



**SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES OF THE TURKESTAN GENERAL
GOVERNORATE IN THE COLONIAL INTERESTS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE
TURKESTAN CIRCLE OF ARCHEOLOGY AMATEURS).**

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Abstract: *In this article, the main goal of organizing the Turkestan circle of archeology amateurs, who conducted scientific, historical, archaeological, and ethnographic research of the region in the Turkestan Governor-Generalship, the processes of opening this circle, the opinions of the Turkestan Governor-General A.V. Vrevsky, who was its honorary chairman at the time of the circle's establishment, as well as the views of N.P. Ostroumov and V.V. Bartold, who actively participated in the opening of the circle, were revealed through the works of B.V. Lunin, the circle's charter, archival documents, and modern historical research.*

Key words: *scientific societies, honorary chairman, N.P. Ostroumov, charter of the circle, theory of the Aryans, Committee for the Study of Central and Eastern Asia.*

The colonial policy of the Russian Empire in the Turkestan Krai manifested itself in all spheres of the cultural sphere, including scientific societies, various circles, oriented towards the interests of the empire. The study and research of the rich mineral resources, historical and cultural past of the Turkestan Krai was one of the priorities of the colonial policy of the Russian Empire in the region. The Governor-Generals of Turkestan, as leaders of the region, were interested in the information collected by scientific societies and circles.

The members of scientific societies and circles operating in Turkestan were representatives of various fields: state and military personnel, representatives of science, orientalist and archaeologists, and their honorary members were the leaders of the region, and the honorary chairmen were the governors-general.

The population of the territory of the Turkestan Krai was mainly engaged in agriculture. Therefore, regional leaders were interested in establishing scientific societies specializing in the scientific study of agriculture in the region. (Исмаилова Ж, 2004, 104)

One of the scientific societies in the field of regional archaeology, created during the reign of the Governor-General of Turkestan A.V. Vrevsky, is the Turkestan Circle of Archaeology Amateurs. The circle was established by decree of the Russian Emperor Nicholas II (1894 - 1917). (O'zMA, I-71 fond) In 1895, when the circle was formed, its honorary chairman was the Governor-General of the region, A. B. Vrevsky.



The charter of the Turkestan Amateur Archaeological Circle stipulates that the club's activities include familiarization with ancient monuments in the territory of the Turkestan Krai; their description and inclusion on the archaeological map of the region; protection of archaeological monuments; conducting archaeological excavations with the consent of the owners and preparing local and archaeological materials for publication. (Устав Туркестанского кружка любителей археологии , 1895, 11)

It is noteworthy that the Turkestan Circle of Archaeology Amateurs issued an order to be organized by supreme decree, that is, by the emperor himself. The circle united representatives of the most influential aristocracy of the region. The charter of the circle once again confirms the seriousness attached to this initiative, as it very briefly states that “the Governor-General of Turkestan is the honorary chairman of the circle”. (Устав Туркестанского кружка любителей археологии , 1895, 11) In general, there were three “founders” of the Turkestan Circle of Archaeological Amateurs, and when organizing the circle, each of them also pursued their own personal and scientific interests. By the end of the 19th century, interest in archaeology was assessed as “aristocratic science”. (Арапов Д, Мухаметшин Ф, Абашин С, Германов В, Иванов В, Шигабдинов Р, Бабаджанов Б, 2010, 174)

One of the “troika” interested in organizing the Turkestan Circle of Archaeological Amateurs was N.P. Ostroumov. (Two of the “troika” with common interests in organizing the Turkestan Circle of Archaeological Amateurs - the Russian Emperor, the Governor-General of Turkestan) In his opinion, the original goal of the circle was to study the past and present, the peculiarities of the life and lifestyle of the region's population, in order to effectively manage the newly acquired territories, based on colonial policy. Therefore, the forces of high state and military officials, the intelligentsia of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship, and scholars were united within the circle. (Арапов Д, Мухаметшин Ф, Абашин С, Германов В, Иванов В, Шигабдинов Р, Бабаджанов Б, 2010, 175)

The Governor-General of Turkestan, Baron A.V. Vrevsky, strictly and precisely tried to lead the circle along the path of Aryan theory in the concept of great-power chauvinism. Speaking at the annual meeting of the circle members on December 11, 1896, A.V. Vrevsky, taking into account the interest and significance of the topic of the Aryans, expressed his desire that the archaeological circle tirelessly continue its research on the ancient period. The Governor-General of Turkestan, A.V. Vrevsky, in the early days of its formation, tried to guide the circle towards geopolitical goals. While presiding over the general meeting of the members of the Turkestan Circle of Archaeological Amateurs, the Governor-General returned to the circle's previously declared “higher” goal:...”we must devote all our efforts to clarifying the life of the settled Aryan population, especially in the distant past.” (Арапов Д, Мухаметшин Ф, Абашин С, Германов В, Иванов В, Шигабдинов Р, Бабаджанов Б, 2010, 175)

N.P. Ostroumov, Vice-Chairman of the Turkestan Circle of Archaeological Amateurs, said: “Currently, the circle is dealing with the latest historical (Muslim) period, under which



there are traces of Turkic influence on the indigenous Aryan population of the country, which is the goal of our aspirations.”

The renowned orientalist V.V. Bartold also made a significant contribution to the organization of the Turkestan Circle of Archaeological Amateurs. Another historian, A. Yakubovsky, noted that V.V. Bartold perfectly understood what a wonderful future a serious archaeological study of Central Asia promised. V.V. Bartold understood better than anyone that the territory of Central Asia preserved monuments of world significance - ruins of cities, ancient fortresses, architecturally beautiful buildings, and other antiquities that played a huge role in the history of humanity in antiquity and the Middle Ages. He believed that the work carried out in Central Asia in the 20th century, along with Iran and the Caucasus, could attract the attention of the world, just as the excavations in Egypt and Mesopotamia in their time. (Лунин Б, 1958, 224)

Among the members of the Turkestan Circle of Archaeological Amateurs were many privileged individuals who joined the circle not because of their love for science, but because of their closeness to its honorary chairman - the Governor-General of the Turkestan Krai. Of course, these individuals did not determine the success of the circle. (Арапов Д, Мухаметшин Ф, Абашин С, Германов В, Иванов В, Шигабдинов Р, Бабаджанов Б, 2010, 181)

At the end of the 19th century, Muslims, along with Europeans, were members of the Turkestan Circle of Archaeology Amateurs, among whom were representatives of the local population of the Turkestan Krai. This also applies to the management of the circle, which included the famous local historian Abubakr Akhmedjanovich Divayev. He served as the club's board member-secretary. Among the full members of the circle were Sherali Lapin, Mirza Abdulla Isamukhamedov, Mulla Alim Abulkasimov, Mukhitdin Khoja Hakim-Khoja Ishanov, Saidkarim Saidazimboyev, Saidgani Saidazimboyev. (Арапов Д, Мухаметшин Ф, Абашин С, Германов В, Иванов В, Шигабдинов Р, Бабаджанов Б, 2010, 181)

Many Russian scientists became world-renowned under the pretext of studying the Turkestan region. For example, local historian V.L. Vyatkin managed to open Ulugbek's observatory in 1908-1909 through a waqf deed given by local intellectual and literary scholar Abu Said Maxsum. (Содиқов Х, Шамсутдинов Р, Равшанов П, 2000, 304)

Members of all types of societies operating in Turkestan, along with conducting research, served as the main assistants in sending the rare oriental manuscripts and material wealth collected in the region to the Russian Empire. (Исmoilова Ж, 2004, 106)

The Turkestan Circle of Archaeology Amateurs was engaged in identifying the rich cultural heritage of the region for the colonial administration of the Russian Empire, compiling their list, and conducting not only archaeological but also ethnographic and numismatic research. The circle became a means for the Governor-Generals of Turkestan to replenish the cultural heritage sites of the region - imperial palaces, libraries, museums, and thereby receive praise from the Tsar of Russia. However, the Turkestan Circle of Archaeology Amateurs did not have practical significance. The Turkestan Circle of Archaeology Amateurs



conducted archaeological research in the territories of Central Asia, and not all artifacts found in the region were taken into its possession. (Nazarov A, 2023, 79)

The Turkestan Circle of Archaeology Amateurs was considered a society that understood the high significance of ancient monuments in the region. However, in practice, high-ranking officials in the administration of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship did not take into account the ideas put forward by this circle regarding its main scientific direction. As proof of the above, let's consider an example: according to archival documents, the Bibi-Khanym Mosque in Samarkand was damaged as a result of an earthquake in 1897. The Turkestan Circle of Archaeology Amateurs appeals to the Samarkand Regional Administration regarding the preservation and restoration of damaged architectural monuments. In response, the interpreter of the military governor of the Samarkand region wrote a response letter to the vice-chairman of the circle, N.P. Ostroumov, and, by order of the military governor of the region, N.Y. Rostovtsev, work began on the repair of buildings destroyed as a result of the earthquake. However, the restoration work will be carried out without the participation of members of the Turkestan Circle of Archaeology Amateurs. As a result of restoration work in 1897, the upper part of the last surviving minaret of the Bibi-Khanym Mosque was demolished, which greatly concerned the Turkestan Circle of Archaeology Amateurs. (Nazarov A, 2023, 78)

In conclusion, from the establishment of the Turkestan Circle of Archaeology Amateurs until the end of its activities, like other scientific societies established in the region, the Russian Empire was forced to deviate from the direction of colonial policy, however, despite this, the archaeological, ethnographic, and numismatic research conducted by the circle effectively served the development of the history and archaeology of Central Asia. The research work carried out during the activities of the circle on the study of the ancient history of Central Asia is of great importance. It was the Turkestan Circle of Archaeology Amateurs that participated in the process of uniting scientists in Tashkent and subsequently contributed to the emergence of many archaeologists and historians.

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