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ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN KHIVA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY UP TO THE REVOLUTION: HISTORY AND RESULTS

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Abstract: The article examines the initial, pre-revolutionary stage of the archaeological study of the medieval architectural monuments of Khiva. The aim of the study is to reconstruct the chronology of the expeditions of the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, to determine their methodological features and to assess their scholarly results. The analysis shows that the study of the region began after its inclusion into the Russian Empire and was carried out simultaneously in the architectural and the archaeological perspective, frequently by the same researchers, both military and civil officials. Four groups of results are distinguished: the first photographic documentation of the monuments (1858), the first descriptions of the ruins of Ichan-Kala (P.I. Lerkh, 1867–1870), systematic historical and geographical generalisation (N.I. Veselovsky, 1877) and the combination of written sources with field observation (V.V. Barthold, 1893–1894). The main methodological limitation of the period is identified: description and collection prevailed over stratigraphic excavation.

Key words: Khiva, Ichan-Kala, archaeological study, Imperial Archaeological Commission, P.I. Lerkh, V.V. Barthold, N.I. Veselovsky, V.A. Zhukovsky, historiography, photographic documentation.

АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ В ХИВЕ В XIX ВЕКЕ ДО РЕВОЛЮЦИИ: ИСТОРИЯ И РЕЗУЛЬТАТЫ

Аннотация: В статье рассматривается начальный, дореволюционный этап археологического изучения средневековых архитектурных памятников Хивы. Цель исследования — восстановить хронологию экспедиций второй половины XIX — начала XX века, определить их методические особенности и оценить научные результаты. Анализ показывает, что изучение региона началось после его вхождения в состав Российской империи и велось одновременно в архитектурном и археологическом отношении, нередко одними и теми же исследователями. Выделены четыре группы результатов: первая фотофиксация памятников (1858), первые описания развалин Ичан-Калы (П.И. Лерх, 1867–1870), систематическое историко-географическое обобщение (Н.И. Веселовский, 1877) и соединение письменных источников с полевым наблюдением (В.В. Бартольд, 1893–1894). Установлено основное методическое ограничение периода: описание и собирание преобладали над стратиграфическими раскопками.

Ключевые слова: Хива, Ичан-Кала, археологическое изучение, Императорская археологическая комиссия, П.И. Лерх, В.В. Бартольд, Н.И. Веселовский, В.А. Жуковский, историография, фотофиксация.

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Introduction

The archaeological study of the medieval architectural monuments of Khiva before the revolution constitutes an important stage in the history of research into this unique cultural heritage. In the nineteenth century archaeological work in Khiva began with the aim of revealing the secrets of ancient structures and of clarifying the history and culture of the region. The results of these investigations enabled scholars to gain a better understanding of the architectural features and characteristics of the buildings recorded in Khiva, as well as of their historical and cultural significance.

At the end of the nineteenth century the study of Central Asia was complicated by the remoteness of the region and by the absence of information on its historical and cultural features. The region entered the Russian Empire precisely during this period: in 1865 the north of Central Asia (the southern part of present-day Kazakhstan) was annexed, and between 1868 and 1875 Khiva and Bukhara, as well as the Khanate of Kokand and the mountainous districts — the valley of the Zeravshan, Fergana and the Tian Shan — came under Russian rule. This political change opened the region to systematic scholarly observation for the first time.

Materials and methods

The study is based on the historiographical analysis of published field reports and monographs of the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century [1; 2; 3; 4], as well as on source-critical assessment of the biographical and review literature devoted to the researchers of that period [5; 6]. The problem-chronological method was used to establish the sequence of expeditions, while the comparative method made it possible to distinguish the descriptive stage of research from the stage of systematic documentation. The chronological framework of the analysis covers the years 1858–1917.

Results and discussion

1. The specific character of the initial stage. The investigation of the architectural and archaeological monuments of Khiva at that time was carried out simultaneously, and frequently the same scholars — both military and civil officials — dealt with these questions. In the initial period of the study of the region photography was not yet the principal method of documentation; systematic photographing of monuments became obligatory only later, in the course of the activity of the Imperial Archaeological Commission. Among the first photographs recording the monuments of Central Asia were the shots taken in 1858 by the artillery sub-lieutenant A.S. Murenko during the diplomatic mission of Colonel N.P. Ignatiev from Orenburg to Khiva and Bukhara.

Table 1

Chronology of the pre-revolutionary study of the monuments of Khiva and the adjacent region

Year	Researcher / institution	Character of the work	Principal result

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Year	Researcher / institution	Character of the work	Principal result
1858	A.S. Murenko (mission of N.P. Ignatiev)	photographic recording during a diplomatic mission	first photographs of the monuments of Central Asia
1866	local population, Janikent	unsystematic extraction of bricks (up to 2,000 people)	destruction of the cultural layer before the arrival of scholars
1867	P.I. Lerkh (Archaeological Commission)	reconnaissance in Janikent and the lower Syr Darya	description of the ruins of Ichan-Kala and of the citadel walls
1870	P.I. Lerkh	publication of the results of the journey	"An Archaeological Journey to the Turkestan Region"
1877	N.I. Veselovsky	generalisation of historical and geographical data	monograph on the Khanate of Khiva
1884 – early 20th c.	N.N. Pantusov, N.I. Veselovsky	first excavations, architectural observations	description of the monuments of Khiva, emphasis on the Timurid period
1890, 1896	V.A. Zhukovsky (Imperial Archaeological Commission)	study of Islamic culture in Western Turkestan	"Antiquities of the Transcaspian Region. The Ruins of Old Merv" (1894)
1893–1894	V.V. Barthold, artist S.M. Dudin	description of ruins without excavation	report of 1897; combination of written sources and field data
1894	E.P. Kovalev	survey of hard-to-reach sites, drawings	short report (1894), detailed report (1897)

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of [1; 2; 3; 4].

2. The reconnaissance of P.I. Lerkh and the first description of Ichan-Kala. In 1867, bearing in mind his previous experience, the Archaeological Commission sent P.I. Lerkh to the Turkestan region in order to conduct excavations at Janikent. Should Janikent prove to be of little archaeological significance, the Commission instructed Lerkh to examine the lower reaches of the Syr Darya in search of other significant finds. In his report Lerkh describes Ichan-Kala in detail — the ruins of the ancient Khivan fortification — as well as the remains of the pisé walls of the citadel and of the town of Janikent itself. Lerkh noted that the town had been abandoned undestroyed, but that over time the pisé structures had collapsed and the local inhabitants had used the bricks for the construction of mazars [1].

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The research situation was seriously complicated by the events of the previous year. In 1866 large-scale “excavations” were undertaken on the territory of Janikent with the purpose of searching for bricks among the ruined walls; up to two thousand people took part in this work, which left the archaeologist, who arrived a year later, with little chance of finding anything of value. Lerkh began his reconnaissance both inside and outside the fortress, where he discovered a Muslim cemetery. Here the deceased had been buried without inscriptions, in graves constructed of fired and unfired brick; the same types of funerary structures could be observed at Shah-i Zinda in Samarkand and near the mausoleum of Ismail Samani in Bukhara. Beneath the mounds investigated by Lerkh, burial structures built with the use of tiles with a blue glaze were found. In 1870 the results of the journey were published as “An Archaeological Journey to the Turkestan Region”, which includes a description of the architectural features of Ichan-Kala, of its structure, fortifications, buildings and monuments, together with the historical context and the significance of this site for the cultural heritage of the region [1].

3. The generalising works of N.I. Veselovsky and V.A. Zhukovsky. In the nineteenth century the first archaeological excavations are associated with the names of the orientalists N.N. Pantusov and N.I. Veselovsky, the latter of whom continued archaeological and architectural research from 1884 until the beginning of the twentieth century. On the basis of these excavations Veselovsky published the book “Historical and Geographical Information on the Khanate of Khiva”, in which the available historical and geographical data on the region are generalised and systematised: the origin and formation of the Khanate, its political system, social structure, economy and culture, as well as its borders, natural features, climate and relief, and the influence of geographical factors on historical and cultural processes [2]. Veselovsky provides a detailed description of the architectural monuments of Khiva discovered in the course of his work, with an emphasis on the Timurid epoch.

Whereas Veselovsky concentrated on particular finds, V.A. Zhukovsky undertook a broader investigation. In 1890 and 1896, having been sent by the Imperial Archaeological Commission to Western Turkestan, he studied Islamic culture. His principal work, published in 1894 under the title “Antiquities of the Transcaspian Region. The Ruins of Old Merv”, considerably enriched the understanding of the cultural heritage of Central Asia: Zhukovsky carried out a thorough archaeological analysis of the ruins of Merv and connected them with the history of the Khanate of Khiva [4]. His second journey to the Transcaspian region in 1896 did not produce significant results. In addition to his publications in the “Transactions of the Oriental Department of the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society”, Zhukovsky published a number of articles in the “Journal of the Ministry of Public Education”, in the journal “Living Antiquity” and in several newspapers [5; 6].

4. The expeditions of V.V. Barthold and the formation of the documentary base. In 1893 St. Petersburg University sent Professor V.V. Barthold to Central Asia to investigate ancient monuments; a similar commission was given to him by the Academy of Sciences. He was accompanied by the artist S.M. Dudin. Their task was to collect information on the past of the region, supplementing the written sources with data on the traces left by its former inhabitants and, where possible, to describe the ruins of towns and fortifications. These missions did not provide for archaeological excavations or other specialised work. In 1894 Barthold invited Lieutenant E.P. Kovalev, a member of the Taurida Scientific Archival Commission, to examine antiquities in localities that could be reached only on horseback and to produce the necessary drawings and photographs; the photographs from this journey have not been preserved in the archive, while a short report was published in 1894 and a detailed one in 1897 [3].

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Barthold's report on the journey of 1893–1894 constitutes an important source of information on the culture, history and archaeology of the region. It records observations, research results and discoveries, and contains data on ancient towns, architectural monuments, historical sites and the cultural features of every district visited, together with an analysis and interpretation of the material obtained and conclusions that gave an impulse to further research [3; 7]. From 1893 onwards Barthold conducted investigations that combined a profound knowledge of the written sources with the archaeological finds discovered by himself and his colleagues.

Table 2

Methods of the pre-revolutionary stage and their limitations

Method	Content	Limitation
Visual description of ruins	recording of the state, dimensions and structure of the walls	absence of stratigraphic control and of precise dating
Photographic recording	from 1858; obligatory in the work of the Commission	incompleteness; part of the material has not survived
Collection of artefacts	transfer of finds to museums and to the Commission	loss of the archaeological context of the objects
Written-source analysis	comparison of narrative data with the terrain	dependence on the reliability of the written tradition
Reconnaissance excavation	limited trenches (Janikent, burials)	damage to the layer by earlier unsystematic works

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of [1; 2; 3; 4].

During the period of its activity the Imperial Archaeological Commission assembled about 100,000 items, the historical and archaeological photographic heritage of Central Asia amounting to approximately one quarter of this archive. Objects dated from the Bronze Age to the late Middle Ages were distributed among various museums, except in cases where they were acquired specifically for a particular institution; most of the articles of so-called "Oriental silver" were published, and photographs of the antiquities taken by I.F. Chistyakov were included in the archives. These materials are now preserved in the State Historical Museum, the Russian Museum, the Hermitage, the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, as well as in the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Asiatic Museum [3; 7].

Discussion

The analysis makes it possible to define the pre-revolutionary stage as descriptive and collecting rather than stratigraphic. Excavation in the modern sense was carried out only sporadically, and even then under unfavourable conditions: the Janikent case demonstrates that the destruction of the cultural layer by the local extraction of bricks preceded scholarly investigation. Nevertheless, the value of this stage is not diminished. Its principal achievement lies in the creation of the primary documentary base — descriptions, drawings and photographs — which recorded the state of the monuments before the

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large-scale transformations of the twentieth century and which therefore retains an independent source value today.

A second feature of the period is the institutional unity of architectural and archaeological observation. The same researchers described the plan of a fortification, the technique of its masonry and the finds obtained from it, which corresponds to the modern understanding of an architectural monument as an archaeological object [8]. Finally, the works of Barthold and Dudin formed a new vector in Russian scholarship — the systematic study of the cultural heritage of Central Asia — and led to the formation of significant museum collections and to the development of a methodology that strengthened the links between the historical disciplines and anthropology.

Conclusions

1. The archaeological study of the monuments of Khiva began after the inclusion of the region into the Russian Empire (1868–1875) and passed, up to the revolution, from occasional photographic recording (1858) to institutionally organised expeditions of the Imperial Archaeological Commission and of the Academy of Sciences.

2. The scholarly results of the period are grouped in four directions: the first photographic documentation of the monuments; the first description of the ruins of Ichan-Kala by P.I. Lerkh; the historical and geographical generalisation of data on the Khanate of Khiva by N.I. Veselovsky; and the combination of written sources with field observation in the works of V.V. Barthold.

3. The methodological limitation of the stage consisted in the predominance of description and collection over stratigraphic excavation, which reduced the possibility of precise dating; part of the information was also irretrievably lost as a result of the unsystematic extraction of building material by the local population.

4. Despite these limitations, the materials of the pre-revolutionary stage retain the value of a primary source, since they record the state of the architectural monuments of Khiva before their later restoration and reconstruction, and they therefore constitute a necessary comparative basis for the present-day archaeological study of Ichan-Kala.

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