

References

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AZIZ NIYAZI. FOUNDER OF HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF CENTRAL ASIA. TO 150-ANNIVERSARY OF ACADEMICIAN V.V. BARTOLD // *The article was written for the bulletin “Russia and the Moslem World.”*

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Abstract. The article analyses the main historical and geographical works of academician V.V. Bartold of Central Asia, which are generally considered as a single comprehensive study

of the centuries-long interaction of society and nature in the region and partially adjacent land areas.

November 3, 2019 marks the 150 anniversary of the birth of the outstanding Russian and Soviet orientalist Vasily V. Bartold (1869-1930). The excellent knowledge of Arabic, Persian, Turkic languages, history and culture of the Muslim world, its population served as the basis for numerous fundamental researches of the scientist in various fields of Oriental studies. He traveled extensively the East, took part in scientific expeditions, archaeological excavations, collected manuscripts and legends, which enriched laborious desk job. In the scientific circulation he introduced a large number of previously unused sources, and the known ones were carefully revised in order to distinguish the actual facts from fiction and unfounded interpretations. In 1963, Vasily V. Bartold's rich scientific heritage began to be published in 9 volumes. How numerous it is, it can be judged by the names: Volume I (1963). "Turkistan in the age of Mongolian Invasion"; Volume II, (1963) "General Works on the History of Central Asia. Works on the History of the Caucasus and Eastern Europe"; Volume III (1965) "Works on Historical Geography"; Volume IV (1966) "Works on Archaeology, Numismatics, Epigraphy, and Ethnography"; Volume V (1968) "Works on the History and Philology of Turkic and Mongolian Peoples"; Volume VI (1966) "Works on the History of Islam and the Arab Caliphate"; Volume VII (1971) "Works on the historical geography and history of Iran"; Volume VIII (1973) "Works on the source study"; IX volume (1977) "Works on History of Middle Eastern Studies."

During the years of scientific workflows, thanks to the extraordinary erudition, brilliant talent and rare efficiency of Vasily V. Bartold published more than 400 scientific works. The collected edition in 9 volumes included about 300 works - monographs, articles, reviews, notes, as well as more than 200 articles written by the author for the "Encyclopedia of Islam." The multifaceted creative thinking of the scientist has been

translated into the fields of the history of Islam, Central Asia, Iran, the Arab Caliphate, oriental studies and archival affairs, as well as the fields of philology, cultural studies, archaeology and ethnography, and source studies. He worked extensively at the study of oriental manuscripts, mostly Arab authors who wrote about ancient Slavs.

Particularly, Vasily V. Bartold was interested in historical geography - is relatively new discipline in Russian science of the time. Within its framework, he prepared monographs "Information on the Aral Sea and the Lowers of Amu-Darya from the earliest times to the 17th century" (1902), "Towards the History of Irrigation of Turkistan" (1915), "Historical and Geographical Survey of Iran" (1903), as well as numerous articles for the "Encyclopedia of Islam." Historical and geographical methodology has been applied by the author in many archaeological articles. In order to verify geographical data, physical and cultural landscapes of past epochs, the scientist resorted to the mass of written historical monuments and various documents of Arab, Iranian and local authors, as well as Greek, Chinese and Russian sources. These were literary works, historical chronicles, notes of geographers, travellers, merchants, economic orders, shariah rules, waqf documents, etc.

In 2002, the book "V.V. Bartold. Works on Historical Geography" was published in the series "Classics of Domestic Oriental Studies." It collects the main monographs, articles, reviews and notes of the author dedicated to the historical geography of Central Asia. In general, these publications are a single comprehensive study of the centuries-long interaction of society and nature in the region and partially adjacent land areas. Held at the junction of related sciences - geography, history, linguistics, archaeology, toponymy, onomastics, ethnography, anthropology and others, it is a fundamental work on the historical geography of Central Asia.

In his studies of the region, Vasily V. Bartold was far ahead of Western European Middle Eastern Studies, which later had to

rely on them to a large extent. The Russian academician showed that already at that time it was not efficient to engage in historical and geographical study of Central Asia without reliance on Russian oriental literature. Even earlier, ignoring the knowledge of Russian researchers left notable gaps in foreign science about the East. In the introduction to the German edition of the monograph "Information about the Aral Sea and the lowers of Amu-Darya from the earliest times to the 17th century," the scientist noted: "Individual Arabic maps were used by Europeans in the Middle Ages; Individual works by Arab geographers appeared in the 17th century in Latin translation; although the detailed and trustworthy reports of the Arabs about the Caspian and Aral Seas, about Oaks (Amu-Darya, A.N.) and Yaxart (Syr-Darya, A.N.) didn't influence European science. Everything that Western Europe could learn from the Arabs 800 years ago, it learned only in the 18th century from the Russians. Correcting previous views on Oaks, Yaxart and the Caspian Sea belongs to the first achievements of Russian research borrowed by Western European science."

The research article of V.V. Bartold on the Aral Sea and the lowers of Amu-Darya was published in 1902 in Tashkent in the light of the comprehensive study of the Aral Sea undertaken by the Turkistan Department of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. In 1910 the book was published in German in Leiden and drew so much attention of foreign specialists. Using a solid number of written sources, the author was able to present the reader a living picture of the centuries-long interaction of civilizations, movement of peoples and tribes, rises and falls of empires, states, cultural areas and cities in relation to the natural and climatic conditions of the region. Moreover, the scientist conclusively proved the fact that the waters of Amu-Darya fell into the Caspian Sea through the Lake Sarykamysh and the ancient corridor of Uzboy in the medieval period. Thereby he cut down the opinion of geologists and geographers, as well as the famous Dutch orientalist Michael Jan de Gue, that this could not be. As it is shown in the work, the river, its arms and waterways in the

delta often changed their directions, were absorbed by sands and reappeared, often under people's influence who built irrigation systems, or, on the contrary, destroyed dams in order to defeat enemy.

Academician Vasily V. Bartold believed that Amu-Darya could flow into the Caspian Sea between the 13th and 16th centuries. Henceforth thorough archaeological and geographical studies in the lowers of the river and the districts of Sarykamysh and Uzboy, carried out by the Khwarazm Expedition in the 1950s, made their adjustments. It was learned that water runoff of Amu Darya waters into the Caspian Sea was less and more short-run (several decades in the late 14th – early 15th centuries) than Vasily V. Bartold supposed, but in general the fact was confirmed by modern methods and means of science. Thus, conclusions of the scientist, based on the analysis of written sources, in the most important thing withstood the test of time. He proved that historical science can be as strong tool in geography study as natural sciences, and sometimes win, as it happened in his dispute with geologists and geographers (Vasily V. Bartold called them naturalists) on the Amudarian question.

Another historical and geographical monograph of academician Bartold "To the History of Irrigation of Turkistan" was prepared by him at request of the General department of land organization and agriculture of the Russian Empire. In the introduction to it the researcher wrote: "As is known Russian conquerors found a centuries-long agricultural heritage in the province based on artificial irrigation, which could not but arouse interest both among orientalists and archeologists and among people of practical business. In this area, maybe more alive than in others, there was a close connection between studying the past of the region and working for its future; during discussions of irrigation projects, there were repeatedly raised questions concerning the cultural past of the same areas; nevertheless, the works of Russian orientalists and archeologists about the historical past of Turkistan and monuments of this past had an extremely

limited number of readers and, with few exceptions, did not become well-known specialists in physical geography and hydraulic engineering. Even outstanding representatives of geographical science made assumptions that did not correspond to precisely established historical data, there were raised questions that were in fact already resolved by historical science; there were even cases when the authors of works on hydraulic engineering reproached Russian orientalists for indifference to historical monuments, but in fact detailed research about them was already available in Russian.

Consequently, Vasily V. Bartold prepared a fundamental work, which summarized all the available information on irrigation issues of Central Asia in ancient times and Middle Ages. It is also impossible for modern researchers to do without it, ones who study economic life of Central Asian peoples, the history of ancient and medieval irrigation in the region.

Except for monographs devoted to multiple survey of Amu-Darya, the Aral Sea and the problems of irrigation of Turkistan, the collection of works of academician Bartold on physical geography included 111 articles from the "Encyclopedia of Islam," the most important reviews, articles and notes on actual problems of Russian development of Central Asia. All of them have continued importance for those who are interested in history, economic and spiritual culture, nature of this region.

It is important that the research of Vasily V. Bartold proved the failure of the popular in his time theory of gradual desiccation of Central Asia. Its supporters argued that the region has been drying up for thousands of years, shallowing of rivers and lakes, the reduction of fertile land cannot be prevented. Disappearance of once cultural beds and caravan routes, abandoned once prosperous cities, mass displacement of tribes and peoples are the result of the progressive degradation of the natural and climatic conditions of the region. It was not wars and political processes that caused devastation of land, but on the contrary, degradation of the natural environment was their origin. Desiccation cannot be stopped and,

therefore, the accession of the Central Asian territories to Russia, investment of huge resources in their economic and cultural development is a pointless and futureless matter.

Academician Vasily V. Bartold, on the basis of many Arabic sources argued the contrary and concluded that the relation between cultivable lands and desert in Persia and Central Asia 1000 years ago was about the same as by the beginning of the 20th century.

Inaccuracy of the theory of desiccation was confirmed by the contemporary Vasily V. Bartold, the authoritative researcher of Central Asia academician Leo S. Berg. On the basis of convincing physical and geographical data, he proved that in the historical era the climate of Turkistan did not undergo any significant changes. The scientist noted that the water economy of Turkistan is regulated by nature so that there is no permanent chronic shortage of water there, and falling water in one place is replenished by surplus in another. Both academicians, based on different directions of science, concluded that degradation of cultural territories, disappearance of ancient cities and trade routes are primarily explained by river diversion, their tributaries and sleeves, (so-called river peregrination), taking water for irrigation, destructive wars, which destroyed dams and irrigation channels, a large part of the population was killed or stole into slavery.

How significantly nomad raids and local devastating wars affected the change of waterways is seen as exemplified by the Amu-Darya. The destruction of Khorezm 's irrigation system during the Mongolian invasion led to the fact that some of Amu-Darya 's water began to flow back into Sarykamysh, its water level rose to 50 m above sea level, but not enough to form a runoff on Uzboy into the Caspian Sea. Then the water level in the lake gradually decreased. At the end of the 14th century, after the defeat of Khorezm by Timur, there was a new breakthrough of Amu-Darya, as a result of which water in Sarykamysh reached the highest level in historical time – not less than 53–54 m above sea level. Water began to overflow into Uzboy. Respectively, it could

reach the Caspian Sea, as evidenced by the written sources on which Vasily V. Bartold relied.

The works of Vasily V. Bartold are not only a retrospect, they are projected on modernity, convince of frequency of trends in relations between society and nature. His research shows that powerful states could create and preserve extensive and efficient irrigation systems. Summarizing the extensive material he studied, he wrote, "Association of the state was achieved by extremely violent means; however, the periods when this goal was achieved were the best time in the life of the country. In the sphere of irrigation, only at such times extensive works could be carried out, important for the population of the whole area using the water of a river or a main canal; during the periods of revolts, each sultan or beg naturally cared only for the prosperity of his "capital" and his small area, sometimes forcibly relocating the inhabitants of neighboring areas there; the dams they erected could only lead to a general irrigation system disorder. Such periods always made the population ruefully consider powerful rulers. Despite the mass bashing held under Timur or Abdullah Bukhara (in the second half of the 16th century), Turkistan still remembers these rulers as benefactors of the people, who everywhere tried to restore the well-being of the areas in decline." The analogy with the Soviet and post-Soviet experience of the Central Asian republics suggests itself.

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E.E. Bertels, I.Yu. Krachkovsky, A.N. Samoilovich, A.Yu. Yakubovsky took part in its writing from Russia and then the USSR.

M.Th. Houtsma et al., eds., *The Encyclopedia of Islam: A Dictionary of the Geography, Ethnography and Biography of the Muhammadan Peoples*, 4 vols. and Suppl., Leiden: Late E.J. Brill and London: Luzac, 1913–1938.

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6. Introductory note to a German edition // V.V. Bartold. *Works on historical geography*. P. 16.
7. Partly the study of the lowers Amu-Darya was related to the failed grand project to direct the river into the Caspian Sea with the aim of creating a continuous waterway from the borders of Afghanistan to the European part of Russia.
8. Modern studies have shown that during the Neolithic water from Sarykamysh Lake, where Amu Darya was falling, through Uzboy was flowing into the Caspian Sea; at the turn of the III and II millennia BCE there was a breakthrough of Amu-Darya waters to the north into the Aral Sea. The supply of water to Sarykamysh decreased, by the middle of the first millennium BC Uzboy finally dried up, and soon the water of Amu-Darya stopped reaching Sarykamysh. The reason for this was largely the creation of an extensive irrigation system that changed the water regime of the delta.

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9. V.V. Bartold noted:... “It will not be too bold to affirm: the fates of Ox 's problems can serve as proof that scientific knowledge can sometimes be more advanced by methods of historical study, which are so often questioned than by allegedly accurate methods of so-called exact sciences.”

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10. To the history of irrigation of Turkistan. Introductory note // V.V. Bartold. *Works on historical geography*. P. 97.
11. The lowers Amu-Darya, Sarykamysh, Uzboy. P. 29–31.