

Review

Vladimir Shtiftar (1880-1942) and his Views on the Formation of the Architectural and Cultural Landscape of the Eupatoria Resort

Karbovskiy Andrey^{1,*}

^{1.} Andrey Karbovskiy, Ph.D., Independent Scholar, based in Washington, D.C., United States

* Correspondence: elbrus999@gmail.com

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Abstract:

The paper considers activities and theoretical heritage of Vladimir Shtiftar, a pedagogue and social activist of Slovenian ancestry, living in the early 20th century in a Black Sea town of Eupatoria. Shtiftar's works devoted to the local landscape aesthetics, can be considered as one of the first attempts to ponder over an interaction between natural factors, urban planning, history of arts and healing practices. His interdisciplinary studies give us an insight into a vibrant context of a changing socio-economic structures in the pre-war Black Sea region. What inspired this passionate classical scholar to formulate a holistic outlook for a health resort aimed at preserving its rich cultural heritage, which was endangered by rapid modernization? How effective were V.Shtiftar's efforts? Why do his views and works remain relevant today?

Keywords: Vladimir Shtiftar; Eupatoria; Kerkynitis; archaeology; landscape

Much has been said about the importance of landscapes and landmarks in the development of cultural activities aimed at health improvement, psychotherapy, and wellness (Souter-Brown, 2015; Rose, 2012). Rapid economic development worldwide has increased the demand for effective policies to preserve landscapes from uncontrolled destruction (Fancourt et al., 2019). Today, the international community unanimously agrees that poorly regulated urban development has damaged and impoverished the cultural and aesthetic heritage of entire regions. In response, various preventive measures have been proposed, including the supervision of all types of public and private construction. These structures should be designed to meet specific aesthetic standards while avoiding superficial imitation of traditional forms. Additionally, they should harmonize with the overall atmosphere of the site that is intended to be preserved. Civic control mechanisms and architectural watchdogs gain importance when discussing the development of historical settlements with recreational potential, as these areas are particularly vulnerable to economic pressures at the local level. Their activities promote the best principles agreed upon at the international level. One of the most notable examples of this approach is the 1962 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding of the Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites.

However, protecting heritage requires continuous improvement and upgrading of policy tools, making further research into past best practices essential. This task becomes even more significant when considering that Slovenians were among those who formulated and defended these advanced principles. This paper seeks to revive the legacy of Vladimir Shtiftar (**Figure 1**), a remarkable teacher and public figure of Slovenian origin. Born in 1880 in the Russian city of Kaluga, he was the son of France Štifter (**Figures 2, 3, and 4**), widely recognized as the father of mountain tourism in Logar Valley.



Figure 1. Vladimir Shtiftar in gymnasium teacher uniform, decorated with the Order of Saint Stanislaus, 3rd class, early 1910s.



Figure 2. France Štifter in gymnasium teacher uniform, decorated with the Order of Saint Anna, 2nd class, early 1910s.



Figure 3. Štifter family village of Solčava appearing under its German name of Sulzbach on the old Austro-Hungarian map, early 1900s (marked with a green cross).

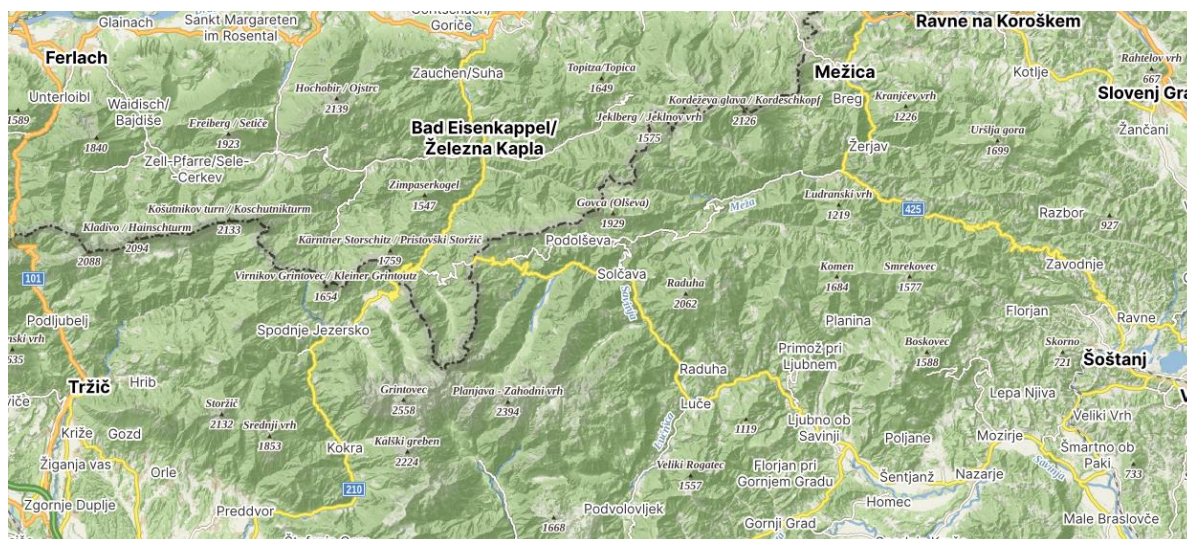


Figure 4. Solčava on today's map of the Slovene-Austrian borderland.

As a graduate of the Historical and Philological Lyceum in the city of Nizhyn, Vladimir Shtiftar secured a position as a teacher of ancient languages at the gymnasium in Eupatoria. Situated on the Black Sea coast, Eupatoria captivated the young teacher, sparking his deep passion for architecture and archaeology. He devoted himself wholeheartedly to preserving the city's unique urban landscape, which harmoniously blended Greek, Ottoman, Oriental, and European elements. Engaging his students in hands-on historical inquiry, Shtiftar led the excavation of an ancient burial mound near the city. Determined to preserve his findings for future scholars, he meticulously documented his observations, performing schematic measurements of the stone masonry and describing the collected artifacts. Through this work, he contributed significantly to solving a key scholarly question of the time—the localization of the ancient Greek colony of Kerkynitis.

Shtiftar's ambitions, however, extended far beyond personal curiosity. Building on substantial theoretical knowledge and excavation findings, he fundamentally reimagined the architectural identity of Eupatoria. He envisioned it not merely as a developing resort city but as a "park city" and a "garden city," united by a cohesive architectural style.

The quintessence of his vision is articulated in his 1916 book, *Suburban Architectural Landscape of Eupatoria*. He proposed replacing the city's chaotic, unstructured development with centralized urban planning inspired by the symmetry, proportion, simplicity, and elegance of 5th-century BCE Greek temples. This influence is hardly surprising, given Shtiftar's background as a scholar of philology. However, his retrospective aesthetic choices can also be seen as a reflection of the "Zeitgeist", the spirit of the Historicism movement that dominated European and, particularly, Russian architecture at the time.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw a resurgence of Greek Revival architecture, particularly in Moscow, where designers and patrons incorporated refined elements of the Athenian Erechtheion (421–406 BCE) into the city's architectural landscape. Interestingly, this trend largely bypassed St. Petersburg, the imperial capital. It is possible that Shtiftar's embrace of Greek Revivalism was influenced by his native Kaluga, situated in close proximity to Moscow, where the movement thrived.

Tragically, Shtiftar did not live to see his vision realized. He and his family perished in a mass execution carried out by the Nazis in 1942. However, his contributions were not in vain. His invaluable descriptions of archaeological excavations laid the foundation for future research on Kerkynitis. Furthermore, the Neo-Classical architectural principles he championed were eventually embraced by post-war Soviet architects tasked with recon-

structuring war-ravaged Black Sea cities such as Sevastopol and Odessa. More broadly, Classical architectural principles were integrated into Socialist Realism and, later, into Post-modern Contemporary Classical architecture, ensuring the enduring influence of Shtiftar's ideas. Slovenia has every right to be proud of this remarkable son — one of the pioneering researchers of ancient civilizations in the Northern Black Sea region. It is time to celebrate his multifaceted legacy and reinstate him as a visionary advocate for healthy urban landscapes, a thinker who was clearly ahead of his time.

Shtiftar's creative and intellectual contributions remain highly relevant in today's era of rapid advancements in landscape design, urban planning, and territorial branding. His central idea - that a well-planned, welcoming resort landscape must be integrated into urban development strategies from the very beginning - has never lost its significance.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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