ICHAN-KALA STATE MUSEUM-RESERVE: 
THE HISTORY OF CREATION

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Abstract: This article describes the foundation of the Ichan-Kala State Museum Reserve in Khiva in 1920 and the activities of the museum, its staff, exhibitions and events over the past 100 years.

Key words: Khiva, Ichan-Kala, museum, reserve, exposition, fund documents, tourist.

Introduction

There are many cities in Uzbekistan that are famous for their great architectural heritage – Samarkand, Bukhara, Kokand, Shakhrisabz. Particularly important among them is Khiva with its famous historical center – the Ichan-Kala Fortress (‘inner fortress’), perfectly preserved to the present day. This place, recognized as the Open Air Museum City, has become one of the centers of world tourism. E. Zhelyabuzhsky, a Russian traveler, wrote about this city in his book Essays and the Conquest of Khiva, published in Moscow in 1875: “Central Asia, where the Khiva Khanate is located, in hoary antiquity was the cradle of all our Indo-European Aryan tribes, i.e. of most of the Europeans, Indians and Persians. Our forefathers, the Slavs, also came to Russia from Central Asia. As is known, Tsar Alexander the Great undertook his famous military campaign to Central Asia. Khiva, according to legend, was founded three centuries before the Christian Era” [1]. Georg Bitzmann, a German traveler, noted: “I have visited many countries of the world, but I’m still lost in admiration of Khiva’s majesty that I saw for the first time. Look, there are two fortresses – Ichan-Kala and Deshan-Kala located in one city. Grandiose beauty of the age-old monuments will remain in our memory for the rest of our lives” [2]. Over the centuries, the Khivans managed to create their own authentic culture and did their best to transmit it to future generations. For example,
the Khiva ruler Abulgazi Bakhodir Khan (reigned 1645–1663), a historian and a writer, collected antiquities at his court, and arranged a special room for their demonstration. The people called this place *Ajoyibhona* – “Room of Miracles” (Kunstkamera) [3].

**The main findings and results**

According to the established rules, the treasures of the Khorezm rulers were kept in a number of places within the palace. Diamonds and expensive jewelry, headgear with precious stones, unique weapons were kept in a special storeroom. The mint was a place where gold, silver and copper coins as well as paper banknotes issued during the reign of one or another Khan were stored. In the corridor leading to the reception hall were rare weapons presented to the Khan, in the library – unique handwritten books, in the internal treasury – gold coins minted in different periods, rare coins issued in other states, Khan’s seals, *yarlyks*, decrees, correspondence with foreign rulers. Finally, the dressing room was intended for ceremonial clothing, awards, precious weapons specially made as gifts, etc.

According to the ambassador who attended the court of Muhammad Rakhim Khan (reigned 1806–1825), “the road from the gate to the reception hall passes through three courtyards. In the first courtyard, next to the palace gates, where the ambassadors were waiting for the reception, there were seven cannons mounted on a gun carriage. The walls of the second, covered, courtyard-gallery were lined with rich weapons that would make any officer admire. Finally, in the third courtyard – the largest and following after the gallery, the Khan’s receptions and meetings were held” [4].
During the campaign that began in the second half of the 19th century and was aimed at conquering the Central Asian Khanates, the Russian Empire deliberately included scholars Orientalists in its military expeditions, whereby they had a task to collect the region’s ancient relics. Thus, the Khiva campaign of 1873 was attended by the Orientalist A.L. Kun (1840–1888) who was entrusted with a thorough study and collection of everything that was of scientific importance for the libraries and museums of St. Petersburg. E. Zhelyabuzhsky and M. Alikhanov-Avarskey who participated in this campaign wrote: “On May 29, at 2 pm, the troops of Turkestan, Orenburg and Caucasus under the general command of Major General Golovachev solemnly entered the capital of the Khanate with music”[5]. “After that, Kaufmann entered the palace, which had already been occupied by one of our troops and where the representatives from the city and the surrounding communities were waiting for him, and, ascending one of its galleries – where there was something like a throne, sitting on which the Khan usually conducted trials – turned to the natives present with the following words: ”Behold and spread my words to everyone that now our enmity is over and that from now on we will act only as your patrons” [6].
Kaufmann also ordered General Golovachev to deploy soldiers to guard the palace. Kun, in turn, made an inventory list of all property. Most of the treasure chests were empty, and only one was full of coins. Among them were 20 gold and 5 silver seals, 172 gold coins of the times of Genghis Khan and Temurids, many gold coins minted by the Khorezm Khans, hunting rifles, pistols, swords decorated with gold and emeralds, daggers, helmets, armor, 200 forms for minting coins, documents of the royal chancellery, 300 handwritten books [7]. The books from the library of the Khorezm Khans were confiscated and transferred to the capital of the empire [8].
Pic. 4. Former Soviet Museum at the Nurullaboy Palace in Khiva

From that time, scientists and local history experts, together with the representatives of local inhabitants, began their work throughout Central Asia to collect artifacts according to European criteria, and create public libraries. Russian scientists conducted scientific research, organized archaeological, ethnographic, geographical and other expeditions. Numerous exhibitions demonstrated the collected samples of applied arts and crafts of the Central Asian peoples. In particular, members of the archaeological commission headed by the Russian archaeologist and orientalist N.I. Veselovsky, addressing the Head of the Amu Darya Department, recommended starting the collection of the ancient monuments of the Khiva Khanate and taking measures to preserve them. On January 18, 1896, the latter, based on this recommendation, sent a letter to the Khorezm Khan: “The people of Turkestan, who keep historical objects, do this sincerely. Their goal is to preserve all buildings, constructions and historical relics that have survived from ancient times intact. I would like to inform Your Excellency about this and request you to issue an order for your people on the preservation of material and other values” [9]. Muhammad Rakhim Khan II, sharing the desire to preserve the heritage,
issued special decrees on this matter. In particular, on April 12, 1898, he gave the khokims of Kunya-Urgench, Khodjejyli and Kungrad the following order: “Do not destroy ancient monuments, let every type of ancient structures be preserved, be it a dilapidated building or a palace; and if there are ancient coins, gold items and money, then send it to us” [10]. Agricultural and handicraft products of local masters were demonstrated at AllRussian exhibitions. Particularly, in 1890 in Tashkent and in 1895 in Nizhny Novgorod. Samples of handicraft products collected from 16 districts of Khorezm were presented at the World Exhibitions in Paris (1900) and St. Louis, Missouri, USA (1904). At that time, however, all the collected valuables were sent to Russia, while in Khiva not a single museum was open. On February 2, 1920, the last Khiva Khan was deposed and a Provisional Government was formed to prepare for the Constituent Congress for the new government to be set up. On April 11, the Joint Meeting with the participation of the Chairman of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of Khiva Jumaniyoz Sultonmurodov and the Plenipotentiary of the RSFSR decided: “With purpose of the public demonstration and ensuring safety for the future generation, we decide to collect all the property and items related to the past and present culture of the Khiva people, as well as Khan’s instruments of torture and atrocities, and create the People’s Museum; to take all measures to collect all these objects in the near future and to open this museum in the old Khan’s palace, before the election of representatives of the people” [11].

On April 17, the newly formed Ministry of Culture and Education, which executed this decision of the Provisional Government, issued a decree: “On April 26, 1920, a museum-exhibition will be opened in the fortress of Khiva. It is essential in the shortest possible time to ask the population for the possible museum exhibits and deliver them to Khiva two days before the opening. Upon receipt of historical objects, the museum employees should issue a document to the owner confirming his/her right to get these objects back whenever he/she wants upon submitting this document. List of objects required for the museum: old guns and swords, books, old gold and silver coins, copper and silver dishes, old clothes, all kinds of Chinese
dishes, women’s jewelry, ancient lanterns and buckets, mosaics, lamps, belts and samovars, carpets, manuscripts, armor, spears, iron, copper and silver teapots, staves. Mullah Bekchan, son of Rakhmanbergan, *Nazir* (Minister) of Culture and Education of Khiva, April 17, 1920” [12]. In turn, in a special mandate given to the performers who were entrusted with the mission of collecting items for the museum, it was said: *Mandate*

*The given mandate is given to Egamberdi, son of Ibadullah and Abdullah, son of Hussein, to visit the persons included in this list, and to receive their items for the museum under the record in the inventory book. Mullah Bekchan, son of Rahmanberdi, Nazir (minister), April 19, 1920.*

The lower part of the document contained the names of 16 people who were entrusted with the mission of collecting items for the museum: Atajan Tura, Babadjan Tura, Sayyid Gazibek, Inak Tura, Ibadulla Tura, Abdullabek, Makhmudjan the lame, Ataniyaz Devon, Bagbek Tura, Kushbegi, Sayyidjan Akhund, Vais Eshon, Muhammad Yusuf Qari, sons of Mamat Makhram, Hikmatillo Eshon, Muhammad Riza Tura. The museum-exhibition was opened on April 27, 1920 in *Arzkhana* (reception hall) of Kunya-Ark in the presence of the participants of the 1st *Kurultay* (Congress) of national representatives. It was called the People’s Museum. The number of visitors increased day by day. In addition to the exposition itself, introductory lectures were held there and thematic exhibitions were organized on certain dates.

Until 1924, the descendants of Allakuli Khan lived in the huge Tash-Khauili palace built in 1831–1839 in the inner fortress of Khiva. Considering it their own possession, they began to sell the property of the palace. The government members, having learnt about this, moved the Khiva museum from Kunya-Ark to Tash-Khauili and included it in the list of state property [13]. In August of the same year, the Khiva Museum was supplied with the necessary exhibition equipment delivered from Moscow. 285 unique pieces were exhibited in the imported showcases. In general, during that period the People’s Museum had 1 200 exhibits in inventory, which then became the main part of its gradually growing fund.
The museum’s personnel consisted of one manager and one security guard, as well as four employees on a voluntary basis. In Khorezm, as well as throughout Uzbekistan, the 1920s–1930s were the time of the elimination of illiteracy, the cultural revolution, and the prevention of internal strife. During those difficult years, the museum became a truly cultural, educational and scientific institution. The first congress of museums, held in Moscow on December 1, 1930, set the crucial tasks for all employees of the industry. In particular, measures were developed to further improve the work of various types of museums, provide museums with academic staff, and further improve the exposition work. From 1931, the journal Sovetskiy Muzey began to be published. This, in turn, led to the development of museum work in remote areas, including Khiva. In 1934, museum scholars M. Voevodsky, A. Popov and A. Trenozhkin came to study the activities of the Khiva Museum and provide it with methodological assistance. They proposed to reconstruct the museum aesthetically and replenish it with new acquisitions. The reorganization of the museum, as well as the search for new exhibits began on May 24, 1935.

In 1939, the History of the Revolution Museum was founded in the Nurulla Bai palace. In the same year, the two Khiva museums were visited by about 36,000 people with about 195 museum tours. Participants in the revolution in Khiva (1917–1924), who had became pensioners by this time, as well as eyewitnesses of those events started working in museums on a voluntary basis. During the Great Patriotic War, the museum staff was engaged in massive political, cultural and educational work among the population, ran agitation and propaganda campaigns at enterprises and production facilities, was actively involved in collecting money, food and warm clothes to be sent to the front. In 1960, the Local History Museum was also opened in Khiva, thus bringing the total number of museums in the city to three, and the number of exhibits to 12,000. 24 employees worked in the main museum of Khiva: Director, Scientific Director, fund manager, 3 department heads, 4 scientists, restorer, accountant, gardener, carpenter, 3 security guards and 7 museum employees [14]. By the Decree No. 616 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated November 30, 1967, the old part of the city of Khiva was
declared a reserve and endowed with a separate administration. By the Decree No. 343 of the Council of Ministers of the USSR dated July 21, 1969, the museum was merged with the reserve, resulting in the establishment of Ichan-Kala Khiva State Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve. This event, in turn, led to the transformation of the Museum into a major scientific center and imposed on the employees such duties as preservation and restoration of the architectural monuments, opening of new museums, collection of rarities from the population, their scientific study, their promotion and preservation in their original form for future generations. On December 12, 1990, by the decision of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, the Khiva fortress Ichan-Kala was included in the List of World Heritage Sites. After gaining independence, our state continued to pay great attention to improving the activities of museums, reinforcing their material and technical resource base, supplying them with modern technologies, restoring historical monuments, organizing new modern museums and publishing guidebooks, catalogs, booklets. This can be confirmed by the Decrees of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan On measures to improve the museums’ activities of dated December 23, 1994; On radical improvement and perfection of museums” activities dated January 12, 1998. Apart from the above, the Law on protection and use of cultural heritage objects (2001) and the Law on museums (April 12, 2010) were adopted. Today, the Ichan-Kala State Museum-Reserve has 15 permanent expositions with its fund comprising more than 60 000 exhibits reflecting the rich history of Khorezm from ancient times to the present day.

**Conclusion**

The Museum-Reserve staff works on the study and translation of historical documents together with the researchers of the Abu Rayhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Institute of Iranian Studies of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the universities of Tokyo and Kyoto of Japan; cooperates with the St. Petersburg Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography named after Peter the Great of the Russian Academy
Sciences (Kunstkamera), and with colleagues from Budapest on the establishment of “Vamberi and Khorezm” museum in Khiva.

For a century now, the Khiva Museum has been carrying out a great work of collecting and preserving unique objects of nature and history of the country, demonstrating them to tourists from all over the world, responsibly preserving them for future generations in their unchanged appearance and grandeur.

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