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The Contribution of Researchers of the Russian Empire to the Study of Antiquities in Kazakhstan: the Case of N.I. Veselovsky

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Abstract

The article analyzes the manuscript of N.I. Veselovsky “Description of the ruins and ancient cities on the road from Kazala to Tashkent”, stored in the Russian State Archives of Literature and Art. Information obtained by N.I. Veselovsky during a trip in the fall of 1884 is given in comparison with the data published by other researchers, which makes it possible to assess the scientist’s contribution to the history of the archaeological study of the region. N.I. Veselovsky was a pioneer in the study of the Korkut-ata mausoleum and the ruins of the medieval city of Sygnak, the Mir fortress. The orientalist stood at the origins of archaeological research of the Otrar settlement, conducted excavations in Sauran and described the monuments of Sairam. His description of the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasavi and other artifacts of Turkestan has not lost its value. Conducted by N.I. Veselovsky, the accounting and description of numerous monuments and antiquities of South Kazakhstan have not lost their significance in our time. Some of the monuments described by him have over time completely collapsed or changed so much that for the whole complex of antiquities in the Syrdarya region the manuscript of N.I. Veselovsky is the only source of information for us. In historiographic reviews on the history of the archaeological study of Kazakhstan as an integral part of the Russian Empire of that period, it is necessary to take into account the contribution of N.I. Veselovsky.

Keywords: archaeology of Central Asia, Dzhanakent, Sygnak, Sauran, Turkestan, Otrar, Sairam, mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasavi.

1. Introduction

The article analyzes the manuscript of N.I. Veselovsky “Description of the ruins and ancient cities on the road from Kazala to Tashkent”, stored in the Russian State Archives of Literature and Art ([RGALI. F. 118, Inventory N. 1, Ed.h. 243, L. 2](#)). Information obtained by N.I. Veselovsky during a trip in the fall of 1884 is given in comparison with the data published by other researchers, which makes it possible to assess the scientist’s contribution to the history of the archaeological study of the region. N.I. Veselovsky was a pioneer in the study of the Korkut-ata mausoleum and the ruins of the medieval city of Sygnak, the Mir fortress. The orientalist stood at the origins of archaeological research of the Otrar settlement, conducted excavations in Sauran and described the monuments of Sairam. His description of the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasavi and other artifacts of Turkestan has not lost its value. Conducted by N.I. Veselovsky, the accounting and description of numerous monuments and antiquities of South Kazakhstan have not lost their significance in our time. Some of the monuments described by him have over time completely collapsed or changed so much that for the whole complex of antiquities in the Syrdarya region the manuscript of N.I. Veselovsky is the only source of information for us. In historiographic reviews on the history of the archaeological study of

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Kazakhstan as an integral part of the Russian Empire of that period, it is necessary to take into account the contribution of N.I. Veselovsky.

2. Materials and methods

The materials involved were documents from the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Moscow, Russian Federation), in particular the manuscript of N.I. Veselovsky "Description of the ruins and ancient cities on the road from Kazala to Tashkent" (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 2). Thus, the material for this work is the poorly studied contribution of N.I. Veselovsky in the formation of the national histories and cultures of Central Asia.

When analyzing materials and their scientific interpretation, we used the following methods:

- Comparative historical analysis made it possible to explore the process of studying the real contribution of Veselovsky into problems, firstly, in the social and political context of the formation and development of the pre-revolutionary historiographic tradition and, secondly, from the point of view of the continuity of scientific developments at different times;

- Comparative analysis was applied in two interdependent directions – diachronic-comparative and synchronous-comparative. The diachronic-comparative approach allowed us to explore the process of the accumulation of knowledge on specific aspects of the topic, while with the synchronous-comparative approach we could determine the real contribution of a particular researcher to the historiography of the issue;

- Method structural problem analysis was used to study the content of research from the point of view of the interdependent relationships of certain aspects of the problem, as well as the achieved level of knowledge in each of them.

3. Discussion

Corresponding member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences Nikolai Ivanovich Veselovsky (Figure 1) left a very significant and varied scientific and literary heritage. A fairly extensive bibliography has developed about his life and work. Information about him was included in the largest reference and encyclopedic publications (Encyclopedic, 1892: 100-101; Vengerov, 1900: 563; Imperial Moscow, 1915: 66-67; Kononov, 1989: 62-63; Outstanding Scientists, 2003: 12). The monograph by B.V. Lunin "Central Asia in the scientific heritage of Russian oriental studies" is almost entirely devoted to the scientific activities of N.I. Veselovsky; in it he is placed on a par with V.V. Grigoriev and V.V. Barthold (Lunin, 1979: 5). In this triad N.I. Veselovsky is a student of the first and a teacher of the second. V.V. Bartold dedicated to N.I. Veselovsky a large and meaningful obituary essay, where he paid tribute to his teacher (Bartold, 1977: 642-664). In this book, B.V. Lunin noted that the orientalist, following P.I. Lerhom, was one of the first specialists to join the field of archaeological research in Central Asia (Lunin, 1979: 34). The field archaeological activity of N.I. Veselovsky began precisely in the Turkestan Territory, where he was sent on a mission from November 15, 1884 to November 15, 1885 (Lazerevskaya, 2002: 494-497). However, the results of his research in the fall of 1884 into the sites of the lower and middle reaches of the Syr Darya remained unpublished. Therefore, in the first essay on the history of the study of the antiquities of Central Asia, covering the first thirty years of the annexation of the Turkestan Territory to Russia, only the works of N.I. Veselovsky in 1885 in Fergana and Samarkand are included and there is no information about research in other parts of the region (Lykoshin, 1896: 32-33).

In 1905, under the leadership of N.I. Veselovsky, an expedition was organized at the expense of the Russian Committee for the study of Central Asia and East Asia in the city of Turkistan with the aim of the scientific fixation of the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi. Members of the expedition, the artist-architects A.I. Gorokhov and A.M. Gurzhienko, drew up drawings of the mausoleum and copied the epigraphy of the structure, making drawings of carved doors, bronze candlesticks and the tip of the banner. In 1906, a short description of the cauldron with inscriptions, candlesticks and a marble tombstone of Ulugbek's daughter Rabia-Sultan (Veselovsky, 1906: 26-26; Lunin, 1979: 883-84) was published. N.I. Veselovsky is the author of a review about "stone women", where a statue (Fig. 2) from the Aulie-Atinsky district of the Syrdarya region is published (Veselovsky, 1915: Table VII, No. 28). The orientalist became the initiator and editor of the first edition of the works of the Kazakh scientist Ch.Ch. Valikhanov (Veselovsky, 1904: 3), where there is information about the antiquities of Central Asia. From the publications indicated and related to the archeology of Kazakhstan by N.I. Veselovsky, only an article on the relics of the mausoleum of Khoja Akhmed Yasavi was reflected in a review of the literature on the study of archaeological sites in the middle reaches of the Syr Darya and Karatau (Ageeva, 1949: 138). In a historiographic review on the archeology of the republic, published in such a major work as the "Archaeological Map of Kazakhstan", studies by N.I. Veselovsky are not mentioned at all (Ageeva, Maksimova, 1960: 9-26). In the monograph by B.V. Lunin, published at the beginning of the last quarter of the twentieth century, among the unpublished works of N.I. Veselovsky, stored in the Central State Archive of Literature and Art of the USSR (Moscow), the manuscript "Description of the ruins and ancient cities on the road from Kazala to Tashkent" (Lunin, 1979: 157) is indicated. As can be seen from the title of the manuscript, it is dedicated to archaeological sites in the south of Kazakhstan. Unfortunately, this document, interesting for the history of the archaeological study of Kazakhstan, remained unpublished for a long time and therefore unnoticed by archaeologists. The well-established historiographic

review of the 60-70s continued to be replicated in the scientific and educational literature of the late twentieth century, where there are no references to the works of N.I. Veselovsky (Baypakov, 1996: 17-18; Levina, 1996: 6; Baypakov, 1999: 163-164; Baypakov, Taimagambetov, 2006: 13-20). Only at the beginning of the twenty-first century did articles appear based on the analysis of individual parts of the above manuscript (Kozha, Elgin, 2004: 237-241; Kozha, 2008: 3-14; Kozha, Baysarieva, 2016: 181-184). However, they did not touch upon the question of N.I. Veselovsky in the study of the archaeological heritage of Kazakhstan.

4. Results

The manuscript of N.I. Veselovsky "Description of the ruins of ancient cities on the road from Kazala to Tashkent", stored in the Russian State Archives of Literature and Art (fund 118, inventory number 1, storage unit 243) contains 28 sheets. It begins with a description of the ruins of the Dzhankala settlement near Kazala:

The Dzhankent fortress, or rather the citadel, is an irregular quadrangle from east to west, surrounded by a rampart, on which walls have survived in places. On the western side, even now you can still distinguish the position of the large gate. At the entrance to the citadel from here, high dunes are visible on the sides, tightly fitting to its corners. The width of the area occupied by these dunes deserves attention. In general, the entire area of the citadel is covered with dunes separated from each other with many crooked hollows, which, in all likelihood, should be recognized as the direction of the former streets ... During exploration in the citadel, one of the Kirghiz (Kazakhs – authors) reported that to the northwest, from the fortress – 400 metres away, under the dune, according to his grandfather, there was a palace of the ruler of Dzhankent, Dzhangir Sultan; therefore, upon completion of work in the citadel, the exploration was transferred to this dune and to the city in general. The dunes indicated by the Kirghiz really, judging by the dug surface of it, hid beneath themselves a huge building made of fired bricks with a visible direction of the walls that divided it into rooms. Around the surface of the dune were scattered many very small fragments from colored tiles, which spoke for the dominance of architectural luxury.

This characteristic of the settlement of Dzhankent differs from in the sketch by P. Lerch, who examined the indicated monument in 1867. If, according to P.I. Lerhu, one of the large hills near the citadel of Dzhankent was considered by the locals as the palace of "the king of Janjarkhan, famous for his unjust jealousy of his wife and allegedly punished for this by snakes that destroyed his city" (Lerch, 1966: 327), then, according to N.I. Veselovsky, it was "the palace of the ruler of Jankent Dzhangir Sultan" (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 4). Interesting is his interpretation of these ruins as "a huge building made of baked bricks with a visible direction of the walls that divided it into rooms". In the description of the ruins of Dzhankent, N.I. Veselovsky is more devoted to the topography of the settlement and marks the places of gates and streets.

The next monument that attracted the attention of N.I. Veselovsky was the mausoleum of Korkut-ata /Khor-Khut/:

The grave of Khor-Khut, a Kirghiz (Kazakh – authors) saint, lying on the Daria (Syrdarya river – authors) near the post road draws the attention of the researcher only to the dubious size of the deceased. In a square building 1 ½ fathoms (3,2004 m – authors) and so outside the building rises a hearse with a height of 1 ½ arshins (1.0665 m – authors). Pointing to the length of the hearse, the Kyrgyz say that it was made to the full height of Khor-Khut. It would be interesting to check the legend of the Kirghiz (Kazakhs – authors) by excavations. However, the Syr Darya, annually washing away the banks, which is indicated by the many human bones lying on the shore, as well as burials on the banks, gives hope that the grave of Khor-Khut, which is now 10 steps away from the shore, will soon be washed away. (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 6)

An orientalist gave the earliest description of the Korkut-ata mausoleum. It differs from that of A.A. Divaev, who visited 14 years after N.I. Veselovsky and noted: "I found her in the saddest form, and one wall had already collapsed into the Syr Darya" (Divaev, 1900: 39-40). In the summer of 1906, I.A. Castagnier failed to find the mausoleum, for, in his opinion, the Syr Darya "destroyed the grave of the saint" (Kastanje, 2007: 325).

N.I. Veselovsky visited the ruins of the ancient Sygnak:

The next ruins were Saganak – the capital of Tokhtamysh, christened by Kyrgyz geography in Sagan-Ata (or rather Sunak-Ata – the authors). The ruins of the city, like Jankent, consist of a city with gardens and a citadel and are located 30 versts to the northwest from Sor-Kuduk station. From the halfway point, the shaft of the main ditches is shown, going from Darya and branching into many small ditches. Behind them, the fortress and the walls of two dilapidated mosques made of burnt bricks are quite clearly visible ... The Saganak mosques, judging by the masonry and architecture, were built at the same time. The whole difference lies in size. The nearest smaller one, with one dome, consists of one room, in which doors are laid in pointed arches on the E, W and S sides. The ceiling of the room is vaulted. It can be seen that the inside was plastered. It is difficult to determine whether the walls were whitewashed, but the finish, presumably, was good for the remaining bricks. Lancel frames were drawn along the walls by a cornice. The outer side is not plastered; you can only see that it is lined with patterned tiles. Another mosque is larger than the first, and it has two dilapidated domes of unequal size and located in a row. Here, as well as in the first mosque

with E, W and S doors, doors were embedded in the lancet gates with parapets. At present, the size of the doors is not visible, the brick has been broken... (Figure 3; RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 6)

Sygnak was first localized on the site of the settlement Sunak-ata by P.I. Lerch in 1867, who, however, did not leave a description of the ruins of the medieval city. Only 15 years after visiting the settlement in 1900, Prof. N.I. Veselovsky published an article by V.A. Kallaura characterizing the ruins. Comparison of the reports of researchers shows that during this time the monumental structures of Sygnak underwent even greater destruction: the dome and vault of the “nearest mosque” collapsed, and the second got various extensions (Kallaur, 2011: 204-211). Therefore, the description of the ruins of N.I. Veselovsky gives valuable information about the monumental monuments of the Sygnak settlement.

The next important sites visited by N.I. Veselovsky were the ruins of Sauran and Myrtobe:

From here I drove to the Tyumen-Aryk station and did not examine the Kokand fortress Yangi Kurgan on the way, since this is the same as Dzhankala, Kos-Kurgan, stopping to inspect the ancient city of Sauran, which surpasses everything in its size seen so far. Here, like all previous ruins, it consists of a citadel and its own city, which is a multitude of dunes. In some places, ruins of walls from clay buildings have been preserved in it. These visible remains lie to the NW and E sides of the citadel. The entire space occupied by the ruins is indented by ditches, and judging by the largeness of them, water for irrigation was drawn from the Daria (the Syrdarya river – authors). In the citadel, except for a tower made of fired brick with a dilapidated base from time and the foundation of another similar tower that has recently fallen, there are no traces of housing. The entire area of the citadel is dotted with sand dunes separated by small hollows indicating the direction of the streets. The citadel, as in Dzhankent and Saganak, rises on a hill, along the rampart, and in some places you can see the remains of the fortress wall ... and the position of the gate, the last as it seems there were two. The area of many dunes is strewn with fragments of broken dishes. The reconnaissance carried out at the points indicated on the plan did not find anything. The strata of dunes both here and outside the citadel are the same as in the Dzhankent dunes (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 8)

The author goes on to make a very valuable observation:

The difference is that in the dunes of Sauran, bones are found less than in Jankent. The cleaning of the surroundings of the fallen tower and the continuing wall of the building indicate that these towers are built on the same foundation with the building and therefore it can be assumed that the towers served as a minaret to the mosque hidden here. The southwest side of the mosque was cleaned; it was impossible to continue work from the other sides, because the Kirgiz (Kazakhs – the authors) warned that they had chosen all the bricks from the E and S sides. Within two or three versts, the remains of the walls from the clay buildings lying outside the citadel are completely similar in their interior decoration to the remains in the Saganaka mosque, which suggests that there were also mosques in Sauran made of unbaked clay. Six versts from Sauran to the northwest you can see the ruins of a small fortress, called Myr by the Kirghiz. According to their explanation, Myr was the forefront of Sauran. This fortress has a square shape of 25 fathoms (53.34 m – the authors) and is surrounded by a moat. It stands on a high place and is surrounded by a rampart, on which you can see the surviving clay walls. On the south side there is a gate with towers on the sides. No traces of housing can be seen inside. Its circumference is completely even, you can't even see the traces of the irrigation ditch.

From this passage of the manuscript it follows that N.I. Veselovsky carried out excavations on the territory of the Sauran settlement, which should be taken into account when writing the history of the archaeological study of the ancient city. The researcher also gave the first description of the ruins of the Mir (Myr) fortress. To the antiquities of Turkestan, N.I. Veselovsky paid great attention. The orientalist gave a detailed description of the “mosque of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi” (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 8). We should not be confused by the designation of the building as a mosque. At that time it was generally accepted under the term “mosque” to designate mausoleums and other religious buildings of Islam.

N.I. Veselovsky, characterizing the mausoleum, writes:

Outside, the mosque is in front of two high jagged minarets, connected by a pointed arch, which forms the front part of the mosque, for the entrance to which there is also an external door; the top of the mosque is decorated behind the arch with two high domes: a large one, then small. Around these domes are several other low domes with narrow windows. They cannot be seen from the ground by those looking at the mosque, because a parapet of the same height as the domes rises above the roof on all sides. The large domes were once covered with tiles and, it seems, predominantly blue, while the small ones remained unplastered. (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 11).

The first translations of a number of inscriptions in the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi were made in the third quarter of the nineteenth century (Lerch, 1870: 17-22). In contrast to the above works, N.I. Veselovsky made more translations of the epigraphy of the architectural decor of the building:

Around the large domes in Kufic script is written in Arabic: “The Lordship” (appendix to the text No. 1). This expression is repeated several times. On the wall of the basement of the largest dome in the arch facing the 2nd dome it is written in Arabic: (app. 2). “May the blessing of God be over him, the prophet said, and advocating the pleasure of the world, the despicable (dog)”. On the walls, tiles with checkers in several patterns are given to our letter in ligature, and sayings in Arabic are repeated: “God”, “Greatness of God”,

“My Lord”, “My Prophet Muhammad”, “God is one”, “There is no God but God and his prophet”, “O God”. (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 14)

These expressions are repeated countless times in extremely regular geometric shapes. Columns, walls and piers in arches are all dotted with them. The letters are drawn in blue and blue glaze on a gray-pink background; in some places long sayings are written on a blue background in large letters, for example, the dome and arches are decorated. On the main building, on the wall, instead of a cornice, a whole chapter from the Koran was painted on alabaster with paints. (In the note. Surah XIX. Mother of God Mary).

At the present time it is completely impossible to read; it is possible only by a few words to determine which chapter. This extract from the Qur'an began from the southern side, bordering the western and northern and ends with the words: Hadji Hussein, a native of the city of Shiraz

and the date is immediately visible in number. Presumably, the written name denotes the builder, and the date with the number was probably with others /? / Time or year of construction. The mosque was built of burnt and glazed bricks. The interior of the mosque consists of three sections: the first is a huge hall of 18 fathoms (38.4048 m – by the authors) in length. Its ceiling was vaulted, judging by the remains of plaster, and was decorated with stucco work. Several doors were laid on the left side. Presumably, there were a lot of inscriptions in this room, but with the neglect of time, everything is worn out, nothing is visible. That there were inscriptions in this room is still suggested by preserved inscriptions on all doors, linings and cornices. These inscriptions include Persian verses, or sayings from the Qur'an or legends and the name of the one who did the thing: so on the iron plate and rings it is written in Persian “may his future be happy, the work of Muhammad Nazar 1251 (1841)”. (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 15)

The information about the now completely lost epigraphic paintings on the plaster of the large hall of the mausoleum is unique:

Traces of inscriptions in the arches were painted on alabaster with dry paints, indicating that Sura XXIV was written here from the Koran. The rings at the doors are made through. The lines of the pattern converging towards the center represent the Arabic sayings: “God is one”. (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 15).

An orientalist's note about the disappeared banners in a large niche in front of the entrance to the tomb is noteworthy:

In the right corner of the pulpit there are several bunchuks, and above the door itself at an angle stands a green banner, four or more fathoms long, if not more. According to the testimony of some, it belonged to the saint, according to others, to Timur. At the very top end of the banner, in a medallion, like a flat lance, it is written in through letters: “God”, then in the second medallion there is also an inscription; it could be read, but this was not done due to its enormous weight. Six people who were present at the inspection of the mosque were unable to lower the banner to the ground. For some letters, which we managed to make out in height, one must assume that something from the Koran is written here; however, this is only a guess (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 15)

There is a description by N.I. Veselovsky of the interior of the room where the tomb of Khoja Akhmed Yasavi is located:

There is no inscription on the hearse, covered with many pieces of brocade and other material since the founding of the mosque and at a later time. The cover was lifted and the inspection was made from all sides. On the left side of the Sultan's tomb, a fence was made, in which they say his wife and son are buried. On the right side, at the headboard, are tomes of large and small volumes of books. A detailed examination of them showed that these were copies of the Koran, written and donated by pious Muslims at different times. Pieces of decayed sheets from the oldest Korans are collected in a box on the shelves. It is rather difficult to determine whether there were inscriptions in this room; the most detailed examination of everything that is located here does not give the right to assume the existence of an inscription. The lowermost cover of the tomb, dark crimson, has inscriptions (yellow letters) along the edges, but so faded that nothing could be read. The doors to the side rooms are visible in the original room, and therefore to examine them it was necessary to go into the first room, from which there are doors to the aforementioned rooms on the right and left sides of the pulpit (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 15).

Thus, N.I. Veselovsky was one of the first to characterize the monument with the translation of the architectural epigraphy, and gave a detailed description of the room where Khoja Akhmed Yasawi was buried. The orientalist also mentions another monument in Turkestan – the mausoleum of the wife of Khan Abu-l-Khair (1429-1468), Rabi'a Sultan Begim:

Near the mosque there is an unfinished mausoleum with a dome, separated by blue patterned tiles, on which it is written in white letters in Arabic: “Lordship”. This mausoleum, as they say, is one of the keepers, and was built by Timur for himself, others – for his great-granddaughter, but none of them is buried here. This building has two floors, of which there is a hotel in the lower one (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 18).

Further N.I. Veselovsky presents the local version of the biography of the Turkestan saint:

Sultan Azret Ahmed Yasavi was born in the city of Yassy/now Turkestan/in 440 AH/1048, according to R.Kh. /. His father Sheikh-Ibrahim and mother Tagay-bicha, although they originated from Sairam, where their ashes now rest, spent their whole lives in Turkestan, whose inhabitants revered Sheikh Ibrahim as their ishan. Ahmed Yasawi, nicknamed by his murids/disciples/Sultan Azret, expressed great inclinations towards spiritual life in his early youth. Having received a general Muslim education, he joined the murids of Pira

(Ishan) Arslan Baba, who was then living in Turkestan, the head of the Jakhrya sect, which was very widespread throughout the Muslim world. After several years of staying at the school of this teacher, Sultan Ahmed, by clairvoyance, which was sent down by God, Arslan-Babu went to finally strengthen in the faith, to Pir... Hamadani, who was teaching at that time in Bukhara. The new mentor with the greatest joy received the new disciple, and, having informed that this circumstance had been announced to him from above, appointed him as his third caliph over the flock. After that, the Sultan, until the death of Pir and his first two caliphs, stayed in Bukhara without a break, perfecting himself in theological sciences and doing miracles. After the death of the second caliph, he had to accept his flock in Bukhara, but he did not stay there for long ... At the school of Sultan Ahmed Yasawi, as the tombs in the mosque indicate, there were some of his contemporary khans between his murids, so in the corridor opposite the doors of the namaz mosque there is a high lattice hung with horns. This is the grave of the holy king of the East Zul-Bars-khan, the former murid of Azret. It was noted above that the Sultan keeps to the sense of Jahrya. The Central Asian followers of this sect, who consider Ahmed Yasawi as their head both in Turkestan and in other cities, perform jakhrya every Friday after namaz, during which feast they sit in a niche and sing and read the Sultan's deeds written in Persian and Arabic (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 16).

N.I. Veselovsky was the first to describe the underground cell of Khoja Akhmed Yasawi:

From the mosque, at the direction of the keepers, I proceeded to inspect the house of Sultan Akhmed, which lies 100 fathoms from the fence in the city. This dwelling is no different from other buildings in Turkestan and it is hard to believe that a house made of unbaked clay could stand for so long. We can only assume that this place was the house of Azret. In its present form, the house was probably built recently. Nobody lives in it. It consists of several rooms. In one of them, in the wall, there is a very low passage three fathoms underground, into a small square hole, 5 spans in size and as high as a man's height. In the corner of this burrow there is a small niche, the floor of which is covered with a reed mat. According to the keepers, at the age of 60, the Sultan accepted the schema and until the end of his life he hid here hopelessly (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 19).

The underground structure, where, according to legend, Khoja Akhmed Yasavi lived after 63 years, was investigated in detail only in 1996 (Tuyakbaev, 2000: 41-51). N.I. Veselovsky after inspecting the antiquities of the city of Turkestan visited Otrar, which like all other examined cities along the Daria (the Syr Darya river – the authors), consists of a citadel and a city with gardens and seems now completely destroyed. The huge area of the city, pitted with many ditches, is dotted with dunes. The area, which, in all likelihood, was under the citadel, is now one high mound with a surface covered with dunes, divided by crooked hollows. These hollows, in all likelihood, signify the directions of the former streets.

Despite the fact that the remnants of Otrar have completely crumbled, it is quite easy to discern traces of a ditch in the circle of the citadel, the location of the fortress gates and the walls of the fortress. The surface of the dunes of the citadel and nearby heights is dotted with fragments of glazed dishes made of baked clay of all kinds of colors and shades. The Kirghiz say that these fragments are found from the dunes by rains: their children sometimes found old coins on the dunes after the rain. On the occasion of summer migrations it was impossible to get them, although one of the coins was found. Reconnaissance in the citadel showed the soil: sand with rubble with fragments of broken dishes, pieces of unbaked clay bricks, black earth, in places crossing a strip of yellow-brown earth. The excavations were carried out over a length of 2-3 fathoms, and a depth of 6 fathoms and more (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 20).

The author goes on to make a very valuable observation:

In the excavation of one of the dunes outside the citadel on the west side, which has an oval shape at the base of 50 sazhen and 13 arshins in a circle at a depth of sazhen, three human skeletons were found. A skull was taken from one of them. The dead lay almost one on one. The distance between them was less than ½ an arshin (0.3555 m – authors). All of them lay with their heads to the west with outstretched arms and legs, only at the very bottom, the legs laid on top of each other were slightly bent. In addition to this find, reconnaissance was also made to the southwest of the citadel on a rather high mound, called Ak-Tyube by the Kirghiz. In four excavations carried out here, each 2-2 ½ fathoms long (4.2672-5.334 m – authors) and 1-2 fathoms (2.1336-4.2672 m – authors) depth, were found at a depth of two arshins (1.422 m) from the surface jugs made of baked clay. One of them is intact, the other two are broken. The soil of the earth that accompanied these vessels was sand, black earth, clay, pieces of brick, and the smallest gray earth, just like dust. The vessels were lying at an angle. The broken ones were full of earth, and the whole one was empty inside (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 20).

Before the introduction of the manuscript into scientific circulation by N.I. Veselovsky, it was considered that the first description of the ruins of medieval Otrar had been made by I.T. Poslavsky, who published an article about the ancient city in 1898 (Poslavsky, 1898: 236-238), and that the first excavations at the site had been carried out by A. Klare and A. Cherkasov (Klare, 1904; Baipakov, Taimagambetov, 2006: 17).

N.I. Veselovsky characterizes the monuments of Sairam:

... all the mosques of Sairam were rebuilt recently and therefore there are no ancient inscriptions on them, but there is an inscription of pilgrims who visited the saints, but they were not removed because they have no significance for history. In the Idris Mosque, one column in a sandstone gallery deserves attention.

On it are barely perceptible some patterns and Arabic words: “There is no God but God”, “God is one, God is the Lord” (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L.21).

Before finding the manuscript of N.I. Veselovsky, it was believed that the first translation of the inscriptions on the column was made only in 1925, when, for the sake of acquaintance with it, M.E. Masson visited Sairam and dated it to the ninth to tenth centuries (Masson, 1928: 31). Perhaps the column represents an element of the earliest Muslim building in Kazakhstan. N.I. Veselovsky also found inscriptions on the minaret of the Khyzr Paygambara mosque: “At the gates of the mosque, a low tower has been built that replaces the minaret; there is a small inscription in Persian on it” (RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 243. L. 22). This monument was repeatedly destroyed and, apparently, N.I. Veselovsky was the last of the researchers who saw the epigraphy of the Khizr Paygambar minaret.

5. Conclusion

The manuscript of N.I. Veselovsky “Description of the ruins of ancient cities on the road from Kazala to Tashkent” is valuable for its factual material, scientific commentaries, translations of inscriptions and interesting author’s observations. It contains a description of the largest medieval settlements of southern Kazakhstan: Dzhanakent, Sygnak, Sauran, Turkestan, Otrar, Sairam. The researcher not only described and made fixations of the found monuments; he made copies of inscriptions, drawings and plans of fortified settlements and individual details of architectural monuments, but also conducted archaeological studies of individual parts of the settlements of Dzhanakent, Sauran and Otrar. According to the text, N.I. Veselovsky conducted a survey of the local population about the monuments towards clarifying understanding of the object, at least in the form of folk legends or poetic legends. The scientific value of a number of pieces of information about the monuments of Sygnak, Turkestan, Sairam is unique in many ways. The manuscript records their state in the autumn of 1884. The accounting and description of numerous monuments and antiquities he carried out have not lost their significance in our time. Some of the monuments described by him have over time completely collapsed or changed so much that the surviving records of N.I. Veselovsky are for us the only source of information, which indicates a great contribution to the study of antiquities of South Kazakhstan.

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Attachment A



Fig. 1. Corresponding member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences N.I. Veselovsky (12. XI. 1842-12. IV. 1918)



Fig. 2. A stone statue from the Aulie-Ata district of the Syrdarya region published by N.I. Veselovsky.

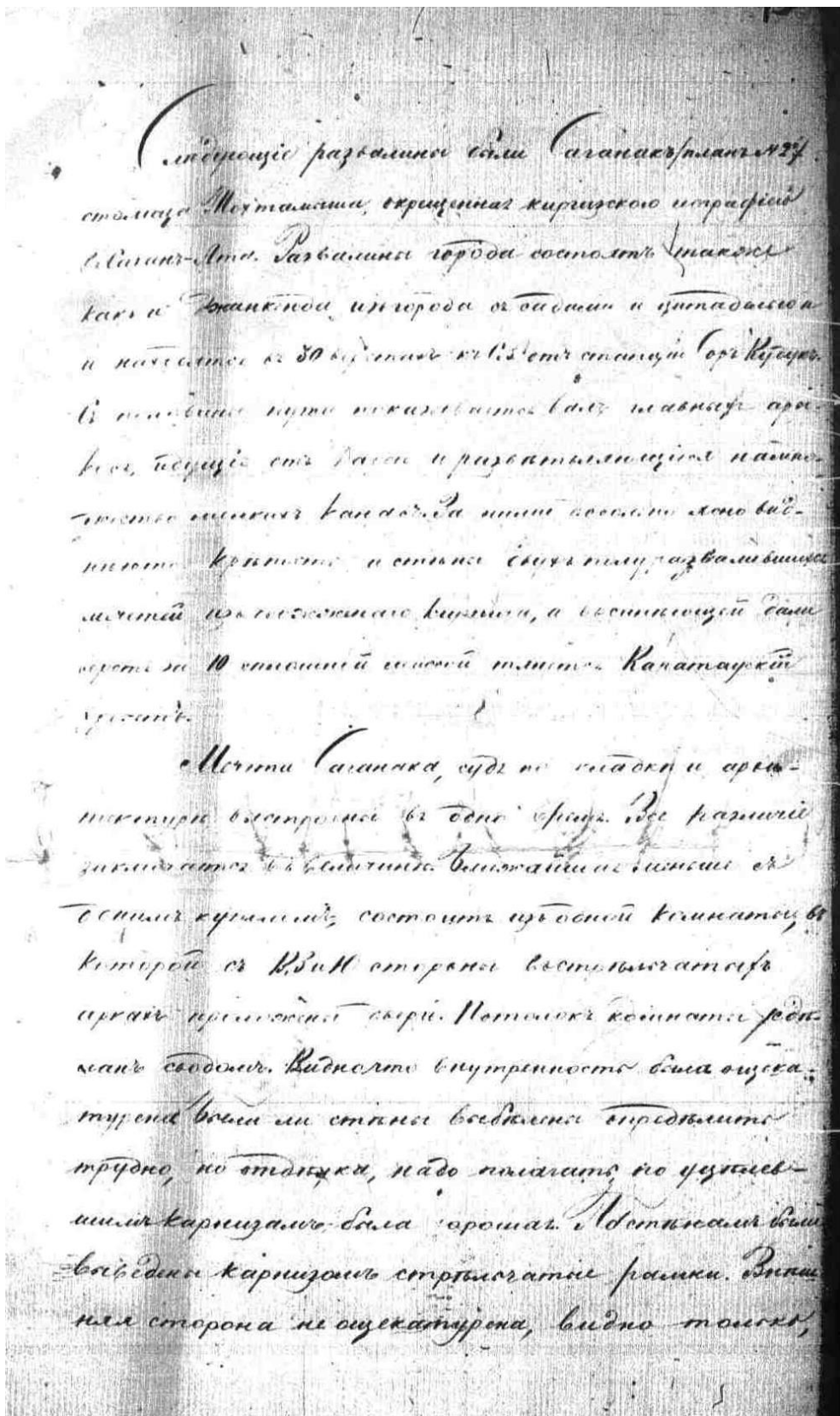


Fig. 3. Page of N.I. Veselovsky’s “Description of the ruins of ancient cities on the road from Kazala to Tashkent”, kept in the Russian State Archives of Literature and Art