Development of Regional Studies and Collecting in Kazakhstan (in the Late 19th Century and Early 20th Century)

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: The objective of this paper is to supplement or substantiate the role of scientific societies of Kazakhstan and Russia in the development of regional studies and collecting in northern and eastern Kazakhstan. Method/Statistical Analysis: The study of this problem was performed using mainly the general scientific methods: analysis and synthesis, historical method, logical method; among special and historical methods we should mention those historical-comparative and historical-systematic. These methods provided the possibility to analyze the set of historical materials, statistical data, archival and literary sources, containing diverse factual material which enabled to adequately present the issue under study. Findings: The paper presents the information about local centers of museum and regional study work, the activities of which helped to form a network of historical and regional study museums in the region. Using archival sources, the authors show the history of formation and development of the activities of scientific societies. Special attention is given to the role of the Russian Geographical Society in the cultural and educational activities in the territory of Kazakhstan, representatives of which, both in the center and at the local level, paid great attention to the development of museums. Application/Improvements: The article helps to determine the role of scientific societies in the cultural and educational activities, the development of regional studies and collecting, the establishment and development of museums in Kazakhstan.

Keywords: Regional Study Movement, Russian Geographical Society

1. Introduction

The aim of the study is to complete and generalize the previously published materials, describing and characterizing the activities of scientific communities of Kazakhstan and the Imperial Russian Geographical Society in the late 19th century and early 20th century in the territory of north-eastern Kazakhstan. The urgency of the research is determined by the insufficient study of museum development in terms of the consideration of cultural outreach activity of scientific societies in the late 19th century and early 20th century in the territory of Kazakhstan and Russia.

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, there were many different societies in Russia and Kazakhstan: historical, geographic, music, theater, firefighting, etc. The societies were widely distributed not only in large central cities, but also in the province. The only difference between the provincial societies and those large in capital cities, “… consisting usually of famous scientists and formed on the single-discipline basis or grouped on the basis of more or less close scientific disciplines (history,
philosophy, cultural history)’, was the fact that such societies were more broad-based and were founded by the local intellectuals.

A great role in the study of Kazakhstan in the first half of the 19th century was played by scientific societies at universities, such as: Society of Russian History and Antiquities (1804) and Society of Lovers of Nature (1805) at Moscow University; Mineralogical Society (1817), Physicomical Society (1805) and Forestry Society (1834) at the University of Saint Petersburg and others. Their main task was to collect and compile special scientific research materials in the form of articles and books. Interest in the Kazakh people’s socio-economic life consisted in collecting information on the economy and history. In the second half of the 19th century, their activity expanded significantly, and new societies were created. Their special popularity, corresponding to the nature of their work, was consistent with the amount and composition of their membership, and not many of them were available to the public.

The Russian Geographical Society was created in 1845, when famous sailors, soldiers and prominent academic scholars, as well as some geographers and scientists raised before the government the issue regarding the establishment of the Russian Geographical Society. Circumnavigator F. P. Litke sent to L. A. Petrovskii, Minister of Internal Affairs, a memo about the need for the Russian Geographical Society. In the opinion of F. P. Litke: “The main task of this society would be: the collection and distribution, both in Russia and other countries, of as much complete and reliable information as possible. One of the main objectives of the Society should be ‘...a spread in our own country, together with substantial geographic information, of a taste and love for geography, statistics and ethnography...’”

Now, just like before, members of the public pay a lot of attention to the development of museums and establishment of libraries. Museums and museum activities are discussed in many articles. The emergence of museums and analysis of their activity are determined by the time and history. Discussion of issues related to the museum operations, such as the collecting, documentation, exhibition and museum activities is important for many countries. Many cultural and educational websites contain discussions regarding the classification of museums and their description (local lore museums, natural science museums, science and technology museums, history museums, art museums). Prominent figure of the Russian Geographical Society D. A. Klements wrote: “Museums are needed not only for some scientific research, but also for practical life”. Modern museum affairs analysts are no exception. According to Geoffrey D. Lewis “The museum is an institution dedicated to preserving and interpreting the primary tangible evidence of humankind and the environment. In its preserving of this primary evidence, the museum differs markedly from the library, with which it has often been compared. The items housed in a museum are mainly unique and constitute the raw material of study and research”. Museums have been founded for a variety of purposes: to serve as recreational facilities, scholarly venues, or educational resources; to contribute to the quality of life of the areas where they are situated; to attract tourism to a region; to promote civic pride. Given such a variety of purposes, museums reveal remarkable diversity in form, content, and even function. Yet, despite such diversity, they are bound by a common goal: the preservation and interpretation of some material aspect of society’s cultural consciousness. A great emphasis in the development of museum work has been laid on the cultural and outreach activities.

A similar situation was in many countries. For example, the Natural History Museum at the Humboldt University (Berlin, GDR), which celebrated its centenary in 1989–1990, is a union of several natural history museums: mineralogical, palaeontological, special zoology museum, special botany museum etc. The research areas presented in the museum are: crystallography, petrography, geology, anthropology, etc. These museums were established on the basis of collections amassed in the late 18th century and early 19th century by the University, Academy of Sciences, Academy of Mining and other scientific institutions. Natural History Museum is a subdivision of the Humboldt University. A specific feature of the museum, being an “university section” is a prioritized scientific and research activity in the field of natural sciences and at the same time in-depth focus on the solution of special museum tasks being closely connected with the educational process.”
The staff members of the Terra Amata Museum (France, Nice) give pride of place to the popularization of the knowledge of the laws of the time turnover of human evolution stages, knowledge and skills. Museum takes the collecting and education as major aims of its work. There are also special workshops at the museum, where children learn the technique of excavation and reproduce some of the scenes of prehistoric life. With the assistance of the Association of Friends of the Terra Amata Museum, theoretical and practical paleontology courses are organized for the adults monthly. The activities of the staff of the Museum are based on the motto: “Museum is a meeting place for the science and the people”. Marking.

For the majority of museums around the world, the fact of donating to the museum by regional study specialists and scientific associations of collections, which formed the basis of the museum, is indisputable. The Museum of Aquitaine (Bordeaux, France) was founded on the basis of two large collections: the one offered by the regional study specialist and paleontologist E. Arlais, having collected archaeological material from 240 sites of prehistoric man (including such well-known sites as La Madeleine, Altamira, and Predmost), and the collection donated by the regional study specialist and paleontologist F. Dalaux, having given to the museum his collection of the remains of prehistoric mammals, birds and microfauna.

One of the rare collections of paleontological fossils dubbed "Alligatorium" and its description were bequeathed to the Geological Museum of Barcelona at the beginning of the 20th century by the Spanish geologist and mining engineer L.M. Vidal-Carreras.

A contribution to the formation of the paleontological collection of the National Museum in Prague was made by the famous Czech scientist and educator O.P. Novak. His paleontological collections significantly enriched the museum permanent exhibition.

A special exhibition “Goethe's Thuringian fossil collection” at the Goethe National Museum in Weimar acquaints visitors with a special area of the poet's passion: natural-science collecting. The fossils, presented against the backdrop of historical documents on paleontology and modern images, make it possible to understand the extent to which the collection bears the impress of its former owner, and see that its significance is becoming more and more scientific in the light of the latest geological research works. 74 exhibits present to the audience the five systems of the geologic time scale of the most common fossil groups, some of which can still be found today in the territory of Thuringia (East Germany).

The late 19th century and early 20th century were characterized by the widespread creation of museums not only in Kazakhstan and Russia, but also in France, Finland, Czech Republic, Spain and many other countries.

The Central Museum of Natural Sciences in Finland (1898) was created at the University of Helsinki as a result of the merging of zoological, botanical, geological and paleontological museums which were based on the collections of the University scientists. The main directions in the work of the Museum were the fund completing, scientific research, educational activities, etc.

2. Concept Headings

One of the main components of the study of the formation of the museum movement in Kazakhstan is the consideration of issues related to cultural outreach activities of scientific societies in the late 19th century and early 20th century in the territory of Kazakhstan and Russia. In this regard, the purpose of the study is to reveal the role of the scientific societies of Kazakhstan and Russia in the development of regional study movement and collecting in northern and eastern Kazakhstan. Having completed and generalized previously published material, revealing and describing the activities of scientific communities of Kazakhstan and the Imperial Russian Geographical Society in the late 19th century and the early 20th century in the territory of north-eastern Kazakhstan, we have presented for the first time the records of the archives of Kazakhstan (Pavlodar) and Russia (Omsk). The analysis of the set of historical materials, statistical data, archival and literary sources has made it possible to adequately present the issue under study.

Collecting and study of materials on the history, ethnography, archaeology and agriculture were conducted by the Siberian Department of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society opened in 1851 in Irkutsk. The West-Siberian Department was opened in Omsk as a
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The creation at the end of the 19th century in Omsk of the Department of Russian Geographical Society, the appearance of the first printed editions, the opening of statistical committees provided possibility to explore wider and deeper the history and nature of the south of Western Siberia. For a long time, it was the center of the entire museum and local history work in Omsk. As for East Kazakhstan, the key player was the Semipalatinsk Regional Statistical Committee, established in 1878 in Semipalatinsk16. The Committee was almost the only organization aimed at the study and research of the region, having united members with different special education, many of whom were political exiles and populists, who found themselves, abandoned in the remote periphery and felt the need to apply their knowledge and energy. First Secretary of the Committee was a political exile E.P. Michaelis, who had received a broad education. It was through his efforts that the archeology and zoology collections began to be formed. Collection of items of museum value and their accumulation suggested him an idea to open a museum in the city of Semipalatinsk. This idea was supported by the Chairman of the Statistical Committee, the Governor A.P. Protsenko. The exhibits were collected with an active participation of exiled revolutionaries, progressive intellectuals and local historians17.

Thus, the Statistical Committee began forming a constantly expanding collection of written and material sources. At the same time, the Committee accumulated books, which later served as the basis for public library. So, the issue of the establishment of the museum arose simultaneously with the one of the establishment of the library. Their opening was facilitated by the availability of funds paid by the Chinese government as compensation for losses incurred by the Russian nationals in Zaisan district in 1867, which were included in the special funds of the Ministry of Internal Affairs intended to be used for the fulfillment of local needs of the Semipalatinsk region. In 1883, 1500 rubles were allocated for the establishment of the museum and the library: 1200 rubles were devoted for the needs of the library, and the museum received only 300 rubles17.

The opening of the Semipalatinsk Regional Museum and Semipalatinsk Public Library took place on September 11, 1883. In 1888, a catalogue of archaeological collections (85 items) was published at the expense of the Statistical Committee.

With the opening in 1902 of Semipalatinsk subdivision of the West-Siberian Department of the Russian Geographical Society, the work of the regional study museum became intensified. In 1927, it was named the governorate museum and its first director was A. Andrianov. Semipalatinsk museum, established at the basis of the Semipalatinsk Regional Statistical Committee, is the oldest museum in Eastern Kazakhstan.

In the early 20th century, a significant factor of increasing of the public interest in the museum affairs was the rapid development of the mass regional study movement. In 1920, a Society of the Study of the Kyrgyz territory was established, and in 1925 it was renamed as “Kazakhstan Study Society”. Among its members were prominent
orientalist and ethnographer A.A. Divaev, composer, musicologist and collector of Kazakh folk songs A.V. Zataevich and others. The biggest attention was attracted by historians to a revolutionary and national liberation struggle of the Kazakh people.

The development of the industry requested mineral resources. Therefore, branches of the Society were established in various regions and cities of the republic. Such scientific societies involved in the regional study work the workers, peasants, intellectuals and students. In every region of the republic, there were regional departments of the “Kazakhstan Study Society” opened. Their work contributed to the establishment in 1915 of the Kostanay regional study museum and the East Kazakhstan regional study museum; and in 1920 the Kokshetau historical and regional study museum was opened. A distinctive feature of museum activities in this period was the spread of historical knowledge and collection of local history material. There was a complex process of the activities of the Soviet authorities aimed at recording and preserving the monuments of the past, as well as those reflecting the present moment. This was the period of active development of the local population’s interest in collecting and creating the foundations of the museum affairs and archiving in Kazakhstan.

In order to study northern Kazakhstan, in August 1923 there was the “Akmola society” organized, and in the first days about 20 organizations and institutions became its members. The society worked hard to find minerals. There were 4 regional study detachments (59 people) organized; they found peat, refractory clay and gypsum. Already in July of that year, the initiative group of the society proposed to create a museum in Petropavlovsk and started collecting exhibits for the future museum. In 1924, in Petropavlovsk the Akmola Governorate Museum opened its doors to visitors.

In 1938, by the decision of the organizing committee at the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR in Pavlodar region, the Pavlodar region organization bureau of the “Kazakhstan Study Society” was established.

The main objectives of the Society were the development of creative initiatives in the study of natural resources and cultural and educational activities.

The protocol No. 1 of the First Regional Conference of the “Kazakhstan Study Society” in Pavlodar region in 1939 stipulated the following: “In order to expand the regional study work, we need to have a museum” But it was only in June, 1942 that based on the decision of the Pavlodar regional executive committee of People’s Deputies the regional museum was established in the Pavlodar, although the issue of its opening was raised much earlier. All files of the liquidated “Kazakhstan Study Society” were transferred to the museum. The museum did not have its own premises, so only the collecting and propaganda activities were carried out.

3. Results

A major contribution to the development of regional study movement, collecting and formation of the first museum collections in northern and eastern Kazakhstan was made by the various societies: historical, geographic, music, theater, firefighting, etc., raising the issue of collection and preservation of regional study materials.

Center of the entire museum and regional study work in northern and eastern Kazakhstan was the West Siberian Department of the Russian Geographical Society in Omsk, the Semipalatinsk Regional Statistical Committee and the “Kazakhstan Study Society”. Their activities enabled the establishment of a network of historical and regional study museums in the region. In 1883: the opening of the Semipalatinsk Regional Museum, the oldest museum in the region and in Kazakhstan; in 1915: the opening of Kostanay Regional Study Museum and the East Kazakhstan Regional Study Museum; in 1920: the opening of the Kokshetau Historical and Regional Study Museum; in 1924: the opening of the Akmola Governorate Museum in Petropavlovsk; in 1942: the opening of the Pavlodar Regional Study Museum.

4. Discussion

The relevance of the study of museum history is primarily determined by the important role of museums in the life of the state, society and individuals. We are often writing about the social importance of museums (especially their
historical and cultural resources) manifested in their various activities.

In 1917 at the meeting of ethnography department of the Russian Geographical Society, a prominent figure of this society N. Mogilyansky generalized questions of museum affairs and their development in Russia. "It is, however, clear that the development and prosperity of museums, took place mainly in 19th century, especially its second half, and they are dependent on the general conditions and trends of the time: the wide growth and democratization of education, the excellent development of science, especially natural science, the vast accumulation of material resources, the growth of cities and urban life." Emphasizing individual principles of building, I.N. Mogilyansky noted: "... the task faced by the regional museum is special and unattainable by the central museum: to give a comprehensive picture of the development of its region of its features." 

5. Conclusion

The practical importance of regional study research for the development of museums is extremely high. Regional study research method prevailed in historical science of the late 19th century and early 20th century. At that time, the activities of museums and libraries expanded. These cultural and educational institutions did a great job in the field of study of the culture and life of the Kazakh people. Cultural and educational activities were generally progressive and democratic.

The West-Siberian Department of the Russian Geographical Society carried out substantial work in this direction. Many scientific theories and hypotheses were confirmed using the example of Kazakhstan. The contribution of scientists of the society in detailization and organization of the productive powers of the region is inestimable. At the same time, these studies have become a new step in the learning of the whole diversity of unity of man and nature.

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