

**Claiming the Pamiatnik: Transforming a National Monument
Into a Symbol of Local Identity in 1830's Kazan**

Eric Johnson

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, historians of Russia have increasingly scrutinized the late Imperial period for signs of ‘civil society,’ or its absence—searching for traces of the kinds of middle-class identities and institutions that might, under the right circumstances, have acted as an effective counterweight to autocrats and revolutionaries. Kassow, West and Clowes have charted some of the key dimensions of this search. They emphasize the important role urbanization had to play in the emergence of civil society, writing that “[c]ity spaces... provided the essential setting for creating a new social sensibility.” They locate the search for civil society in the years after the Great Reforms, noting that “until the mid-nineteenth century, Russian social identity had been largely defined by [the] traditional categories” of estates, or *soslovie*. And they emphasize the fact that civil society has traditionally been defined in institutional terms, as connoting a “critical mass of... [private social] structures that establish intermediate identities between the family and the state.”¹

But the story of the Kazan Pamiatnik in the first half of the 19th century suggests some ways in which the search for Russian civil society might be recast. For in Kazan, as early as the 1830s, there were signs of a new social configuration rooted in a local identity that cut across traditional estate lines. It wasn’t an identity derived from any specific private institution or organization. Instead, in Kazan, the emerging local identity was an abstract construct, centered on cooperation, collective action and memorialization—and it drew vigor from the reimagining of an existing state institution: the Pamiatnik.

For most of the 19th century, Russians in the Volga River city of Kazan held a deep interest in local sites of memory, or pamiatniki. Prominent examples included historic sites such

as the Admiralty, the Kreml, Kazan University and the Old Tatar quarter; various monuments and buildings associated with prominent political, literary and academic figures; and numerous pre-conquest Tatar cultural sites. But when the term ‘Pamiatnik’ was used as a proper noun, without qualification, it referred to the monument on Zilantov hill, built atop a mass grave for Russian soldiers who had fallen during the conquest of Kazan in 1552.

Although the grave dated back to the 16th century, the monument itself was relatively recent, having been completed only in 1823. Built on a square base measuring seventy feet on a side, it was constructed of white stone in the form of a truncated pyramid. Massive colonnaded entrances projected from each of the four sides, and below the monument lay the crypt containing the bones of Ivan IV’s soldiers. To call Zilantov a hill was an exaggeration—in fact it was little more than a rise in the ground along the shore near the junction of the Volga and Kazanka rivers. During the spring floods the hill became a low island, with the monument entirely surrounded by water. But if the monument did not soar above the city, it did occupy a place of prominence along the Kazan waterfront, greeting Volga travelers as they arrived in town. And during the 1830s and ‘40s the monument became increasingly prominent in the local consciousness as well.

The establishment of the Zilantov monument coincided with a tide of Russian nationalism, and both residents and visitors viewed it as an object of national pride, with unmistakable historic and patriotic value. But for the citizens of Kazan, the monument gradually acquired a new layer of civic meaning as well. Between 1812 and 1823 the Pamiatnik had been constructed at the inspiration of a Kazan abbot, but under the authority and resources of the central government. This situation changed in the early 1830s. In response to a dramatic

deterioration of the structure, it was local authorities who assumed responsibility for its reconstruction and ongoing maintenance. And most intriguingly, several articles and books were published in Kazan during the succeeding years 1832-1845 dedicated to the Zilantov monument. These works highlighted the national significance of the monument, but they also asserted the significance of local history in its own right. Furthermore, they made the recent construction and renewal of the monument a part of that local history, re-remembering the events of 1830-32 in ever more glowing terms. Taken together, the monument's construction, reconstruction and mythologization help to chart the emergence of an increasingly broad-based, interconnected, assertive and self-aware local community in Kazan.

The most complete history of the original construction of the memorial comes from a series of articles by M. S. Rybushkin that appeared in the Kazan periodical, *Zavolzhskii Muravei* in 1833. According to Rybushkin, the concept for the Pamiatnik originated with the abbot of Kazan's Zilantov-Uspenskii monastery, a man named Amvrosii. In 1812, he envisioned a modest structure, to be funded through voluntary donations. He submitted his proposal to the governor, who forwarded it to the Interior Ministry. From there it crossed the desk of Alexander I, who rejected Amvrosii's plan, demanding a more elaborate and imposing design. The revised proposal was approved in 1817, and Alexander committed extensive funds on behalf of the royal family and imperial household, cabinet officials, and the imperial treasury towards its construction. The monument was completed in 1823, and consecrated in a grand ceremony conducted by the archbishop of Kazan, attended by the town notables, and concluded by the military with a cannon salute. Zilantov-Uspenskii took ownership of the monument, and continued their practice of conducting regular memorial services [*panikhidy*] for the soldiers interred at Zilantov.²

Among the citizens of Kazan, Amvrosii can claim a particularly prominent role in the establishment of the monument. Without his inspiration the project would never have been initiated, and without his persistence it would not have been completed. Rybushkin extended credit for the effort to Zilantov-Uspenskii as a whole, by emphasizing the tangible contributions of the monastery to the project. These included the loan of horses for transporting materials, the collection of pledged donations, the appointment of watchmen over the construction site, and the production of bricks. Such assistance may or may not have represented a deep sacrifice on the part of the monks, but it certainly played only a minor role in producing the structure, with its giant blocks of imported stone, and a budget that had soared from 5,000 to 100,000 rubles in accommodating the Tsar's requirements.³

Beyond the efforts of Zilantov-Uspenskii, evidence of meaningful civic involvement in the establishment of the Pamiatnik is scant. It is unclear who Amvrosii expected to contribute towards his original, smaller plan; however Rybushkin contains no indication that these were expected to be primarily local donors. As the project proceeded, Rybushkin wrote that along with the Emperor, "a great many noteworthy Nobles, Clerics and Merchants, as in both capitals, so also in the city of Kazan and other Russian cities" had contributed—a formulation that does little to suggest any particular enthusiasm for the project in Kazan. The description of the monument's consecration ceremony in 1823 similarly emphasized the national, rather than local, significance of the event—noting that it was held on the Emperor's name-day, and that the assembled notables consisted of "Soldiers and State Officials, as well as residents of Kazan." In short, it appears most accurate to say that the monument was originally constructed as a joint project of the tsarist government and Zilantov-Uspenskii monastery, with the involvement of any third parties being distinctly limited.⁴

The Pamiatnik next captured local attention in November 1830, when the Interior Minister, A. A. Zakrevskii toured Kazan as part of his campaign against a cholera epidemic. During the visit he attended one of the regular memorial services at the site, and found that the structure had fallen into a vexing state of disrepair, with prominent cracks in the walls and numerous leaks. Zakrevskii expressed his dismay forcefully to the new abbot of Zilantov-Uspenskii, Gavriil. The minister acknowledged that the Pamiatnik was the monastery's property, and that the monastery's finances were in a poor state, but emphasized that a monument of such significance simply could not be allowed to fall into decay. Subsequent correspondence between the Minister and the Kazan Merchants' Council [*Kupecheskoe Soslovie*] suggests that the city leadership also felt Zakrevskii's displeasure. Within a week of his visit—on the very day that the cholera quarantine around Kazan was lifted—Zakrevskii received a letter from the city merchants, requesting permission to renovate the monument, and take over responsibility for its ongoing maintenance. The Mayor of Kazan [*Gradskii Glava*], who composed the letter on behalf of the merchants, thanked the Minister for “the instructive example by which Your Grace has taught us,” an example that was “given to us at the visit to the Kazan Pamiatnik”—suggesting that the merchants' swift action was in response to a direct rebuke from the Minister.⁵

Zakrevskii was pleased to approve the Merchant Council's offer. In succeeding correspondence the merchants detailed their plans further, while the Minister praised them and forwarded their plans to the local religious authorities. The City Corporation [*Gradskoe Obshchestvo*] appointed two first-guild merchants, Krupenikov and Kotelov, as caretakers to the monument, and they raised a substantial subscription from the members of the Merchants' Council (whose names were dutifully forwarded to Zakrevskii to assure they received proper acknowledgement). Krupenikov and Kotelov renovated the monument extensively, sealing it

against further water damage, adding an ornamental façade, and remaking the crypt. In 1832 a re-consecration ceremony was conducted, reminiscent of, but even more imposing than, the original. After the ceremony, Krupenikov and Kotelov received gold medals from the central government in recognition of their efforts.⁶

This sequence of events suggests a new assertiveness in the civic leadership of Kazan—particularly the Merchants’ Council, the City Corporation, and the Mayor. Local elites, who had been largely invisible during the monument’s construction, took the lead in renovating and preserving it. Pressure from the central government was certainly a factor in this shift. The merchants were evidently not coerced to act, but they were eager to ensure that their “voluntary” individual and collective efforts were brought to the imperial government’s notice. There is some reason to believe that an embryonic sense of civic identity may have been operative as well. When the city fathers expressed their reasons for acting, they expressed them in terms of Zakrevskii’s tangible assistance during the recent, devastating cholera epidemic. “With these voluntary contributions,” they wrote, “we hope to offer a small acknowledgement... of your efforts to deliver us from this disastrous infection, and to sustain our commerce.” There is a suggestion, therefore, that the decision to invest in the local monument was encouraged by a local crisis, by the needs it engendered, and by gratitude for government assistance rendered in response. Perhaps even more telling, after the Pamiatnik’s renovation was complete and the gold medals awarded, the City Corporation allocated 1,000 rubles per year from the city treasury to maintain the memorial in perpetuity. Rybushkin attributed this decision to a “zealous wish to preserve the Pamiatnik in sturdy condition for future ages”; and given the apparent lack of any involvement by the central government in prompting the decision, it does suggest a heightened level of civic involvement by local leaders.⁷

The episode also encouraged interaction between local civic and religious leaders, although admittedly often coordinated through the central government. Even while relinquishing ownership of the site, the monastery sought to maintain its spiritual and historical ties to it. One of Zakrevskii's letters informed the merchants that the archbishop of Kazan had ordered Zilantov-Uspenskii to continue conducting weekly memorial services there. Likewise, in his account, Rybushkin declared that a primary goal of the Merchants' Council in taking over the monument was to maintain all the church's current activities at the site. By the time the project was completed, these ties appeared stronger and more natural. The monastery was made a prime beneficiary of donations collected during the re-consecration festivities. And perhaps in gratitude, Rybushkin's account from *Zavolzhskii Muravei* was republished the next year, along with other documentary material, in a volume dedicated by the abbot Gavriil as a "heartfelt offering" to the City Corporation.⁸

In the twelve years after the renewal of the Pamiatnik, at least three local histories of the monument were published in Kazan, works which actively sought to emphasize and amplify the tentative steps towards civic involvement and cooperation that leading citizens of Kazan had taken during the renovation project. The first of these accounts was Rybushkin's, which originally appeared as two articles within a larger series on the history of Kazan. Rybushkin, aged forty-one at the time of the monument's re-consecration, had been educated in Kazan, and had since worked in the city as an educator, eventually rising to oversee the gymnasium. His history of the Pamiatnik made ample reference to the national significance of the site. In fact Rybushkin's formulation for the monument's patriotic meaning, "Monarch, Church and Fatherland [*Monarkh, Tserkov, i Otechestvo*]," neatly anticipated the 'Autocracy, Orthodoxy and Nationalism' slogan Uvarov would publish about a year later. Rybushkin also asserted the

importance of Kazan and its history within the larger fabric of the Empire. He described the 1552 conquest of Kazan as a glorious victory of Russia and Orthodoxy, and quoted Ivan IV as referring to the crypt at Zilantov as the “first among Russian graveyards [*pervonachalni i Russkii kladbishche*].” He discerned a vital historic thread connecting the glorious past and the patriotic present as residing in Kazan, in the unbroken history of *panikhida* services that the monks of Zilantov-Uspenskii had conducted on Zilantov hill since the 16th century.⁹

Yet by including the story of the structure’s decay and renewal, Rybushkin also sought to celebrate not just Kazan’s national significance and historic past, but the engaged and cohesive citizenry of its present. Such sentiments are apparent, for example, in his account of the monument’s rededication in 1832. After spending three pages describing the religious ceremony, in much the same terms as the original 1823 consecration, he devoted the next two pages to something new: a description of the civic celebration that followed. At these festivities, “120 of the most honored officials and citizens” were invited to a formal dinner, while outside “tens of thousands of the people cheered loudly and joyously.” Likewise, Rybushkin had already begun the process of reinterpreting the events of 1830-32, casting them as less a response to official displeasure, and more a voluntary expression of patriotism and metropolitan pride. Where the Mayor had referred to Zakrevskii’s “instructive example,” Rybushkin adopted more passive language, writing that the merchants “had learned of the Interior Minister’s wishes” and chosen to act on them. Further, Rybushkin wrote that the merchants had acted “in memory of the curtailment of the cholera raging through Kazan, in glorification of Our Lady of Kazan for the lifting of the cordon around the city, and in thankful supplication to the Lord”—a construction which preserved the local meaning that the Merchants’ Council had themselves attached to the restoration project, edited out their thanks to Zakrevskii, and added a distinctly religious gloss.

The result of such reinterpretations was to suggest that the restoration project was a voluntary initiative, representing a partnership between the city merchants and local clergy, which was undertaken based on a set of civic motives that centered on the Pamiatnik's significance to the city, and on the desire to memorialize the city's deliverance from a devastating epidemic.¹⁰

The 1840s saw the publication of two additional local histories of the monument, works for which Rybushkin's account set the tone. The first of these was "Memorial in Honor of Those Who Fell at the Taking of Kazan [*Pamiatnik v Chest Voinov, Padshikh pri Vziatii Kazani*]" by A. Artemev, published in the *Kazanskaia Gubernskaia Vedomosti* in 1843. Artemev entered university at Kazan in 1837, and remained as an employee of the university library after he graduated and into the 1850s. His article, which was divided between an enthusiastic account of Ivan's triumph in 1552, and a brief history of the monument's establishment, drew heavily on Rybushkin's articles. Yet his synopsis of the events of 1830 is almost unrecognizable in its depiction of civic initiative, cooperation, and proactive—rather than reactive—engagement. Because of Zilantov-Uspenskii's poverty, he wrote, the care of the monument was an "extremely awkward" burden. Therefore, in 1830, the Merchants' Council, "at the suggestion of the former Interior Minister," collected funds, repaired the monument and took over its maintenance in perpetuity. The fact that the monument's poor condition precipitated the minor crisis was excluded from mention. The resulting image was of a proactive Merchants' Council working to relieve the burden on a local monastery, aided by the helpful suggestions of a friendly minister.¹¹

Nikolai Bazhenov followed this with a more extensive work, *Journey to Zilantov Monastery and the Kazan Memorial* [*Plavanie k Zilantovu Monastyriu i Kazanskomu Pamiatniku*], in 1845. A military doctor and respected amateur historian, Bazhenov lived the last

five years of his life in Kazan, and before his untimely death in 1848 published not only *Journey to Zilantov*, but also his *History of Kazan [Kazanskaia Istoria]*. *Journey to Zilantov* retold Bazhenov's visit to Zilantov-Uspenskii and to the Pamiatnik; but although it was not constructed as a history in the same way as Rybushkin's or Artemev's works, it did contain extensive historical passages, in keeping with Bazhenov's personal interests. The first section of the book described Zilantov-Uspenskii's buildings, grounds and cemetery, and the second section shifted focus to the Zilantov memorial. When recounting the events of the early 1830s, Bazhenov offered an interpretation that was even more spare and more favorable than Artemev's. In Bazhenov's account, Minister Zakrevskii was finally excised completely. Of the decision of the merchants to take responsibility for the monument, Bazhenov wrote: "at first the memorial represented an office of Zilantov monastery. In 1830 the preservation of the memorial was taken under the care of the Kazan merchants, who were always ready to respond to any worthwhile assignment." Bazhenov went on to laud the merchants' careful attention, and the praise that they garnered at the time, singling out Krupenikov and Kotelov for particular mention.¹²

Reviewing all three local histories of the Zilantov memorial, several trends are evident. First, they all invested substantial effort in documenting the historic and patriotic value of the memorial. Second, they each emphasized the important roles that both Zilantov-Uspenskii and the Kazan Merchants' Council and City Corporation had played in creating and sustaining the monument. Third, and perhaps most interesting, each history successively rewrote the events of 1830. What started as an anxious response by the city merchants to a dissatisfied Minister and a leaking building during a moment of local crisis, was over time reinterpreted as a cooperative and proactive civic partnership between Merchants' Council and monastery, undertaken to ensure that a city treasure would be maintained in perpetuity.

Taken together these themes suggest that during the 1820s, '30s and '40s an increasing level of civic involvement and mutual cohesion was in evidence among local Orthodox clergy, merchants, city officials, academics and writers. These groups not only showed the capacity to work together and take local initiative in rebuilding the Pamiatnik and funding its conservation, they also created their own myths around these events, and in so doing, demonstrated a level of self-awareness. Rudy Koshar has written that “nations developed their sense of history with reference to specific and tangible objects... every moment of social heritage could be a national idea.” In Kazan, a similar process was working out at the local level. The Pamiatnik remained a site of nationalism and patriotism, but it became also a focal point of local memory, where citizens could celebrate their ability to come together as a city to solve problems, and assert their significance within the vast Russian Empire. As such, the Pamiatnik is a site that, for historians today, invites a reconsideration of the search for civil society. For further research may find the traces of a form of civil society in the decades before the Great Reforms, residing in the gaps between social groups, and in the episodes in which existing symbols and institutions were reclaimed and re-imagined.¹³

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End Notes

¹ Samuel D. Kassow, James L. West and Edith W. Clowes, "Introduction," in Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow and James L. West eds., *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 4-7.

² [M. S. Rybushkin], "Kazan (Prodolzhenie) O Sooruzhenii Pamiatnika v Chest Ubiennykh pri Pokoreнии Kazani Voinov," in *Zavolzhskii Muravei*, vol. 2, no. 13 (1833), 722-725, 729-730.

³ Rybushkin, "O Sooruzhenii Pamiatnika," 722-728.

⁴ Rybushkin, "O Sooruzhenii Pamiatnika," 724-725, 729-730.

⁵ Rybushkin, "O Sooruzhenii Pamiatnika," 731-733; *Istoricheskoe Opisanie Pamiatnika, Sooruzhennago v Vospominanie Ubtennykh pri Vziatii Kazani Voinov na Zilantovoi Gore* (Kazan: Universitetskaia Tipografiia, 1833), 70-72.

⁶ Rybushkin, "O Sooruzhenii Pamiatnika," 733-745; *Istoricheskoe Opisanie Pamiatnika*, 70-76.

⁷ Rybushkin, "O Sooruzhenii Pamiatnika," 743-745; *Istoricheskoe Opisanie Pamiatnika*, 70-73, 79-81.

⁸ Rybushkin, "O Sooruzhenii Pamiatnika," 731-735; *Istoricheskoe Opisanie Pamiatnika*, dedication page, 87-89.

⁹ Rybushkin, "O Sooruzhenii Pamiatnika," 721-722, 726-729; Evgenii Bobrov, "A. A. Fuks i Kazanskii Literatnyi 30-40-kh Godov," in *Russkaia Starina*, vol. 119 (July-September, 1904), 19-20.

¹⁰ Rybushkin, "O Sooruzhenii Pamiatnika," 721-733, 738-742.

¹¹ A. Artemev, "Pamiatnik v Chest Voinov, Padshikh pri Vziatii Kazani," in *Kazanskaia Gubernskaia Vedomosti*, no. 40 (1843), 234-235.

¹² Nikolai Bazhenov, *Plavanie k Zilantovu Monastyriu i Kazanskomu Pamiatniku* (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia, 1845), 29-33.

¹³ Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory, 1870-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 18-19.