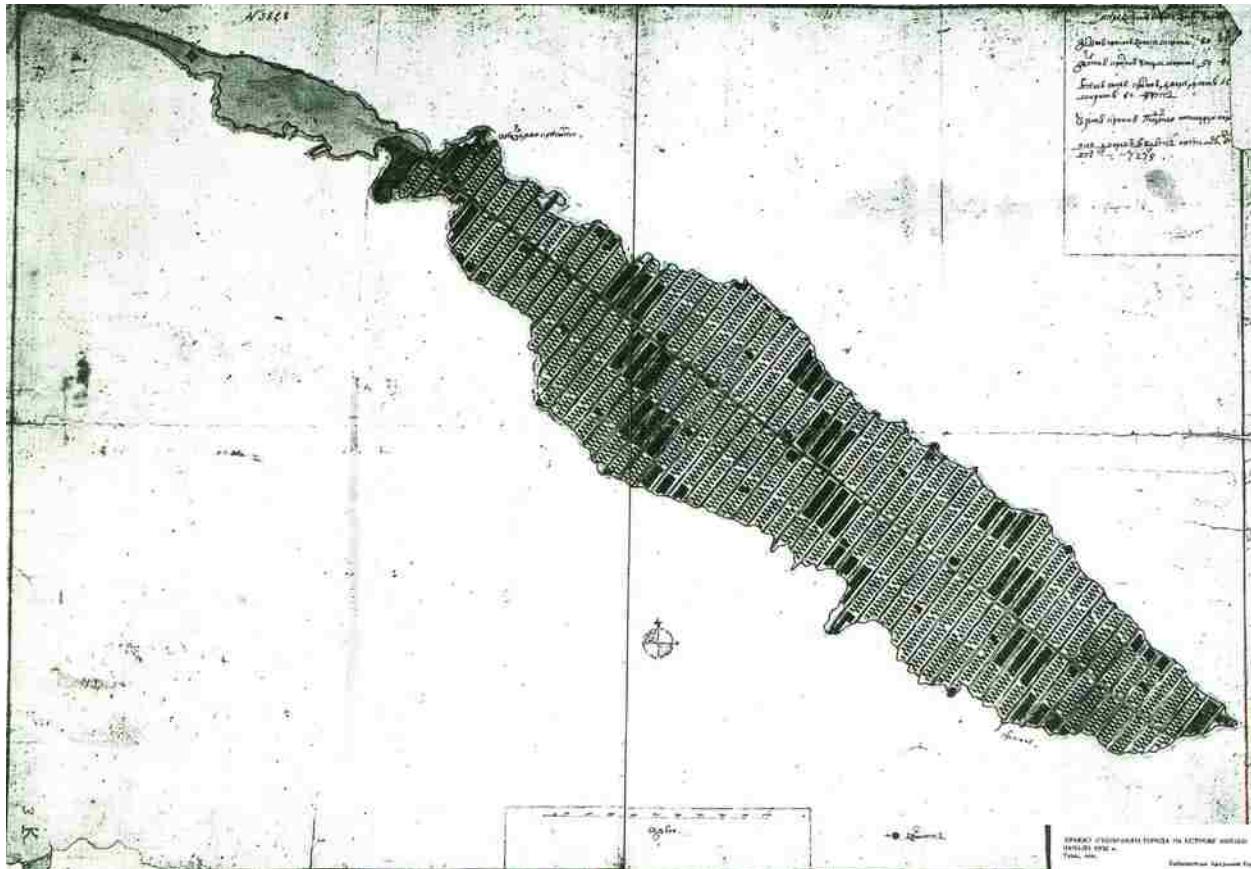
Figure 2.10 Proposal for a capital city on Kotlin Island, 1709. Reproduced in Shvidkovsky, "The Founding of Saint Petersburg."

proposals for Saint Petersburg addressed these same urban conditions. Dmitry Shvidkovsky alerts us that this development represents an often-overlooked aspect of Peter's break with Muscovite tradition. "In previous times," he expounds, "ideology had been conveyed in architectural terms through symbolic forms and ornamental motifs. Now ideology began to be expressed in architecture primarily through urban planning."[103]

An early, rather astonishing document that indicates Peter's approach to expressing his social and political policy through urban form is a 1709 drawing for a capital city on Kotlin Island, which lies some twenty miles west of Saint Petersburg in the Gulf of Finland (fig. 2.10).

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[103] Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West,* 194.

Shvidkovsky attributes this drawing to the tsar himself.[104] The plan shows a kind of Baltic

Manhattan, the entire island mercilessly blanketed with a grid of streets and canals, with a long

central avenue stretching from one end of the island to the other. The composition is quite

radical: there are no clearly defined palaces, fortresses, churches, administrative complexes,

monumental squares, or any other focal elements that might serve as the architectural

representation of the sovereign's power. The sweeping vistas and broad boulevards we might

expect from contemporary Baroque city planning ideals are also absent. Instead, the massive

blocks are packed with nearly identical residential plots (fig. 2.11). Shvidkovsky interprets this uniform scheme, somewhat paradoxically, as a potent instance of autocratic planning: "the highly regular spatial scheme clearly reflected the notion that all subjects were equal before the absolute power of the emperor."[105]
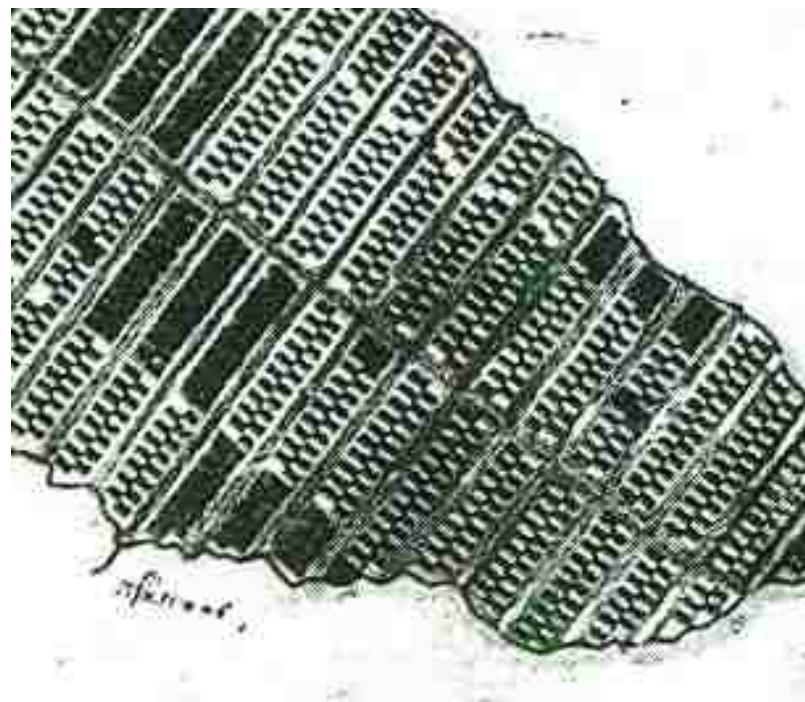
Figure 2.11 Proposal for a capital city on Kotlin Island, detail, 1709.

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[104] Shvidkovsky claims that this drawing is "thought to be from the emperor's own hand." ("The Founding of Saint Petersburg and the History of Russian Architecture," in *Circa 1700*, 83) This to me seems improbable given the rigorous clarity of the draftsmanship compared against the loose, inexpert sketches attributed to Peter I and widely reproduced elsewhere; see, for example, Peter's sketch for a citadel at Azov (fig. 2.1). However, the drawing's provenance during Peter's reign and the incorporation of some of its key elements into a later plan by Domenico Trezzini would seem to confirm Peter's involvement in its production.

[105] Shvidkovsky, "The Founding of Saint Petersburg," 84.

Shvidkovsky quite rightfully seeks in the Kotlin Island plan an expression of state ideology. He falls prey, however, to a common though problematic tendency: the assumption that urban forms produced under an autocracy will have as their chief goal the expression of the autocrat's power. Hilary Ballon, writing on Paris under Henry IV, warns against the consequences of this view. "It has generally been assumed that the ideology of monarchy, centered on the deified king, directly translated into programs of city planning devoted to self-glorification,"[106] she notes. This approach threatens to produce simplistic readings of urban forms, ones that "misconstrue the interrelated social and architectural concerns" that animate a ruler's urban program. Ballon also criticizes this approach for failing to "account for the complex transactions between art and society,"[107] hinting at the reciprocal relationship of influence between a society and its architecture. With Ballon's critique in mind, we might posit Peter's Kotlin Island scheme as an attempt to elucidate a model for ordinary civilian life in the new Russian Empire: a strict urban grid for a strict social hierarchy. The regular housing plots, rather than emphasizing each subject's equal servility before the tsar as Shvidkovsky supposes (Peter, in fact, detested the Muscovite practice of subjects groveling before the tsar and referring to themselves as his "slaves"[108]), reflect Peter's egalitarian manner and meritocratic ideals. Here is an emperor who "might pop up in any corner of Petersburg, drop into any house, sit down at table and not shun the simplest food;" here is an emperor who was once observed by a German diplomat merrily "playing on the swings at the Krasnye Gates that had been set up there for the

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[106] Ballon, *The Paris of Henri IV,* 12.

[107] *Ibid.,* 12.

[108] Sumner, *Peter the Great,* 15.

common folk."[109] A ruler who so demonstratively upended centuries-old social strictures (Muscovite tsars rarely left the Kremlin walls, let alone played on public swing sets) would naturally prefer an urban plan that militated against such strictures. There can be no seclusion within Kremlin walls if there is no Kremlin.

The Kotlin Island plan represents an affront to Muscovite social orthodoxy in another key way: it upends the longstanding distinction between *gorod* and *posad*. Typical Russian cities of the pre-Petrine period consisted of a central *gorod* ("city"), often consisting only of a fortified kremlin and inhabited chiefly by nobles, and a surrounding *posad* (roughly, "suburb"), an area settled gradually by merchants and craftsmen.[110] By the seventeenth century, this distinction had acquired a significant political implication. Taxes were levied exclusively on residents of the *posad*, and accordingly by the time the *Ulozhenie* ("Law Code") of 1649 was introduced, entry into and exit from a *posad* (with a view towards permanent settlement) was strictly controlled by the authorities.[111] It is a curious effect of this policy that although the modern Russian word for "city" remains *gorod,* the state's acute interest in cities as sources of tax revenue meant that "more often than not, when the state said city, it meant *posad*."[112]

Moscow exhibited this tendency in perhaps its most complex form (fig. 2.12). By Peter's reign Moscow consisted of four distinct central districts, each girdled by a wall - the Kremlin, Kitai Gorod ("China City"), Bely Gorod ("White City"), and Zemlianoi Gorod ("Earthen

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[109] Anisimov, *The Reforms of Peter the Great,* 19.

[110] On the composition of early Russian cities, see Gutkind, *Urban Development in Eastern Europe,* 216 - 221.

[111] *Ibid.,* 220.

[112] J. Michael Hittle, "The Service City in the Eighteenth Century," in *The City in Russian History,* ed. Michael F. Hamm (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 55.
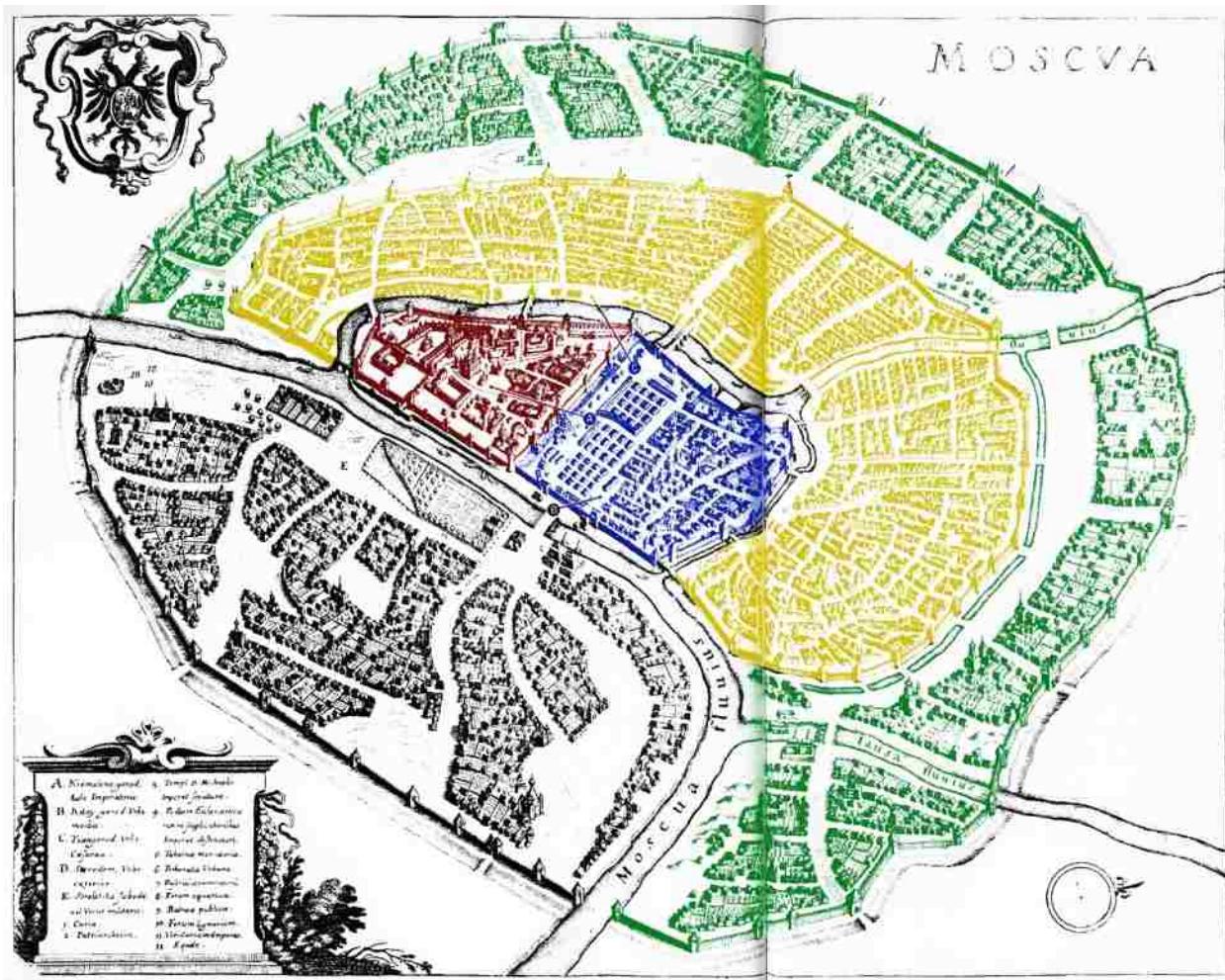
Figure 2.12 Plan of Moscow. Engraving by Matthaeus Merian, 1646. The Kremlin is shown in red, the commercial district of Kitai Gorod in blue, Bely Gorod in yellow, and Zemlianoi Gorod in green. The uncolored area to the south of the Moscow River is the musketeers' quarter *(streletskaia sloboda)*.

City").[113] The walls dividing these districts served much as the walls dividing the four districts of

Ming Dynasty Beijing during the same period - to delineate areas of increasing social prestige

and increasingly limited access (Beijing's Forbidden City thus providing an analog for Moscow's

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[113] The names of Bely Gorod and Zemlianoi Gorod are derived from the walls that once surrounded each district - a whitewashed palisade and an earthen rampart, respectively. The etymology of "Kitai Gorod" is less clear; the prevailing suggestion is a derivation not from *Kitai* ("China"), but from *kita* ("braid," archaic), perhaps also a reference to the construction method employed in the district's early walls. Robert Wallace favors this derivation; see Robert Wallace, *Rise of Russia* (New York: Time-Life, 1967), 70.
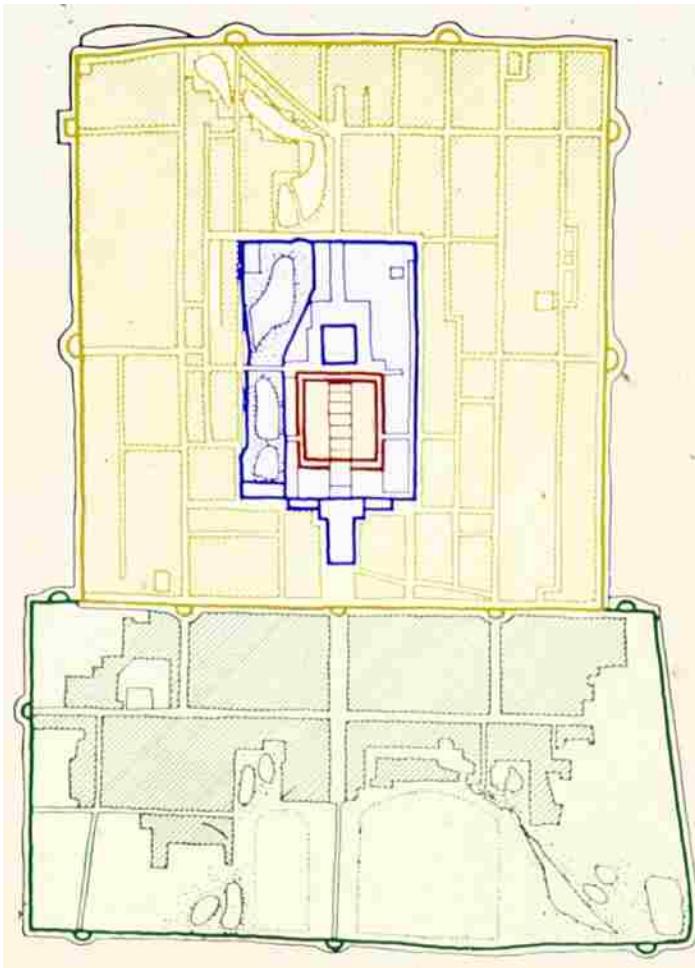
Figure 2.13 Plan of Beijing, Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644). The Forbidden City is shown in red, the Imperial City in blue, the Inner City in yellow, the Outer City in green.

Kremlin; fig. 2.13).[114] In China, the importance of walls for articulating a city's social structure has indeed been so great that the Chinese use the same word for both "city" and "wall."[115] Russian usage echoes this importance: the Russian builder of fortified city walls was called a *gorodnik,* a word derived directly from *gorod* ("city") and connoting considerable social prestige.[116]

The Kotlin Island plan summarily uproots this tradition of walled neighborhoods corresponding to social estate or profession. The uninterrupted central avenue[117], traversing the entire city, militates most strongly against the danger that the old walled districts might reappear. Shvidkovsky quite naturally reaches for the language of violence

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[114] On Beijing's walled districts, see Pan Guxi, "The Yuan and Ming Dynasties," in *Chinese Architecture,* ed. Nancy S. Steinhart (New Haven: Yale, 2002), 204 - 213. On Moscow's early urban development, I again refer the reader to Gutkind's excellent coverage in *Urban Development in Eastern Europe,* 323 - 367.

[115] Michael Fazio, Marian Moffett, and Lawrence Wodehouse, *Buildings Across Time,* 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2014), 87. The word in question is 城, "cheng."

[116] Gutkind, *Urban Development in Eastern Europe,* 228.

[117] The central avenue may in fact be a canal. Shvidkovsky himself is unsure of the correct interpretation.

when describing the avenue as a "sharp sword," although it is Muscovite planning practice, not simply the island's topography, which is skewered.[118] The plan for Kotlin Island cannot be reduced to matters of architectural taste. Instead, the scheme represents an early attempt by Peter at "suggesting that the city was something more than its taxable commercial and artisan population."[119] J. Michael Hittle notes, however, that Peter's insatiable demand for funding (for both his reforms and his military campaigns) meant that this nascent "all-estate" understanding of the city was slow to materialize. Though his conception of urban form represented a radical new vision, financial considerations restricted the tsar to a more modest goal: that of rationalizing the city's institutions, "especially those which connected the *posad* commune to the state."[120]

Even the proposed location of the new city - on an island in the open sea, roughly twenty miles from the mouth of the Neva - represents a radical departure from Muscovite or "medieval" planning. Sergei Luppov reflects that even before the Kotlin proposal, Saint Petersburg exhibited a scattered nature *(razbrosannost),* with its various developments connected by a series of waterways.[121] The inclusion of Kotlin Island within this already expansive system contrasted with the inward-looking character of the walled medieval city, while also compelling Saint Petersburg's residents to become competent seafarers (fig. 2.14).

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[118] Shvidkovsky, "The Founding of Saint Petersburg," 84.

[119] Hittle, "The Service City in the Eighteenth Century," 58.

[120] *Ibid.,* 58.

[121] S. P. Luppov, *Istoriia Stroitelstva Peterburga v Pervoi Chetverti XVIII Veka* (Moscow and Leningrad: Soviet Academy of Sciences, 1957), 26.
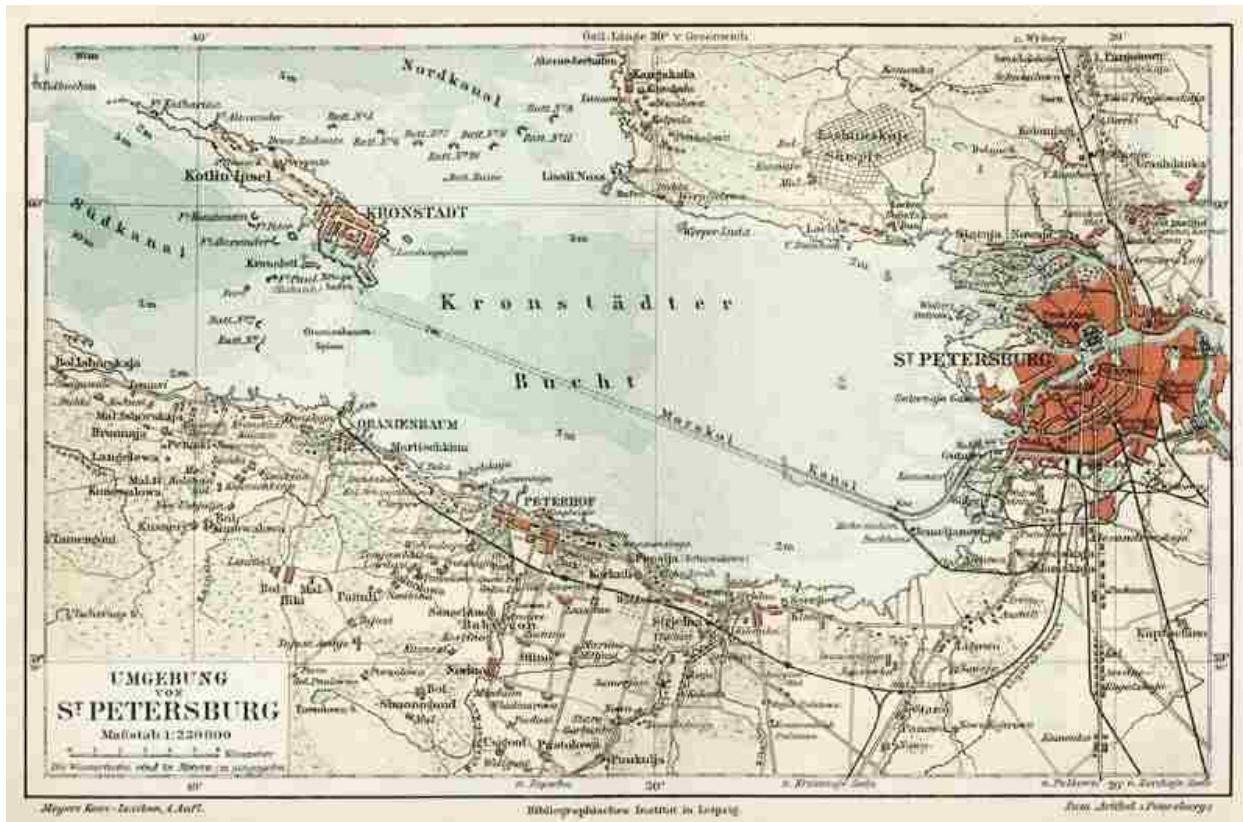
Figure 2.14 Map showing Saint Petersburg and a portion of the Gulf of Finland. Kotlin Island is visible in the upper left; the island measures roughly eight miles in length and one mile in breadth. Produced for the German encyclopedia *Meyers Konversations-Lexikon*, 1888. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, reproduced under public domain.

If we accept that Peter's regular scheme for Kotlin Island reflects his "egalitarian manner," as argued above, we must be careful to note that this fact does not preclude expression of social prestige within the urban environment. Peter certainly did not aim to create a classless society. Instead, we find in the tsar's urban planning proposal the counterpart to his emerging conception of social organization in Russia, codified most prominently in the Table of Ranks of 1722. This act divided military personnel, court servitors, and civil servants into fourteen ranks, promotion through which was to be strictly meritocratic: "nobody is to demand a rank for himself who cannot show the appropriate patent," reads the decree, noting that the state "will be

glad to grant [the appropriate rank] to each according to his merit."[122] This system supplanted the *mestnichestvo,* a stifling and "elaborate system of precedence which strictly regulated the holding of offices and frustrated the rise of talent," dismantled just before Peter's reign.[123] Peter himself made a show of promoting himself through the ranks on merit in order to set an example.[124]

Peter opted to express this new conception of social hierarchy

Figure 2.15 Facades for model houses in Saint Petersburg. Single-storied homes for taxpayers and well-to-do residents by Domenico Trezzini, 1714. Two-storied home for persons of eminence by Le Blond, 1716. Reproduced in Gutkind, *Urban Development in Eastern Europe.*

- strict though allowing mobility - not through walled districts, but through housing types. In 1714 he commissioned his chief architect, the Swiss-Italian master Domenico Trezzini, to design model dwellings for residents of varying social status (fig. 2.15). Trezzini, born in Astano, Switzerland, and working in Copenhagen when he was recruited by a Russian diplomatic mission, oversaw construction in the new capital nearly from its founding in 1703 to 1734, well

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[122] "The Table of Ranks, 1722," in *Major Problems in the History of Imperial Russia*, 114 - 115.

[123] Sumner, *Peter the Great,* 14.

[124] *Ibid.,* 33.

after Peter's death.[125] Art historian George Heard Hamilton notes that Trezzini's familiarity with "the small-scale late Baroque architecture of Northern Europe" suited him perfectly to both Peter's architectural tastes (which leaned Dutch),[126] and to the task of providing practical housing for Saint Petersburg's rapidly growing population.[127] Two drawings survive of his model houses of 1714: a modest one-story dwelling "for taxpayers" *(dlia podlykh)*, and an elongated home with an emphasized central entry "for well-to-do people" *(dlia zazhitochnykh liudei).* A third drawing, depicting an elegant two-story home "for persons of eminence" *(dlia imenitykh liudei),* has long been attributed to Trezzini but is now thought to be the work of Jean-Baptiste Alexandre Le Blond, a French architect who arrived in Saint Petersburg in 1716.[128] The fact that Trezzini's house for taxpayers is precisely half the width of the home for well-to-do residents illustrates how neatly these homes could be sited within uniformly sized building lots.

Trezzini's model housing program, perhaps curiously for a scheme meant to help Russia quickly modernize herself, drew upon a rich heritage in Muscovite urban practice. Seventeenth-century Moscow already possessed a thriving "house market" in which standardized, easily reproducible building elements were employed to rapidly rebuild the city after a conflagration (see chapter one). Trezzini's model dwellings served a similar purpose: to allow for the rapid, controlled expansion of Saint Petersburg given the considerable constraints on time, resources, and expertise (see fig. 2.9, in which the embankment is lined with identical model homes, likely

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125 On Trezzini's arrival in Russia, see Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution,* 156.

126 In 1724, Peter even refused the request of one of Russia's architectural students to go to France, sending him to Holland instead. *Ibid.,* 148.

127 George Heard Hamilton, *The Art and Architecture of Russia* (New Haven: Yale, 1954), 265.

128 Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution,* 156 - 157. Hamilton and Grabar, for example, accepted this drawing as Trezzini's.
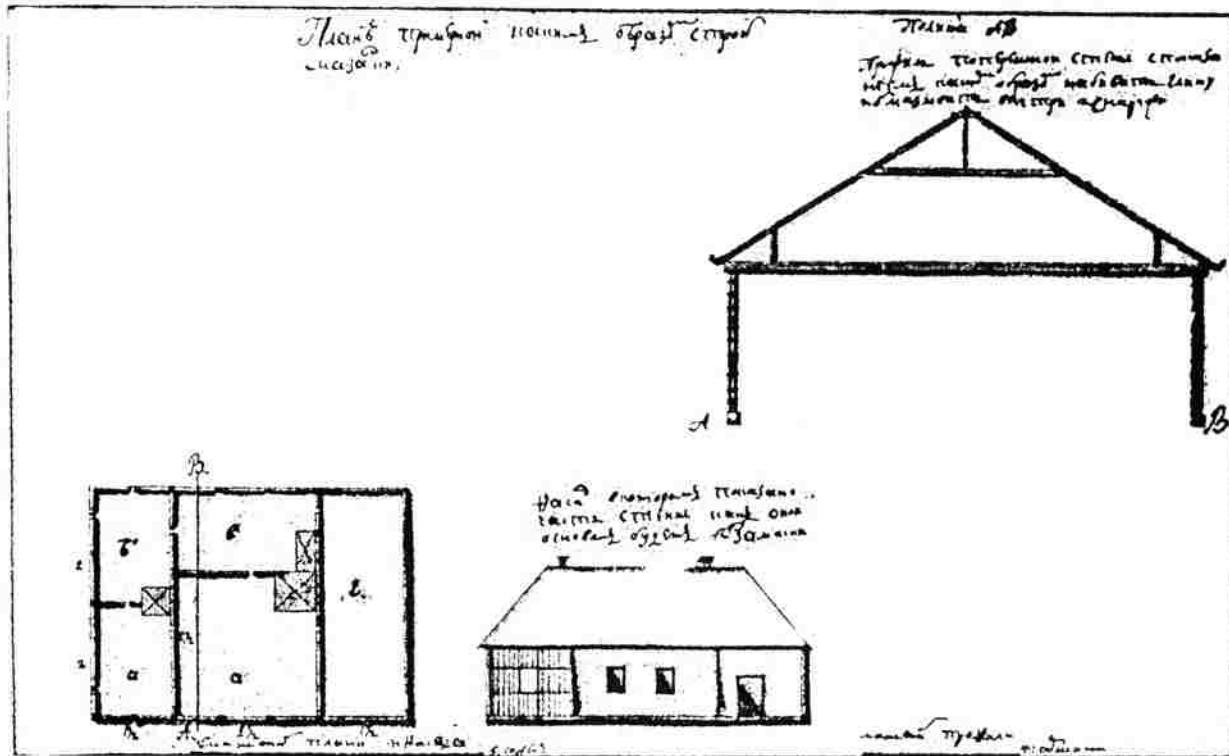
Figure 2.16 Construction standards for trellis-type home construction. Drawing by Domenico Trezzini. Reproduced in Cantini, *Domenico Trezzini.*

based on designs by Trezzini or Le Blond). Peter again relied on compulsion to implement Trezzini's housing program, issuing a decree to this effect in April 1714:

> On Admiralty Island and City Island [today's "Petrograd Side"] in Saint Petersburg, and everywhere along the Bolshaya Neva and the principal canals, no one shall build of wood, but only of wattle and daub (*mazanki)*. In those districts not mentioned above, wood construction shall be permitted. In all cases the manner of homes built shall accord with the designs by the architect Trezzini.[129]

This decree reveals Trezzini's considerable power in shaping Saint Petersburg's built environment. It is not only the stipulation that his plans be consulted that is significant in this regard, but also Peter's (presumably reluctant) decision to permit wood and earth construction.

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[129] *PSZ,* Vol. 5, No. 2792. Author's own translation. The decree continues by specifying standards for the construction of stoves and roofs.

This decision reflects the reality that the Neva delta offered limited access to stone, a reality further registered in the "stone duty" implemented between 1714 and 1776, according to which wagons and ships entering the city had to contribute a specified quantity of stone towards the city's construction.[130] However, this decision can also be seen as recognition of Trezzini's skill in coping with shortages of building material. We know, for example, that Trezzini introduced a kind of

Figure 2.17 (above) Proposal for an officers' barracks. Drawing by Domenico Trezzini. Reproduced in Cantini, *Domenico Trezzini.*

Figure 2.18 (below) Cabin of Peter I, Saint Petersburg, 1703. Photograph by Dmitry Kudinov, reproduced under Creative Commons license.

"trellis" system of construction (fig. 2.16) designed to minimize the amount of wood needed for the construction of homes in the interests of economy, fire safety, and speed of construction.[131]

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[130] Brumfield, *A History of Russian Architecture,* 205.

[131] Alice Biro, "Building for Peter the Great at the Mouth of the Neva," in *Domenico Trezzini e la Costruzione di San Pietroburgo,* ed. Franco Cantini (Florence: Octavo, 1994), 147. Judging from contemporary drawings, Trezzini's "trellis" system was likely a variation on wattle-and-daub construction.

Figure 2.19 Model houses erected along the Volga embankment, Tver, 1763. Reproduced in Gutkind, *Urban Development in Eastern Europe.*

Of course, the substitution of wood frame construction for Russia's traditional log construction would also have advanced these interests; compare, for example, a drawing by Trezzini for a barracks with Peter's modest 1703 cabin (fig. 2.17, 2.18).

Among Peter's many innovations, we might briefly chart the tremendous and enduring success of the model housing program. When a devastating fire destroyed most of the city of Tver in 1763, the state seized the opportunity to extend the model housing scheme to the renewal of provincial capitals. A collection of standardized buildings was drawn up, and the city was rebuilt quickly and efficiently, becoming one of Russia's most prestigious cities in the process (fig. 2.19).[132] In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the prominent Saint Petersburg

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[132] Gutkind, *Urban Development in Eastern Europe,* 304 - 309.
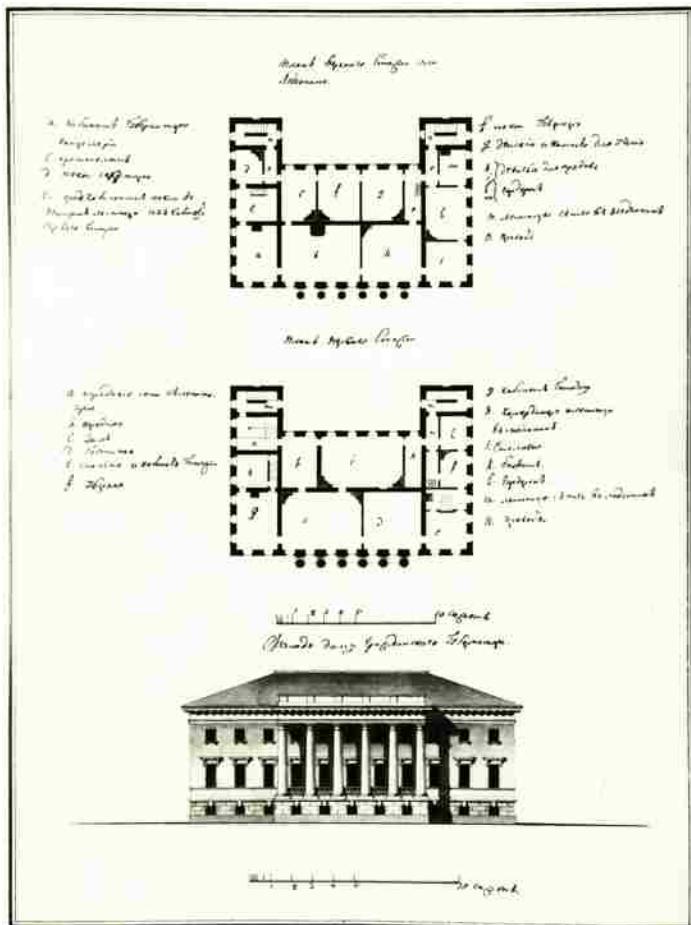
Figure 2.20 Standardized design for a governor's residence, Adrian Zakharov, 1803. Reproduced in Gutkind, *Urban Development in Eastern Europe.*

architect Adrian Zakharov would launch a standardized building program that would see "St. Petersburg set the tone for an entire empire."[133] His 1812 publication *A Collection of Facades* contained over 300 designs for buildings of all types - palaces, law courts, warehouses - that would be used to transform all of Russia's cities in the image of its now century-old imperial capital.[134] "By 1850," notes W. Bruce Lincoln, "huge imperial-style structures towered over wooden cottages in scores of out-of-the-way places, while thousands of provincials struggled to reproduce what they imagined to be St. Petersburg's style of life in their homes and social relationships."[135] Zakharov's standardized designs stemmed quite naturally from his preferred idiom of restrained classicism (fig. 2.20), although his model buildings make no provisions for the irregular sites that the architect often encountered in his Saint Petersburg work (fig. 21, 22).

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[133] W. Bruce Lincoln, *Sunlight at Midnight: St. Petersburg and the Rise of Modern Russia* (New York: Basic, 2000), 7.

[134] Gutkind, *Urban Development in Eastern Europe,* 309.

[135] Lincoln, *Sunlight at Midnight,* 8.

The earliest urban vision for Imperial Russia was therefore eminently practical - standardized buildings erected on uniform lots - and closely linked with Peter's societal ideals. The scheme for Kotlin Island never materialized, however. Peter proved unable to compel his people to live in such a remote, frigid location, despite numerous decrees threatening harsh punishment.[136] Likely for this reason, the tsar commissioned Trezzini to develop a new master plan for Saint Petersburg in 1714 (five years after the production of the Kotlin Island plan), this time with the much more

Figure 2.21 (above) The Mizhueva House, Saint Petersburg, plan. Adrian Zakharov, 1804 - 1806.

Figure 2.22 (below) The Mizhueva House, Fontanka embankment facade. Photograph by A. Savin, reproduced under Creative Commons license.

accessible Vasilievsky Island as the city's core (fig. 2.23). Trezzini's plan sees Vasilievsky Island blanketed with the strict network of streets and canals that characterized the Kotlin Island scheme. Trezzini envisions the island as the city proper, its territory girdled by bastioned fortifications after the manner of Vauban,[137] with the surrounding districts left largely as

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[136] Shvidkovsky, "The Founding of Saint Petersburg," 84. For the initial decree announcing the Kotlin scheme, see *PSZ,* Vol. 4, No. 2467.

[137] Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban (1633 - 1707) was the foremost military engineer of his age; he prompted the adoption throughout Europe of fortifications featuring star-shaped, angular bastions.
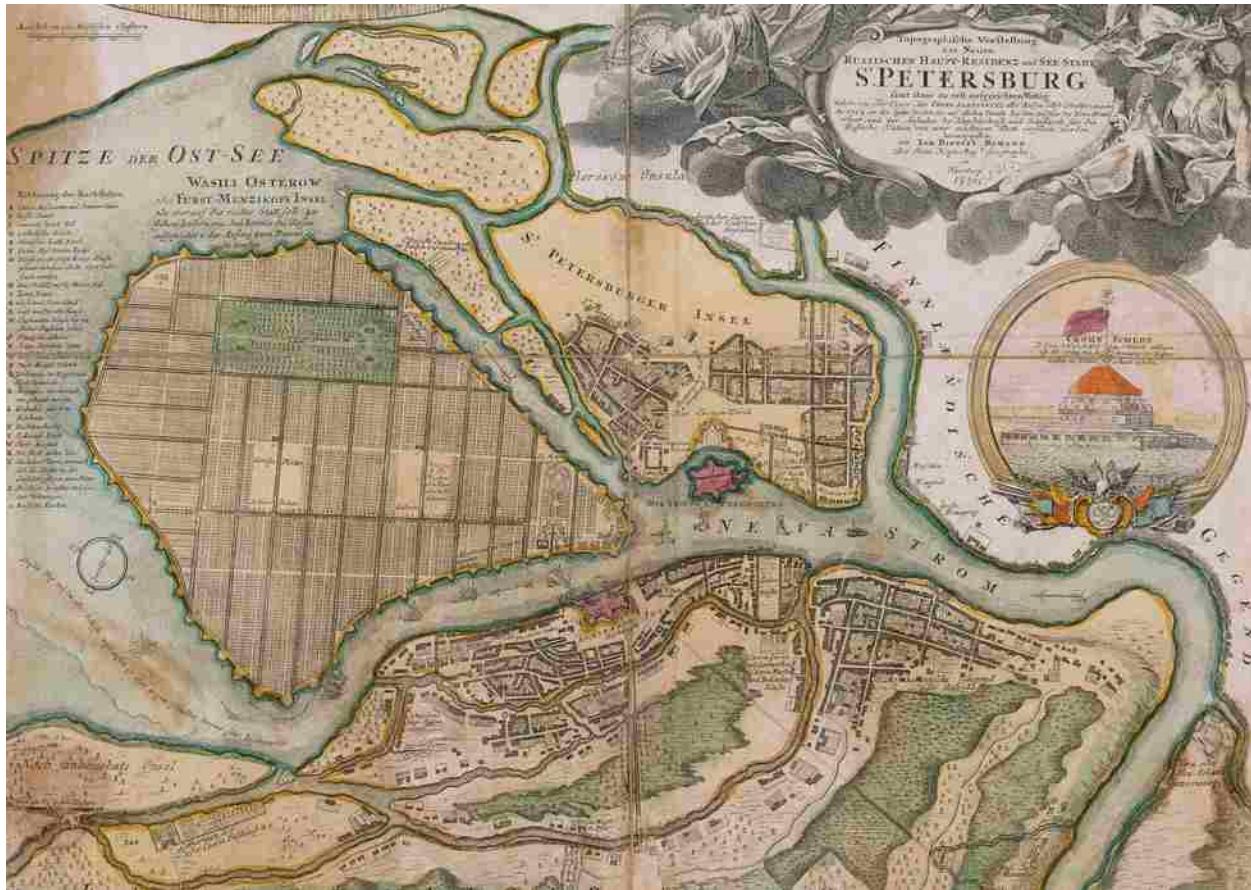
Figure 2.23 Trezzini's 1714 plan for Saint Petersburg. Engraving by Johann Baptist Homann, 1716. Vasilievsky Island is the largest of the delta's islands, visible to the left in this image. Reproduced in Cantini, *Domenico Trezzini.*

undeveloped swampland.[138] Shvidkovsky interprets the close resemblance between the plans for Kotlin Island and Vasilievsky Island as evidence that Peter "forced" Trezzini to apply the ideas previously developed by the tsar for use in the updated city plan.[139] It is possible, however, that Trezzini was involved in the production of both plans and that their similarities reflect the maturation of ideas developed jointly by the tsar and his chief architect.

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[138] For a treatment of Vauban's influence on European city planning that is particularly sensitive to the Russian case, see Simon Pepper, "Military Architecture in Baroque Europe," in *The Triumph of the Baroque: Architecture in Europe 1600 - 1750,* ed. Henry A. Millon (New York: Rizzoli, 1999).

[139] Shvidkovsky, "The Founding of Saint Petersburg," 84.

The connection between Trezzini's city plan and Peter's vision for a new social order finds its succinct elucidation in a decree of 1719. Among the scholars considering Trezzini's proposal, only Shvidkovsky assigns adequate importance to this document in the present author's view.[140] The decree stipulates the house type, plot size, and plot location permitted to each resident based on social standing:

> On Vasilievsky Island in Saint Petersburg, stone and wooden construction shall proceed according to the builder's quantity of peasant households, and for merchants, according to the builder's tax rate *(po platezhu tiagla)*. […] Regarding the size of the plots on which these stone and wooden structures shall be erected, and the type of house that shall correspond to a given quantity of peasant households, builders shall conform to the table printed below.[141]

Stone Palaces of Two Stories:

Quantity of Peasant Households	*Plot Width in Sazhens*	*Plot Location*
From 500 to 450	10	Neva embankment
From 450 to 400	8	
From 400 to 350	10	Principal canal embankments
From 350 to 300	8	
From 300 to 250	6	
From 250 to 200, having pooled resources with a second householder	10	Neva embankment
From 200 to 150, having pooled resources with a second householder	10	Principal canal embankments

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140 Shvidkovsky uses this decree to draw a connection between the regular building plots and Peter's table of ranks, though he does not clarify that the decree predates the table by three years, and that the social statuses listed in the decree do not correspond directly to the titles introduced in the table of ranks. See "The Founding of Saint Petersburg," 84 - 85, and "Russian Architecture and the West," 195.

141 *PSZ,* Vol. 5, No. 3305. Author's own translation. Plot widths are specified in *sazhens,* an Imperial Russian unit of measurement equal to 2.16 meters.

Wooden Homes of One Story:

From 150 to 100	10	Minor canal embankments
From 100 to 80	7	
From 80 to 40, having pooled resources with a second householder	10	

With this decree, Peter quite clearly makes concessions to the old regime for the sake of populating the island quickly: prestige is granted according to the size of rural estates, rather than on merit or state service. The key principal on display, though, is the expression of social status through restrictions on urban form. A second important effect of this policy is the renewed affirmation that the Neva embankments, by virtue of their increased visibility by sea, were to be dressed with the city's most prestigious architecture - that is, large palaces built of stone.

The plan for Vasilievsky Island achieved only partial success. Peter enjoined his nobles to build on the island until his very death in 1725,[142] and Trezzini remained faithful to the plan until his own death in 1734, modifying it as financial and geographic exigencies demanded (fig. 2.24).[143] Resistance remained strong, however. The freezing and thawing of the Neva rendered the island inaccessible during autumn and spring,[144] and the low-lying topography threatened the

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[142] Brumfield, *A History of Russian Architecture,* 208.

[143] Nicola Navone, "Domenico Trezzini and the Plans for Vasilyevsky Island," in *Domenico Trezzini e la Costruzione di San Pietroburgo,* ed. Franco Cantini (Florence: Octavo, 1994), 96.

[144] The technical challenge of spanning the 300-meter width of the Bolshaya Neva would not be met until the mid-19th century with the construction of the Annunciation Bridge. During Peter's reign, the waterway could be traversed by boat when free of ice, and by foot when completely frozen; both of these methods proved difficult in the autumn and spring when ice coverage was partial. A wooden pontoon bridge, Saint's Isaac's Bridge, was erected in 1727 and rebuilt every summer for over a century; its date of construction - just after Peter's death - has led some scholars, including Anisimov, to conclude that Peter forbade large bridges in an attempt to compel his people to become competent seafarers. On Saint Isaac's Bridge and Peter's attitude towards the construction of bridges, see I. S. Khrabry, *Sankt-Peterburg: Tri Veka Arkhitektury* (Saint Petersburg: Norint, 1999), 50. The text of this volume is by Anisimov.
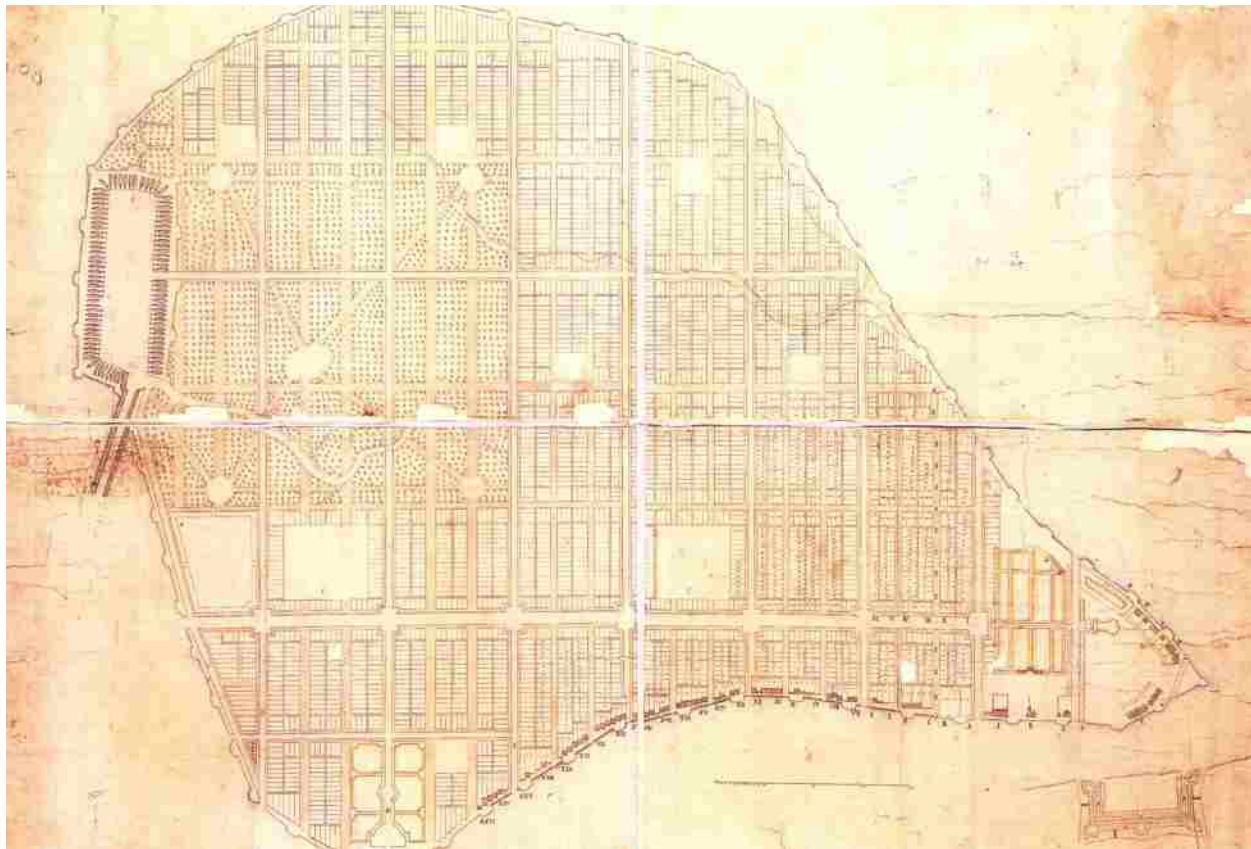
Figure 2.24 Detail of Trezzini's plan for Vasilievsky Island. This print from 1723 represents one of many iterations of Trezzini's proposal. Several changes to the 1714 plan are apparent, most notably regarding the size and position of a large public garden. Reproduced in Cantini, *Domenico Trezzini.*

area with constant flooding. Brumfield notes that contemporary accounts of the island "convey the impression of an abandoned project, imposing from a distance, but on close inspection, rotting and uninhabited."[145] However, Trezzini's regimented grid of streets governs the island's planning to this day, albeit without the proposed canals, large public squares, and bastioned fortifications. Brumfield reflects that Trezzini's grid, imposing its strict geometry upon the swampy morass of the Neva delta, may bear as much responsibility as borrowed architectural styles or faked masonry detailing in earning Saint Petersburg its reputation as a "shammed" or "borrowed" city - a reputation echoed in the declaration of Dostoevsky's Underground Man that

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[145] Brumfield, *A History of Russian Architecture,* 208.

Saint Petersburg was "the most abstract and intentional city on the entire globe."[146]

We have encountered above the French architect Le Blond in his connection with Saint Petersburg's model housing program. It will be instructive to say a bit more about his contributions to the city's urban form, especially as they relate to the tsar's social and political program. Le Blond, a member of the Royal Academy of Architecture in Paris and a pupil of Le Nôtre, the master responsible for the gardens at

Figure 2.25 Engraving from *La Théorie et la Pratique du Jardinage*, Le Blond, 1709.

Versailles, had achieved considerable repute through the 1709 publication of his treatise *La Théorie et la Pratique du Jardinage* (fig. 2.25).[147] Le Blond, "whose name was on every Parisian's lips,"[148] was recruited by Peter's emissaries in Paris in 1716 and spent several days in conversation with the tsar in the German spa town of Pyrmont. Peter hired him on generous terms, and Le Blond served as chief architect of Saint Petersburg from 1716 until his death from

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[146] William Craft Brumfield, "St. Petersburg and the Art of Survival," in *Preserving Petersburg: History, Memory, Nostalgia*, ed. Helena Goscilo and Stephen M. Norris (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 1 - 3, 12 - 15. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground,* trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage, 1993), 7.

[147] This work was published anonymously in 1709, followed by an edition attributing the text to Dezallier d'Argenville and the engravings to Le Blond, followed by an edition indicating Le Blond as an author. See Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West,* 204.

[148] Igor Grabar, *Peterburgskaia Arkhitektura v XVIII i XIX Vekakh* (Saint Petersburg: Lenizdat, 1994), 82. Author's own translation.

smallpox in 1719, briefly supplanting Trezzini by virtue of his title if not through his actual authority.[149]

Le Blond's designs during this short period were left largely unexecuted. This fate befell his most ambitious proposal for the capital, a grandiose master plan for Saint Petersburg drawn up within months of his arrival and evidently meant as an alternative to Trezzini's plan of 1714.[150] Le Blond's plan, like Trezzini's, envisions Vasilievsky Island as the city's focal point
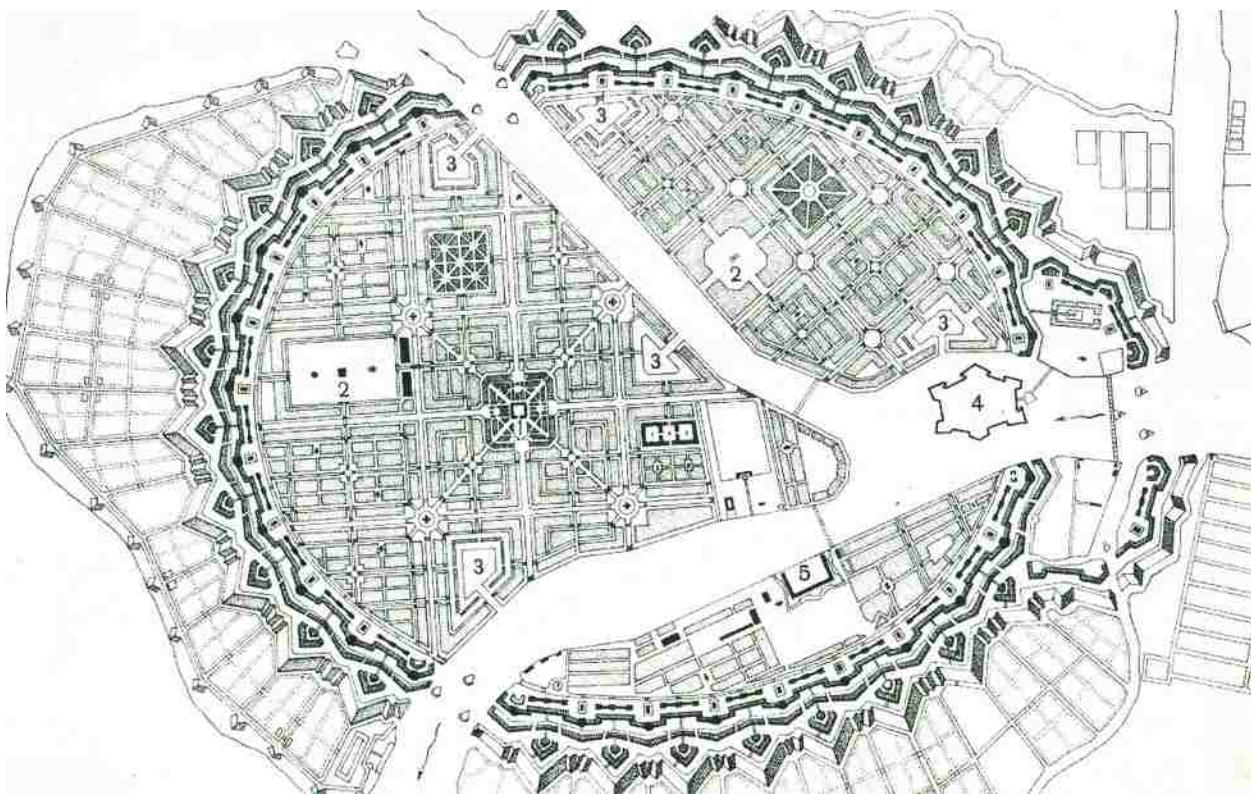
Figure 2.26 Le Blond's plan for Saint Petersburg, 1717. 1. Palace of Peter I; 2. Market squares; 3. Harbors; 4. Peter and Paul Fortress; 5. Admiralty. The four diagonal streets emanating from the central palace terminate in squares with churches at their centers, each indicated on the plan by a black cross. Reproduced in Egorov, *The Architectural Planning of St. Petersburg.*

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[149] On Le Blond's arrival and work in Russia, see Grabar, *Peterburgskaia Arkhitektura,* 82 - 92; Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution,* 158 - 159; Egorov, *The Architectural Planing of St. Petersburg,* 11 - 26.

[150] The precise circumstances surrounding the production of Le Blond's plan are uncertain. Egorov suggests that Le Blond prepared the plan in haste so that it would be considered against an updated version of Trezzini's plan (*The Architectural Planning of St. Petersburg,* 22); Cracraft suggests that Le Blond drew up his plan "with Trezzini's help." (*The Petrine Revolution,* 158)

(fig. 2.26). Rather than wrapping the island itself in a fortified wall, however, Le Blond proposed an elliptical ring of bastioned fortifications surrounding a city distributed between Vasilievsky Island, City Island, and the mainland. The plan shares with Trezzini's proposal a strict geometric regularity, but boasts greater spatial complexity. A large palace for the tsar serves as the architectural focal point of the city, slyly positioned not at the center of the plan, but at one of the two foci suggested by the fortified ellipse. Four grand diagonal avenues proceed outwards from the palace, terminating in public squares crowned with the city's principal churches. The remainder of the city is gridded with a thoroughly hierarchical system of major and minor canals and streets, endowing the city with a composition reflecting Le Blond's familiarity with French formal garden design.

Le Blond permitted no roadways to breach his massive elliptical fortifications; instead, the three waterways contained within the walls serve as the only entrances to the city. Each of these entrances features three "water bastions" arranged in a triangular formation and armed with ten cannons each.[151] Harbors positioned just within each of the three entrances (see fig. 2.26, each harbor is marked with the number '3') reveal Le Blond's sensitivity to Peter's ambitions for Saint Petersburg as both a naval power and a commercial hub. Similarly, the enormous fortifications themselves and the use of waterways as the city's only "gates" are conceits probably best interpreted as Le Blond's attempt to ingratiate his plan with a tsar whom he knew to be both militarily minded and keen to cultivate a nation of seafarers out of the Russians. Le

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[151] Egorov, *The Architectural Planning of St. Petersburg,* 18.

Blond even claimed that a carefully planned network of sluices would allow various zones of the city to be flooded, forcing any invading army into a quick retreat.[152]

The proposal was quickly and quietly rejected, however. Various theories have been advanced to explain Peter's rejection of the plan. Egorov and Brumfield both note that the challenge of erecting the massive fortified walls was likely beyond Russia's technical and financial reach;[153] Hamilton suggests that the walls would have "inhibited [the city's] natural and inevitable growth on the more accessible mainland south of the Neva."[154] Cracraft reflects that Prince Alexander Menshikov, a favorite of Peter's who had already built himself a fine palace on Vasilievsky Island, regarded the entire island as his personal preserve and scuttled Le Blond's plan accordingly.[155] Among the scholars considering Le Blond's plan, only Shvidkovsky proposes that the plan's incompatibility with Peter's social and political aspirations might have prompted its rejection. Though Le Blond's scheme emphasized the role of the monarch through its large central palace, argues Shvidkovsky, "the plan did not express the most important features of the new state power: strict control over every individual and the system of social ranks."[156] Shvidkovsky here remains consistent with his approach to earlier urban proposals for Saint Petersburg. As discussed above, he finds in the uniform blocks of Peter's proposal for Kotlin Island a clear reflection of "the notion that all subjects were equal before the absolute

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[152] *Ibid.,* 16.

[153] *Ibid.,* 20; Brumfield, *A History of Russian Architecture,* 208.

[154] Hamilton, *The Art and Architecture of Russia,* 272.

[155] Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution,* 158. Indeed, a caption on Homann's engraving of Trezzini's 1714 proposal (reproduced above, see fig. 2.21) reads: "Wasili Osterow, oder Fürst-Menzikofs Insel" (Vasily Island, or Prince Menshikov's Island).

[156] Shvidkovsky, "The Founding of Saint Petersburg," 87.

power of the emperor." More importantly, however, Peter's modest tastes regarding his own residences and his insistence that all Russians, including the tsar himself, were bound chiefly by service to the state, dictated that previous urban plans (such as the Kotlin plan and Trezzini's 1714 proposal) should lack a central, grandiose imperial residence or governmental complex. It is likely this aspect of Le Blond's proposal - its hierarchical disposition culminating in a grand palace flanked by impressive churches - that doomed it.

Le Blond's emphasis on a central palatial ensemble compromises his proposal in still another way. We have seen that Peter clearly prized the Neva's embankments as a political tool. Visitors entering the capital by ship would be impressed by the panoramic architectural ensemble unfolding along the riverbanks, and would be quick to spread word upon their return home of the wondrous new capital that had sprung up in "uncivilized" Russia. Le Blond proposes instead that the city's most prestigious architecture be sited further inland. Moscow had long featured a similar arrangement - with the magnificent churches and palaces of its Kremlin sited at the city's center - and this arrangement's failure to distract visitors from the dilapidation of the surrounding city has been well-documented (see opening paragraphs of chapter one above). Egorov, who is otherwise a great admirer of Le Blond's plan, tacitly acknowledges this deficiency by noting that Peter's palace "could have been glimpsed" by ships passing the mouths of the major canals terminating at the palace.[157] If the view from the river was so crucial, as Egorov recognizes, Peter would likely have preferred the city's most important architecture sited along the river, much as Menshikov had already sited his palace.

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[157] Egorov, *The Architectural Planning of St. Petersburg,* 18.

Figure 2.27 Map depicting Saint Petersburg's development circa 1714 - 1725, produced 1843. This drawing illustrates Vasilievsky Island's early, but slow, development along Trezzini's orthogonal grid. Reproduced in *Istoricheskie Plany Stolichnogo Goroda Sankt-Peterburga c 1714 po 1839 God*.

We have examined in this chapter the three major proposals for Saint's Petersburg's urban plan produced during Peter's reign - the Kotlin Island plan of 1709, Trezzini's 1714 plan, and Le Blond's 1717 proposal. While each of these plans serves as a crucial document for understanding the transformations Peter I wrought in his country's urban thought, only Trezzini's proposal enjoyed even partial execution (fig. 2.27). For a better understanding of the capital's appearance as it was actually built, and for an understanding of Peter's innovations within a specifically architectural context, we shall have to inspect some of the major architectural commissions of Peter's reign. Trezzini, in his role as chief architect, executed many of these projects himself.

Representational Structures: Early Monuments of Church and State

3

He caused architecture to be born in his country.

Fontenelle, eulogy of Peter the Great, 1725[158]

Saint Petersburg's founding, quite naturally for such a momentous undertaking, provoked the growth of innumerable legends. One of the most telling of these legends concerns the foundation not of the city in general, but of its earliest ecclesiastical monument, the Peter and Paul Cathedral in the fortress of the same name. According to this account, upon seeing an eagle hovering above Hare Island, Peter I seized a bayonet and cut two strips of turf from the ground. Arranging these two strips in a cross and quickly erecting a wooden cross atop them, he proclaimed, "In the name of Christ Jesus on this place shall be a church in the names of the apostles Peter and Paul."[159] The legend's anonymous author proceeds to recount the tradition that Constantine was led to Byzantium by an eagle, and that the apostle Andrew had once planted his staff in the ground not far from the future site of Saint Petersburg to bless the area.[160]

We have briefly encountered the parallel between Peter and Constantine in the context of Peter's ambitions for Saint Petersburg as an imperial metropolis (see chapter two). Founding

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[158] Quoted in Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution,* 1.

[159] Quoted in Lindsey Hughes, "The Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul," in *Personality and Place in Russian Culture: Essays in Memory of Lindsey Hughes*, ed. Simon Dixon (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2010), 26.

[160] For the full account of this legend, see "O Zachatii i Zdanii Tsarstvuiushchego Grada Sanktpeterburga," in *Peterburg Petra I v Inostrannykh Opisaniiakh*, 258 - 262.

myths such as the one discussed above, however, also plant the city's origins firmly within Christian world history. The Peter and Paul Cathedral, perhaps the most striking monument of Petrine Petersburg and still the tallest structure in the city center, anchored such grand historical myth-making in a concrete architectural work. While the church's most immediately obvious innovation is its rejection of Muscovite architectural norms in favor of a more "Western" idiom (a transformation that will be discussed below), the building also reflected Peter's conception for a new, modern Russia in all its facets - religious, social, political - not simply his aesthetic tastes.

The first church built on the site was erected quickly in 1703, becoming one of the foundational structures of the new capital (fig. 3.1). The hasty construction schedule would have been quite natural for a church within a fortress, for, as Lindsey Hughes explains, "a fortress in the thick of military operations was unthinkable without a chapel, regarded as essential a defense as guns and troops."[161] This modest wooden church was destined for quick replacement by its stone
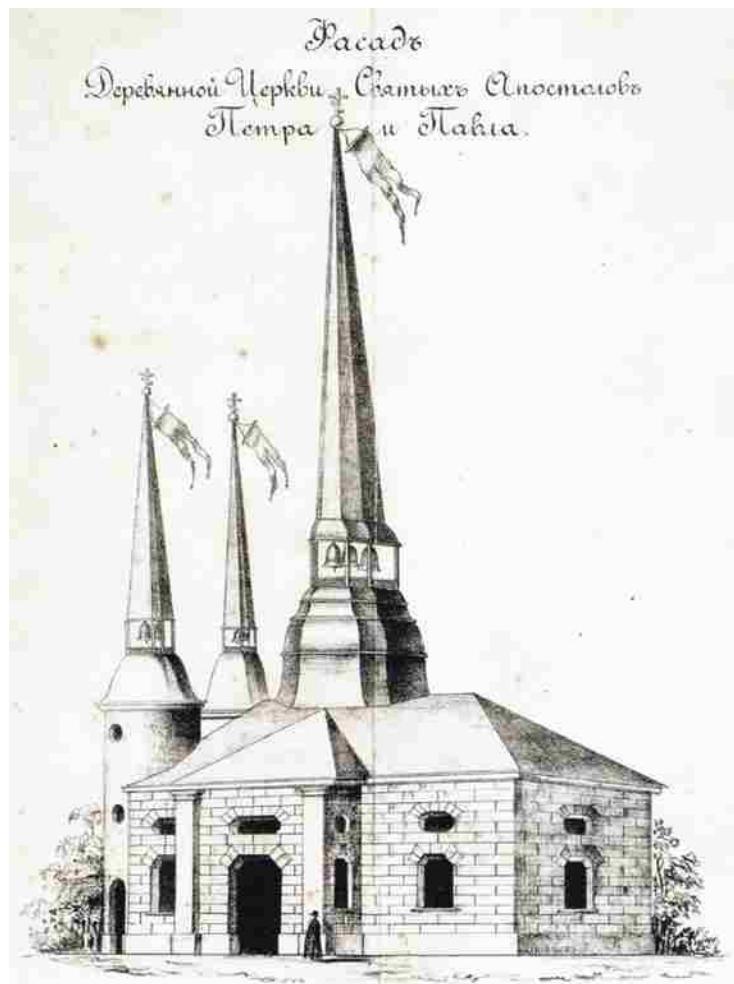

Figure 3.1 Church of Peter and Paul. Architect unknown, 1703. Anonymous 19th-century print. The church's wooden walls were painted on Peter's orders to resemble masonry.

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[161] Hughes, "The Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul," 27.

successor, but the most striking feature of the later church was already on display in its wooden precursor - a soaring spire. The original church indeed featured three spires - one in place of the traditional central dome of a Russian church, another pair flanking the western entrance - from which pennants flew on Sundays and holidays.[162]

Russia's pivotal 1709 victory over the Swedes at Poltava afforded Peter the opportunity to shift his focus from military affairs to architectural commissions, and the reconstruction of the Peter and Paul Fortress, then featuring only earthen ramparts and wooden buildings, became a top priority. Domenico Trezzini received the commission; the project would occupy him until his death in 1734. Peter himself laid the foundation stone of the new cathedral in place on June 8, 1712, the day marking the feast of the Holy Trinity (*piatidesiatnitsa*).[163] Trezzini's design
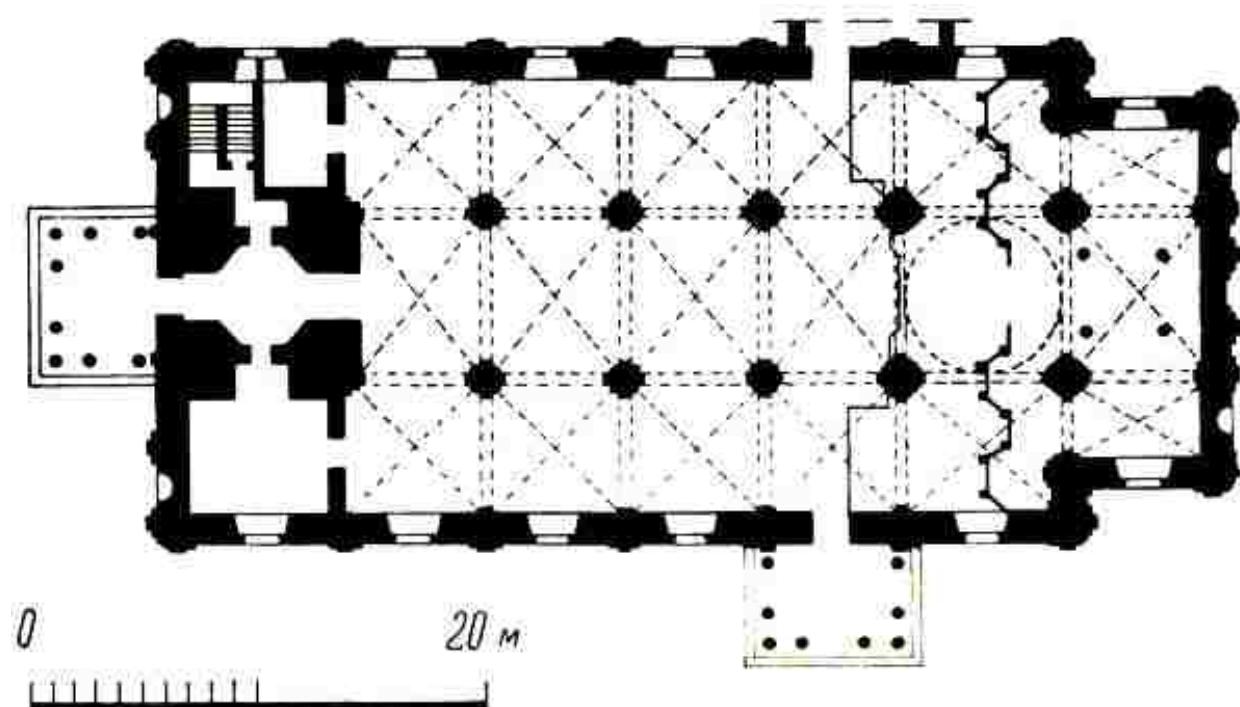
Figure 3.2 The Peter and Paul Cathedral, Saint Petersburg, plan. Domenico Trezzini, 1712 - 1733.

[162] Brumfield, *A History of Russian Architecture,* 205.

[163] There is some confusion regarding the precise date of the cathedral's founding. I use the date proposed by Hughes; for an overview of the problem, see Hughes, "The Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul," 26 - 27.

departed radically from Russian church design of the Muscovite era (fig. 3.2). He rejected the traditional cross-in-square plan in favor of a longitudinal plan,[164] with the church's long, airy nave separated from its side aisles by five pairs of piers clad in imitation marble. The interior (fig. 3.3) contrasted sharply with the heavy masonry vaults and narrow windows of Muscovite churches, drawing on contemporary trends in secular, rather than sacred architecture:

> The secular, palatial character of the Peter and Paul Cathedral's interior must have shocked its contemporary visitors: tall, expansive windows brightened the space, and icons, without which a Russian church had no meaning, were exchanged for paintings wholly removed from the achievements of centuries of Russian icon painting. […] Even today, as then, ancient banners captured in battle hang between the windows, adding to the solemnity and triumphalism of the interior. One is reminded of palace halls, which were frequently festooned with banners and other types of trophies and emblems.[165]

This radical change in the interior treatment of a principal church - from the dark, heavy interiors of Muscovite churches to the airy, palatial treatment of the Peter and Paul Cathedral - reflects Peter's desire to transform the very basis of sovereignty in Russia. We have seen that Peter staged advents on the classical Roman model to celebrate his military victories, likely in an effort to supplant the longstanding notion of rule by divine providence with the notion that a ruler must legitimize his sovereignty through conquest. The dark interiors of Muscovite churches, pierced with only narrow shafts of light and perfumed with the candle smoke of worshippers, fit quite naturally into a conception of Christianity emphasizing mystery and submission. Peter's bright,

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[164] The church's arrangement is occasionally misidentified as the basilica type, although it lacks a clerestory; Brumfield identifies it as such in *A History of Russian Architecture,* 210. Irina Lisaevich more accurately credits Trezzini with introducing the hall church (*zalny sobor)* to Russia; see I. I. Lisaevich, *Domeniko Trezini* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1986), 79.

[165] Lisaevich, *Domeniko Trezini,* 80. Author's own translation.
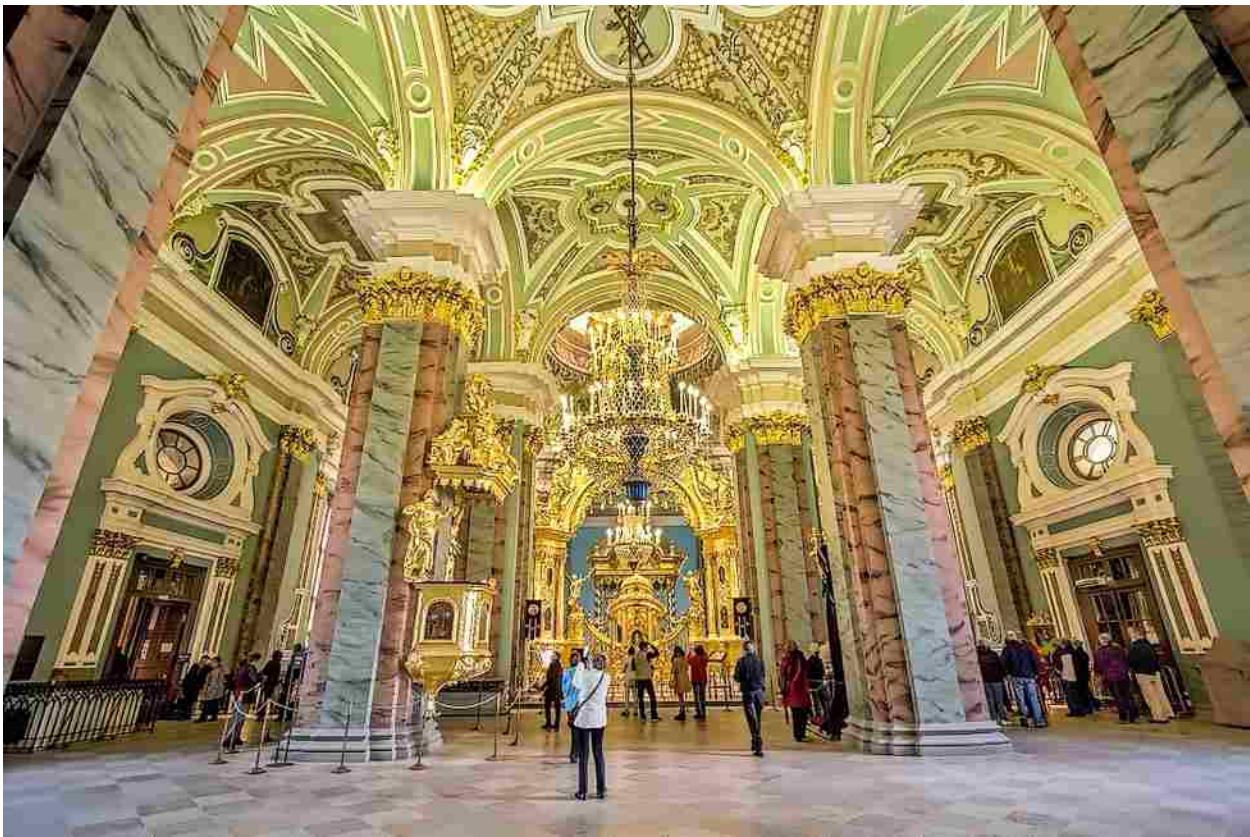
Figure 3.3 The Peter and Paul Cathedral, view towards altar. The pink-and-green color scheme is the result of a 1950s restoration that sought to restore the cathedral to its original appearance (see Hughes, "The Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul," 45). Contemporary photograph by Barbara Weibel, reproduced with permission.

palatial church might be interpreted as an attempt to uproot this conception and replace it with one privileging rationalism over mystery, in which a ruler *earns* submission by increasing the splendor of the state. The turn to secular palace motifs would have suited Peter's social aspirations well, for, as Brumfield notes, "for Peter I, secularism was the essence of social order."[166]

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[166] Brumfield, *A History of Russian Architecture,* 209. The degree to which Peter's reign ought to be viewed as secularizing is a matter of some dispute. The most prominent figure arguing for a religious interpretation of many of Peter's acts is Ernest Zitser, though he focuses strongly on Peter's attempts to arrogate rights to himself formerly reserved for the clergy, and on his cultivation of a personality cult emphasizing the tsar's *charisma,* in the original sense of a divinely conferred gift. Zitser himself acknowledges that Peter valued ecumenism, openness, and social heterogeneity, which we may take as essential aspects of a secular social order. See Zitser, "Politics in the State of Sober Drunkenness."

Nowhere is this shift in the conception of authority more prominent than in the cathedral's iconostasis (fig. 3.4). The Russian Orthodox iconostasis has its origin in Byzantium as a simple screen erected to separate the body of the church from the altar. This screen gradually developed into a large partition carved of wood into which dozens of painted icons were set, their positions and sizes governed by increasingly strict conventions.[167] While an iconostasis might feature more or less ornate carving depending on the importance of the church in which it was housed, the basic form rarely varied. This form was for centuries distinguished by a certain 'flatness;' the expansive grid of icons swept upwards with no extension into space that might be called 'architectural' or 'sculptural.'

Peter revealed his intent to discard the conventional form of the iconostasis in favor of a more symbolically charged arrangement when he awarded the commission to Ivan Zarudny. Little is known about the details of Zarudny's life; he likely hailed from Ukraine and practiced architecture, icon painting, and wood carving.[168] From 1701, he lived in Moscow, where he erected no fewer than six triumphal arches to celebrate Peter's military victories (see the discussion of these structures in chapter two; the arch reproduced in figure 2.5 is Zarudny's design).[169] Zarudny had therefore become the chief actor in Peter's scheme to link Russia architecturally to classical political ceremony. When he was awarded the commission to design the iconostasis for the Peter and Paul Cathedral, he would draw heavily upon his work in

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[167] On the early development of the iconostasis, see Y. B. Mozgovaia, "Ikonostas," in *Ikonostas Petropavlovskogo Sobora,* ed. L. N. Konnova and V. A. Frolov (Saint Petersburg: State Museum of the History of Saint Petersburg, 2003), 9 - 12.

[168] On Zarudny's life and work, see Mozgovaia, "Ikonostas," 12 - 17; see also Julia Gerasimova, *The Iconostasis of Peter the Great in the Peter and Paul Cathedral in St Petersburg* (Leiden: Alexandros, 2004), 47 - 51.

[169] *Ibid.,* 14 - 15.

Figure 3.4 The Peter and Paul Cathedral, central portion of iconostasis. Ivan Zarudny, 1722 - 1728. Reproduced in Konnova, *Ikonostas Petropavlovskogo Sobora.*
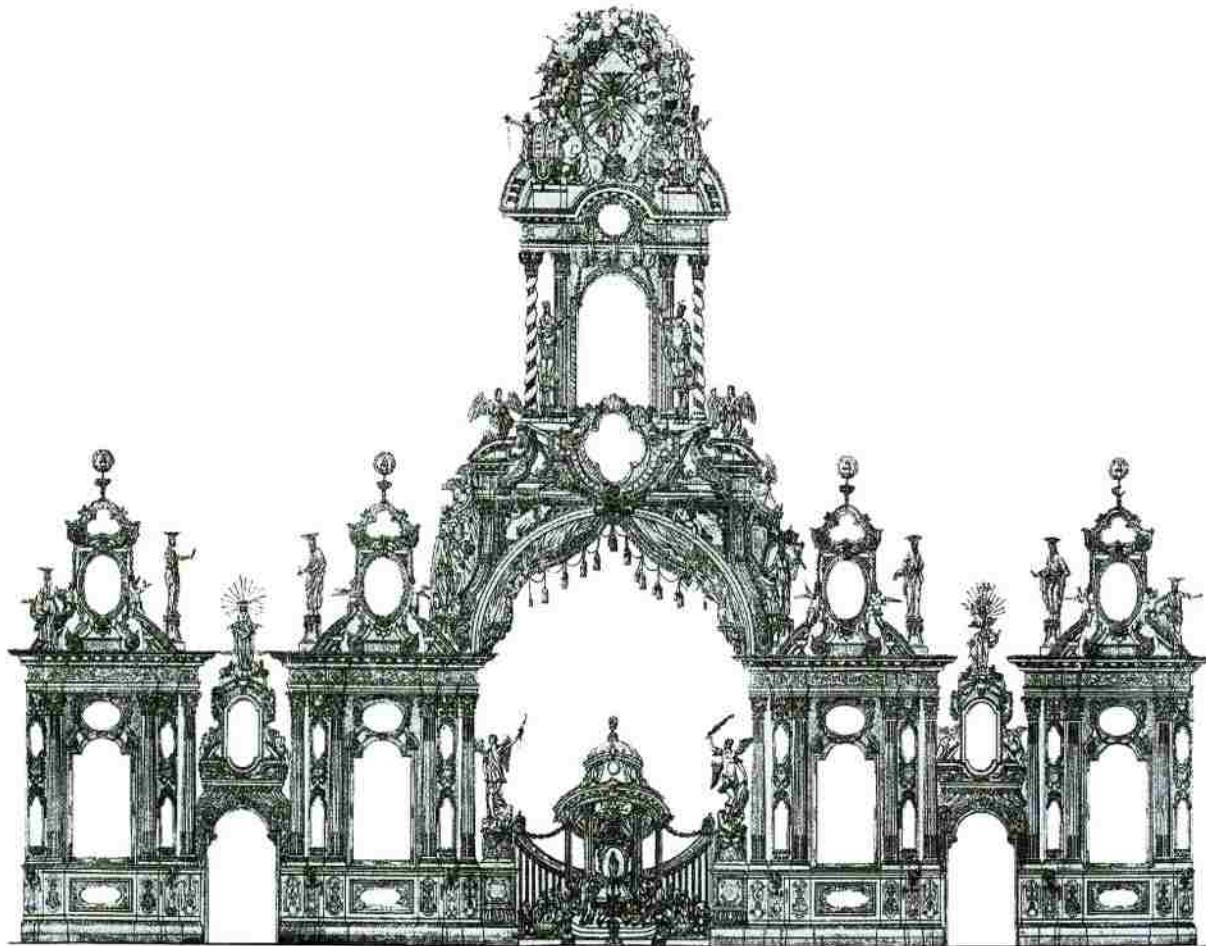
Figure 3.5 The Peter and Paul Cathedral, iconostasis. Elevation drawing, 1957. Note the compositional similarity to Zarudny's triumphal arch reproduced in figure 2.5. Reproduced in Konnova, *Ikonostas Petropavlovskogo Sobora.*

Moscow to produce an iconostasis unlike any previously seen in Russia.

The iconostasis is, above all, a masterful expression of Baroque exuberance. Garlands, cherubs, twisted columns, trumpeting angels, and allegorical figures, all executed in gilded wood, adorn a rich entablature crowned by sinuous broken pediments and held aloft on elaborate classical columns. Most important, however, is the iconostasis's radical departure from Muscovite convention: the entire piece adopts the form of the triumphal arches already so familiar to Zarudny (fig. 3.5). The central arch soars well into the drum of the dome above, dwarfing the royal doors leading to the altar below. The forty-three icons are completely

Figure 3.6 King David, icon in the Peter and Paul Cathedral. Andrei Merkuriev, 1727 - 1728. Reproduced in Konnova, *Ikonostas Petropavlovskogo Sobora.*

subordinated to the architectural composition, tucked between pairs of columns or perched atop pediments. Significantly, the largest and most central icon is not Christ Pantocrator,[170] as tradition would dictate, but Christ Resurrected - a potent symbol of Peter's intended reshaping of Russia.[171] Other icons represent departures from Orthodox convention as well. Most notably, King David appears in the iconostasis wearing the cuirass and mantle of the Roman military (fig. 3.6), rather than the flowing Byzantine robes in which he was traditionally depicted in Russian icons.[172] King Hezekiah is depicted against a background featuring a bustling harbor.[173]

[170] Christ Pantocrator refers to a particular depiction of Christ often reserved for the domes and iconostases of Orthodox churches. Christ is typically depicted with a stern expression, with his right hand raised in blessing and left hand holding the Gospels.

[171] A diagram indicating the positions of each of the iconostasis's icons can be found at A. V. Bertash, et al., "Katalog Ikon," in *Ikonostas Petropavlovskogo Sobora,* 33.

[172] Julia Gerasimova, "Western Prints and the Panels of the Peter and Paul Cathedral Iconostasis in St. Petersburg," in *Reflections on Russia in the Eighteenth Century*, 205.

[173] *Ibid.,* 207.

Saint Petersburg's most prominent church, then, featured an airy, palatial interior hall festooned with captured banners and culminating in a soaring triumphal arch.[174] This atmosphere of military triumphalism found further expression in the use of military motifs in icons such as King David's, and in the depiction of a harbor behind King Hezekiah (Saint Petersburg, after all, was the birthplace of the Russian navy). The church's interior ought therefore to be viewed as deeply connected to Peter's conceptions of a new Russian state. As discussed above, chief among these notions were the assertion that a sovereign's right to rule arises from his military prowess, and a conception of social order rooted in secular rationalism and state service.

The church's interior accounts for only a portion of its significance, however. As construction began, Peter grew to view the church as something to be viewed chiefly from without (fig. 3.8). The towering belfry, crowned by its impressive spire, responds in scale more to the city as a whole than to the body of the church, much like the monumental belfry of the Cloth Hall in Bruges (fig. 3.7) or of the then-recently completed Church of Saint Peter in Riga (fig. 3.9), a building occasionally suggested as Trezzini's chief source of inspiration in designing the Peter and Paul Cathedral.[175] The prominence of the bell tower and its spire only further

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[174] Brumfield notes that the triumphal arch motif is echoed again in the Peter and Paul Gates, which serve as the fortress's chief entrance, and even in the eastern wall of the cathedral, where the traditional rounded apse has been replaced with a straight wall, classically detailed in imitation of a triumphal arch. See Brumfield, *A History of Russian Architecture,* 209 - 211.

[175] Trezzini's archive indeed contains a drawing of the Riga church; the drawing is dated, however, to 1714, two years after construction had begun on the Peter and Paul Cathedral. See A. I. Nekrasov, "K Voprosu Vozniknoveniia Petropavlovskogo Sobora v Leningrade," *Peterburgskie Chteniia* 96 (1996): 78 - 79.

Figure 3.7 Cloth Hall, Bruges, 13th - 15th century. Photograph.

Figure 3.8 The Peter and Paul Cathedral. 19th-century polychrome print. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, reproduced under public domain.

reinforces the motifs of military triumphalism emphasized in the church's interior, this time with a particularly naval character. The church, Lindsey Hughes reflects, serves as "a sort of symbolic ship, its boat-like nave and exterior (both of the old and the new church) decorated with pennants, like ships of the fleet, its outline echoed in the masts of ships on the Neva below."[176] This naval symbolism only grew stronger with the church's use over time. While never employed for baptisms, weddings, or even regular celebrations of the liturgy, the church acquired a role under Catherine II (reigned 1762 - 1796) as the favored site for the celebration of naval

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[176] Hughes, "The Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul," 27.

victories.[177] Simon Dixon notes that these celebrations, although ostensibly religious in character, "were heavily militarized; many would scarcely have been recognizable to the tsars' Muscovite forebears."[178]

As mentioned above, the church's bell tower was of great concern to Peter. The tsar insisted that it be completed "as quickly as possible, in order that the clock can be mounted in it by 1716, but the church can be built in a more leisurely fashion."[179] Peter therefore had grown to view the belfry not only as a potent military symbol

Figure 3.9 Church of Saint Peter, Riga, completed 1695. Elevation and spire section drawing by Gunārs Zirnis, 1984. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, reproduced under public domain.

echoing the masts of his fledgling navy, but as a repository for the church's clock.[180] The clock in question, a set of chimes imported from Holland at a cost of 45,000 rubles, was installed in

[177] Simon Dixon, "Religious Ritual at the Eighteenth-Century Russian Court," in *Monarchy and Religion: The Transformation of Royal Culture in Eighteenth-Century Europe,* ed. Michael Schaich (Oxford: Oxford, 2007), 222.

[178] *Ibid.,* 247.

[179] Quoted in Hughes, "The Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul," 27.

[180] Brumfield has suggested that Peter also valued the belfry as a platform from which to survey construction throughout his new capital. See Brumfield, *A History of Russian Architecture,* 210.

Figure 3.10 Church of the Ascension, Kolomenskoe. Pietro Annibale, completed 1532. Photograph by A. Savin, reproduced under Creative Commons license.

1719.[181] Peter viewed its installation as essential, as, in his own words, "wasted time, like death, cannot be reversed."[182]

Neither the prominent belfry nor the clock are without their precedents in pre-Petrine Moscow. The Ivan the Great Bell Tower in the Moscow Kremlin had stood since 1508 as the most prominent element in the Moscow skyline; indeed, it was succeeded as the tallest structure in Russia only upon completion of the Peter and Paul Cathedral's spire.[183] Similarly, Christopher Galloway's famous clock for the Savior Tower of the Moscow Kremlin had been proudly marking the hours since 1625.[184] But the treatment of the cathedral's roofline marked a singular departure from Muscovite precedent. Over roughly seven centuries of ecclesiastical architecture in Russia, several conceits had emerged as dominant in the

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[181] Hughes, "The Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul," 29.

[182] Quoted in *ibid.,* 28.

[183] Brumfield, *A History of Russian Architecture,* 105 - 106.

[184] Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West,* 154 - 157.

treatment of church roofs. These include the "tent roof" (*shater),* a tall, pointed structure most spectacularly employed at the sixteenth-century Church of the Ascension at Kolomenskoe (fig. 3.10), and the familiar onion-shaped dome of Moscow's churches. Principal churches in Moscow had often been crowned by five onion domes - a large central one over the crossing surrounded by four smaller ones. This five-domed arrangement had indeed become required by law for all of Russia's churches per a 1650 law introduced by Patriarch Nikon (served 1652 - 1666) - a lesser known element of his package of religious reforms that would eventually provoke the greatest schism in the history of the Russian church.[185] Historian Nancy Shields Kollmann asserts that

Figure 3.11 View of kremlin, Rostov. Both the Dormition Cathedral (left, c. 1500) and the Church of the Resurrection (center, 1670) feature the five-domed arrangement favored by Patriarch Nikon. The Church of the Resurrection was commissioned by Nikon's protégé, Metropolitan Jonah Sysoevich. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, reproduced under Creative Commons license.

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[185] For a discussion of the 1650 law's roots in and influence upon Russian church design, see David Buxton, *The Wooden Churches of Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1981), 77 - 80.

Nikon's law represented an attempt to impose a Moscow-centric vision of Russian identity upon other, historically more independent principalities; Moscow's characteristic five-domed silhouette "was repeated throughout the realm from Novgorod to Irkutsk, from Iaroslavl to Vologda."[186] (fig. 3.11)

It is perhaps little surprise, then, that Peter, so intent on loosing his country from the stagnant orthodoxies of Muscovite culture, rejected the five-domed arrangement mandated by law (or indeed, any other arrangement then employed in Russian church architecture). The Peter and Paul Cathedral's modest Baroque dome rises above the eastern end of the church, with the onion profile relegated to use in the cupola crowning the lantern (fig. 3.12). The dome's unusually tall drum provides an effective visual counterweight to the massive presence of the bell tower and allows the iconostasis below to thrust upwards beyond the ceiling plane, where its apex is bathed in light from the drum's windows.

One final aspect of the cathedral's importance must be mentioned: its role as a mausoleum. Since the early sixteenth century, Russian tsars had been entombed in the Church of the Archangel Michael in the Moscow Kremlin. Under Peter's direction, this role was assumed by the Peter and Paul Cathedral - a role that it held until the fall of the tsarist regime in 1917. The last noble to be interred within the Church of the Archangel Michael was Peter's own brother Ivan, buried there in 1696.[187] It is tempting to view the Peter and Paul Cathedral as a replacement for the cathedrals of the Moscow Kremlin (coronation ceremonies were also taken over from the Kremlin's Dormition Cathedral by the Peter and Paul Cathedral), but Lindsey Hughes cautions

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[186] Nancy Shields Kollmann, "Society, Identity, and Modernity in Seventeenth-Century Russia," in *Modernizing Muscovy,* 424.

[187] Hughes, "The Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul," 29.

that it is more accurately interpreted as an extension of Moscow's mausolean tradition. "There were no plans, for example," she notes, "to transfer the remains of the tsars' Muscovite predecessors to St. Petersburg."[188] Furthermore, as discussed above, Peter chiefly valued the church's bell tower and clock, and he may not have viewed the church as a potential mausoleum until well into its construction. In any case, there can be little doubt that the new church supplanted Moscow's principal churches as a potent representational structure - the site where reigns both began and ended. This symbolism, despite all of the church's secular motifs, rooted the site specifically within Christian history:
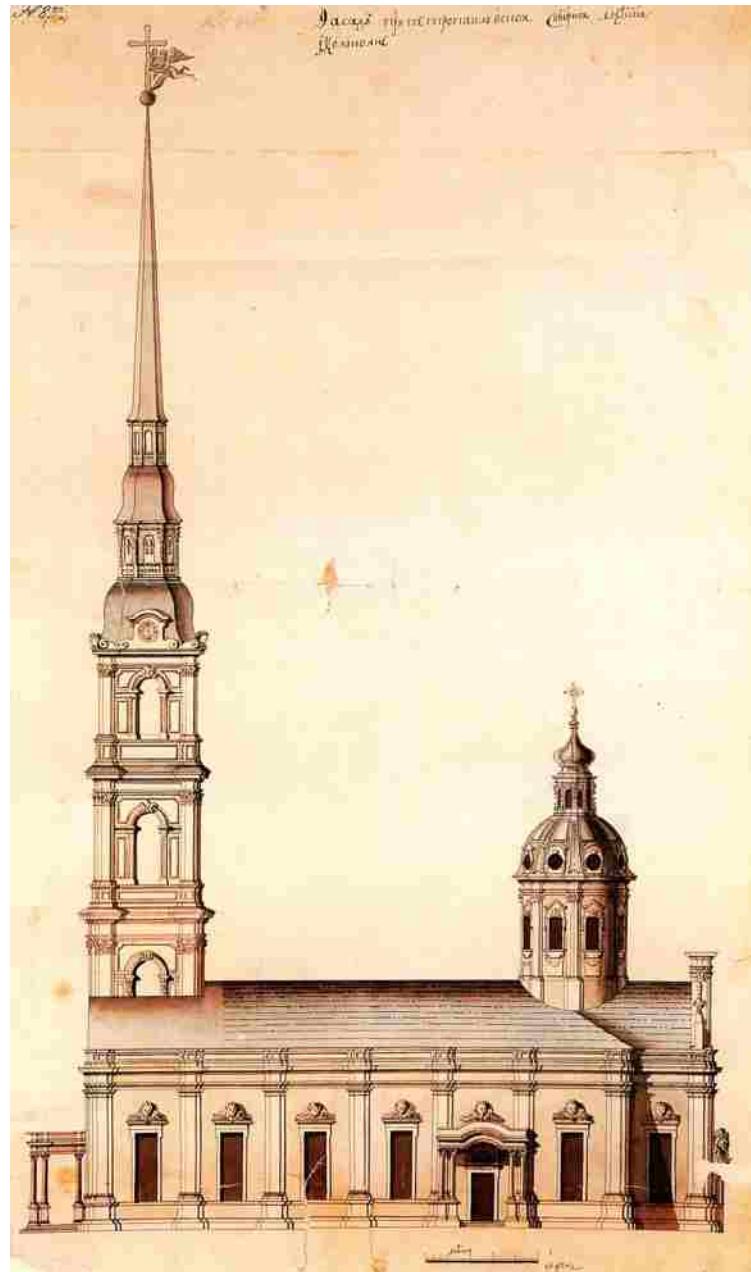

Figure 3.12 Peter and Paul Cathedral. South elevation drawing by Arseny Korenev, 1767. Reproduced in Cantini, *Domenico Trezzini.*

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[188] *Ibid.,* 29.

In the context of world history, the creation of a sepulcher in St. Petersburg continued the tradition of the first Christian emperor, Constantine, who built the Church of the Holy Apostles in his new capital Constantinople in the fourth century with the intention of using it as his mausoleum and a sepulcher for his entire dynasty. […] It is no coincidence, therefore, that Peter I, too, intended the newly built cathedral of his capital to be a burial place for the Imperial House of Romanov.[189]

The Peter and Paul Cathedral, then, shouldered a considerable symbolic burden for Peter's nascent capital on the Neva. The church rooted Peter's city within Christian history, anchored his new conception of sovereignty based on conquest, reflected his insistence on secular rationalism as the basis of society, and provided a striking vertical dominant, echoing and amplifying the masts of the tsar's early navy below. The church is arguably the most important structure erected under Peter's direction that remains standing today. Trezzini, however, oversaw several other monumental commissions. Perhaps the most prominent among his extant works is the Building of the Twelve Colleges, constructed on Vasilievsky Island between 1722 and 1741 (fig. 3.13). While lacking the symbolic wealth of the Peter and Paul Cathedral, this administrative structure offers a neat essay on the architectural expression of Peter's societal ideals.

The building's very name intimates its connection with Peter's administrative reforms, albeit through a slight misnomer. The twelve connected structures of the complex were erected to house the ten "colleges," or state ministries, the Senate (a judicial, rather than legislative body), and the Holy Synod - all twelve bodies created by Peter himself.[190] This reshuffling of the state's

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[189] Vladimir Gendrikov and Sergei Senko, *The Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul: The Burial Place of the Russian Imperial Family* (St. Petersburg: State Museum of the History of St. Petersburg, 1998), 24.

[190] The number of colleges varied even during Peter's reign. As examples, in 1722 the Patrimony Office was removed from the College of Justice and was made into the College of Patrimony; the College of Staffing and College of Revision were subsumed under the Senate in the same year. For a discussion of this problem, see Anisimov, *The Reforms of Peter the Great,* 149.

Figure 3.13 Building of the Twelve Colleges, 1722 - 1741. Domenico Trezzini. Anonymous 18th-century print.

administrative structure followed Peter's success in the war against Sweden, and indeed seems to have been inspired by his success in regularizing Russia's military so quickly. In this connection, Peter's 1718 decree mentioning the creation of the colleges is worth reproducing at length:

> Yet His Majesty, despite his own unbearable toil in this burdensome war in which he was compelled not only to wage war but also to train people in everything anew and to make ordinances and codes of war with God's aid brought everything into such good order that it has now become superior to the former forces and yielded fruits that are known to everyone. At present, in ruling he has not neglected civil administration, but is laboring to bring it into the same good order as military affairs. Wherefore Colleges have been instituted, that is assemblies of many persons instead of the bureaus [*prikazy*] in which the presidents, or chairmen, do not have the same authority as the old bureau administrators who did what they wished.[191]

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[191] Quoted in Anisimov, *The Reforms of Peter the Great,* 144.

In the decree, Peter himself conceives of the colleges not as an innovation, but rather as a regularization of the existing ministerial institutions - Moscow's prikazy.[192] In his design for the buildings meant to house the colleges, Trezzini

Figure 3.14 Building of the Twelve Colleges. Photograph showing the pedimented central bay of one of the twelve linked structures.

echoes this conception. The extraordinarily long building, stretching over 1300 feet from north to south, chains together twelve identical structures (fig. 3.15), detailed in a restrained Baroque idiom and resembling, notes art historian Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, "town palaces in Germany and Amsterdam."[193] (fig. 3.14) Comparison is most often made between Trezzini's building and the Stock Exchange in Copenhagen (constructed 1619 - 1625), which boasts a similar elongated disposition.[194] However, the Building of the Twelve Colleges draws on an even more important precedent: the buildings housing Moscow's prikazy. These buildings, sited

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[192] The Russian term prikaz, referring to the Muscovite administrative department, is most often rendered in English as "bureau" or "chancery." The term "ministry" is generally avoided to prevent confusion with the Ministries commissioned by Alexander I to supplant Peter's Colleges. For an English translation of the decree establishing the Ministries, see "The Statute Establishing State Ministries (1802)," in Reinterpreting Russian History: Readings, 860 - 1860s, ed. Daniel Kaiser and Gary Marker (Oxford: Oxford, 1994), 256.

[193] Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Court, Cloister, and City: The Art and Culture of Central Europe 1450 - 1800 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995), 337.

[194] Boris Vipper argues most aggressively in favor of this comparison based on Trezzini's familiarity with Copenhagen; see Boris Vipper, Arkhitektura Russkogo Barokko (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), 44. See also Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, 198, and Brumfield, A History of Russian Architecture, 214.
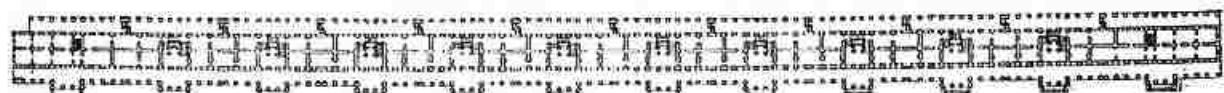
Figure 3.15 Building of the Twelve Colleges, 1722 - 1741. Domenico Trezzini. East elevation and plan.
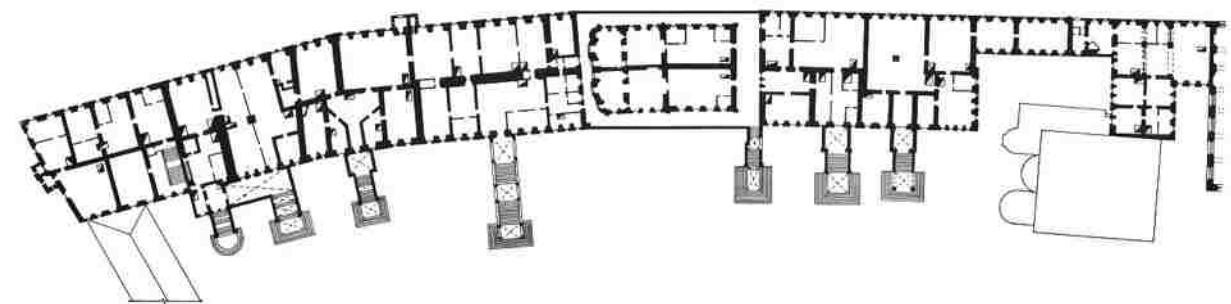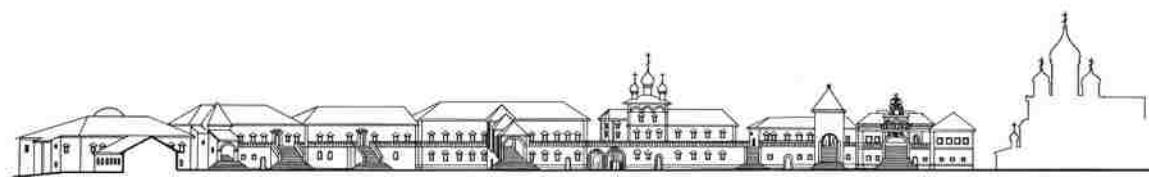
Figure 3.16 Buildings of the Moscow *Prikazy*, completed 1680. Architect unknown. Elevation and plan.

within the kremlin and not completed until 1680, were also strung together in an elongated plan, though with several slight changes in direction and extremely varied decorative treatments (fig. 3.16). Trezzini's design, then, permits an interpretation as a deliberate regularization of the existing Russian manner of housing state ministries. This interpretation is strengthened with a look at Trezzini's proposed site plan, in which a large church is sited just at the end of the chain of ministerial buildings (fig. 3.17) - an arrangement perfectly echoing that of the Moscow *prikazy.* Shvidkovsky asserts that this phenomenon was quite characteristic of the Petrine period: "a foreign architect gives a building of customary Russian construction a more regular plan than
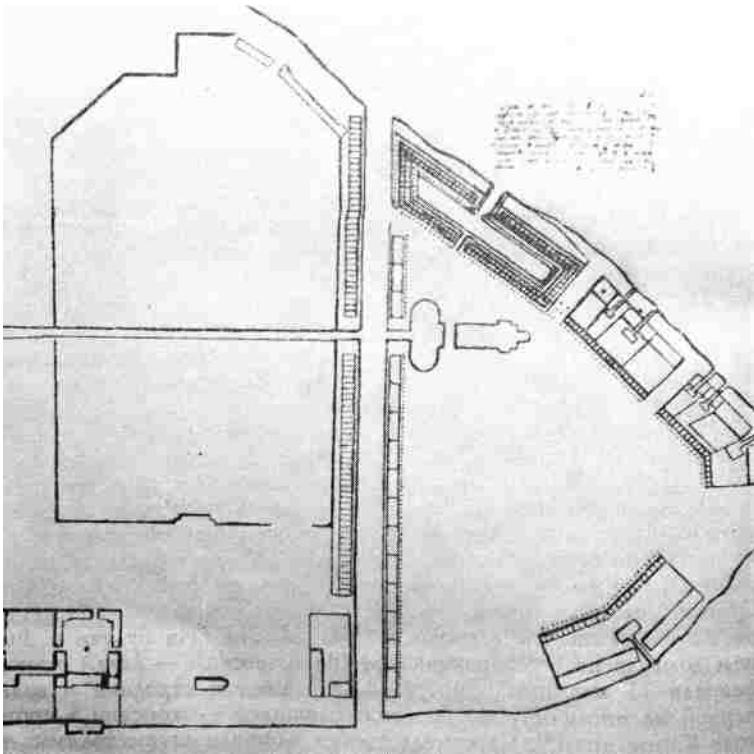
Figure 3.17 Building of the Twelve Colleges, Trezzini's proposed site plan, 1722. The twelve structures are visible just to the right of the large canal that cuts through Vasilievsky Island from north to south. Reproduced in Lisaevich, *Domeniko Trezini.*

his Russian colleagues and clothes its exterior with Order-based elements."[195]

Trezzini's Building of the Twelve Colleges represents a tidy and successful effort to express a particular element of Peter's reforms through architectural innovation. It is this aspect of Petrine architecture that is most often neglected in the existing scholarship. Anisimov reflects that Peter's vision of a regularized state was absolute: "the great reformer of Russia dreamed of creating complete and comprehensive legislation that would encompass and regulate his subjects' entire life. He dreamed of an ideal state structure, like clockwork."[196] Oughtn't we view Peter's architectural reforms as part of the same all-encompassing program? Treating a church's interior as a secular palace hall or giving an administrative building "Order-based clothes," to borrow Shvidkovsky's expression, are acts that cannot be reduced to matters of aesthetic taste. Peter would certainly have viewed a regularized built environment as a potent tool in shaping social and political life. Anisimov recognizes the

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[195] Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West,* 200.

[196] Anisimov, *The Reforms of Peter the Great,* 145.

power of this relationship with respect to legislation: "for Russia it had long been natural that public opinion does not determine legislation, but legislation forms (and even deforms) public opinion and social consciousness in the most powerful manner."[197] But the relationship holds for architecture and urban design as well. In Russia's case, we might invoke Anisimov to argue, public life does not determine the built environment, but the built environment forms (and most certainly deforms) public life in a truly powerful manner.

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[197] *Ibid.,* 145.

CONCLUSIONS

Almost everything was still to be done.

Voltaire, History of the Russian Empire Under Peter the Great, 1759[198]

The opening gambit of this thesis sought to establish the considerable stature of Peter I in Russian history by addressing the problem of periodization that the first emperor invites. Despite this stature, however, we have seen that many of Peter's innovations were resisted or abandoned as impractical, and that the transformations wrought during his brief reign were often quite modest. His reign, therefore, is perhaps best seen as having inaugurated an epoch, rather than constituting one in its own right. This is precisely the view expressed in the prevailing periodization of Russian history (Old Russian and Modern, that is, pre- and post-Peter), an approach anticipated by Voltaire in the epigraph above.

Both of these notions - of Peter's enormous influence and of his role as inaugurator - find expression in the wealth of speculation that the tsar's reign engenders. Would the Westward turn in Russian culture still have transpired if Peter had succeeded in securing coastline along the Black Sea rather than the Baltic? Would the Russians have successfully expelled Napoleon from Moscow if not for the modernization of the Russian military set in motion a century prior by Peter? Could Pushkin have shaped the Russian language so beautifully if not for his reaction against the French that had come to dominate his country's cultural elite since its introduction under Peter? These questions do not easily permit serious scholarly treatment, but they help to

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[198] Quoted in Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford, 1994), 203.

illuminate the scale of Peter's legacy. To study Peter the Great is to study the birth of modern Russia itself, in all its facets, complexities, and uncertainties.

To study Peter the Great, then, is to grapple with an enormous body of historical data and thought, and accordingly to concede that one's own scholarly contribution will be bound by considerable limitations. The present work is certainly no exception. Because Peter the Great's reign influenced nearly all aspects of Russian society, the relevant body of existing scholarship includes works in many fields: architecture and urban history, to be sure, but also works on political regime, social structures, cultural practices, legal systems, military campaigns, artistic currents, conceptions of property, and ceremony and myth-making, among others. While this thesis attempts to demonstrate sensitivity to key works in each of these fields, undoubtedly much scholarship has escaped consideration - due to constraints on time and access - that would have complicated or challenged the narrative presented here.

Another significant limitation of this project arises from the very manner in which the central question is posed. If, as this thesis contends, current scholarship of Peter the Great does not adequately understand the period's architecture as an integral facet of Peter's reforms, then new scholarship would need to be more holistic in approach and scale. This implies a more complete assimilation of the relevant body of scholarship - a body of work acknowledged above as intractably large and complex. In effect, this thesis concedes that the body of historical data and thought on Peter's reign is too difficult to adequately comprehend as a complex whole, while demanding precisely the comprehension of this whole. This contradiction arises to varying degrees in all scholarly work, though it is perhaps particularly acute in the present work.

In connection with the above discussion of the existing body of scholarship on Peter the Great, a brief note on historical method should prove helpful. We encountered in the introduction the pioneering architectural historian and educator Spiro Kostof. His notion of understanding works of architecture in their "total context" informs this project's approach towards the buildings and urban forms under examination. Further clarification might be necessary, however, on this project's approach towards the large body of Petrine scholarship itself. The approach taken here might be described as "synthetic" - throughout this thesis various scholars' positions are examined in which intimations of a deeper connection between Peter's architectural and sociopolitical reforms are expressed. Note, for example, Richard Wortman's assessment of Peter's triumphal arches and their role in shaping perceptions of his reign (see chapter two). See also Shvidkovsky's interpretation of the urban scheme for Kotlin Island as expressing Peter's conceptions of sovereignty and social hierarchy (also discussed in chapter two, though in this case the present author largely rejects Shvidkovsky's interpretation). The aim of this thesis is primarily to synthesize these disparate treatments in order to suggest the possibility of a new, more holistic approach that understands Petrine architecture and urbanism as fundamentally intertwined with other aspects of Peter's reforms.

In recapitulating the findings of this project and examining their implications for the field, it may prove useful to focus specifically on the areas in which the current work engages directly with existing scholars' positions. The first chapter detailed Moscow as the young Peter knew it in the late seventeenth century: built of rough hewn wood, visited by frequent conflagrations, and lacking a cohesive urban plan. Upon his return from a lengthy visit to Western Europe, Peter sought to address what he viewed as Moscow's deficiencies by mandating

stone construction and uniform building lines. Building from positions taken by Erwin Gutkind and Spiro Kostof, this thesis argues that these attempted reforms ought to be viewed as more than aesthetic measures. The individual homestead, with its courtyard and sprawling assortment of outbuildings, had long served as the basic unit of Russian city planning. Shared walls, limited street setbacks, and a prohibition of ancillary structures, would therefore have disrupted fundamental ideas about urban society in Russia. James Cracraft, as noted in chapter one, characterizes the blend of practical (vis-à-vis fireproofing) and aesthetic motives as quintessentially Petrine. He stops short, however, of recognizing that Peter's "aesthetic" motives may have had deeper political and social implications. Evgeny Anisimov asserts that Peter conceived of the state as an instrument for the transformation of society and the upbringing of virtuous citizens. He, too, stops a bit short - this study proposes that the city and its architecture ought to be afforded the same transformative power, and that Peter would have recognized this crucial relationship between city and citizen.

In the second chapter we encountered Vasily Kliuchevsky's enduring contention that the order, tempo, and nature of Peter's reforms were dictated by the needs of war. The urban improvements to Moscow examined in chapter one provide the foundation for a critique of Kliuchevsky's position; these measures could not have been intended to provide a significant military advantage in Peter's various campaigns. Accordingly, Saint Petersburg's founding is understood here as more than the establishment of a naval shipyard, but as a symbolic gesture announcing Russia's entry onto the stage of European civilization. Recent work by Richard Wortman has shown that Peter possessed a deep appreciation for the power of architecture to anchor grand symbolic gestures of this sort; following his military victories against the

Ottomans, he had large triumphal arches constructed in Moscow and held advents on the classical Roman model. These political spectacles are interpreted here as an attempt by Peter to root the legitimacy of the tsar's sovereignty in military conquest, rather than by divine right alone. Peter harnessed Saint Petersburg's early architectural ensemble as a political tool as well. The grandiose facades lining the new capital's canal and river embankments ensured that visiting foreigners would quickly spread the news of the impressive new metropolis Peter had founded, though these splendid waterfront palaces often hid muddy, unkempt plots of small wooden structures behind them. Several proposals for Saint Petersburg's street planning, including one for an audaciously remote capital city on Kotlin Island, represented not only an embrace of a more Western tradition of urbanism, but also a significant disruption of Russian tradition. Until Peter's reign, Muscovite tsars had shaped perceptions of their reign through architectural motifs and details. Peter would accomplish this task through urban planning and the regulation of the city as a whole. The erection of model housing with the inhabitant's social rank reflected in the size and detailing of the home's facade served as a key aspect of this approach to urbanism. Model buildings of this sort would eventually be drawn up for all manner of structures, and would help to shape numerous Russian cities in the image of the new imperial metropolis on the Baltic.

The third chapter examined two of Peter's architectural commissions in detail. The first of these, the Peter and Paul Cathedral in the fortress of the same name, offers a rich case study in Peter's appreciation of architecture's symbolic potency. The airy, palatial interior of the church, festooned with military banners, provided a sharp contrast with the dark, masonry-vaulted interiors of the Muscovite churches of the period. Peter commissioned Ivan Zarudny to re-

imagine the church's iconostasis as a soaring triumphal arch, fitted with paintings emphasizing military motifs and executed using Western European techniques. Furthermore, the cathedral's massive belfry served as a kind of symbolic mast, echoing those of the fledgling Russian navy below. All of these devices together are taken here to reflect Peter's attempt to uproot a longstanding tradition of rule by divine right, replacing it with a conception of sovereignty rooted in military conquest and secular social order. The second work of architecture under consideration is the Building of the Twelve Colleges, built to house the newly created colleges, or state ministries. Peter conceived of the colleges not as an innovation, but as a regularization of the existing *prikazy,* or state bureaus. The new building neatly echoes this conception, as it draws on the siting and arrangement of the seventeenth-century buildings housing the *prikazy,* while regularizing their forms and decoration in a restrained Baroque idiom.

It is customary to assert in studies of this sort that one has identified and promptly redressed a glaring gap in the existing scholarship. The present work, as discussed above, utilizes a different approach. The "gap" identified here is not one of content, but rather of approach. If we understand Petrine architecture and urbanism as simply surface phenomena and ignore their power to influence other aspects of Peter's societal transformations, we impoverish our understanding of the tsar's reign and of each of its many facets. Perhaps it is fair, then, to claim the chief implication of this study's findings as a need for increased interdisciplinary coordination among Petrine scholars, whether they are primarily historians of art, architecture, urbanism, political regime, economics, social structures, or specialists in other fields. Such coordination might produce scholarship that is more sensitive to the complex and reciprocal relationship through which architecture, politics, and society continuously influence each other.

This sensitivity is already apparent to a degree in the work of several scholars treated here. Were this sensitivity to be extended to all manner of Petrine studies, the entire body of scholarship would be significantly enriched.

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