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## RESEARCH OF CULT MONUMENTS OF SARYARKA IN THE ERA OF ULUS JOCHI

The article delves into the historical research of cult-memorial sites from the Golden Horde era in the Saryarka region. It examines various perspectives regarding the emergence of sites influenced by the early spread of Islam in the central regions.

The pre-revolutionary period is characterized by the fixation and description of the brightest and largest remains belonging to medieval mazars, mausoleums as well as buildings covered with glazed tiles. The descriptions were written by travelers, topographers, and prospectors in search for natural resources in the region.

The second phase in the research timeline spans roughly from the latter half of the 20th century (from the mid-1940s to the 1980s). A.Kh. Margulan carried out the fixation and description of the memorial structures located on the caravan routes of Saryarka. He discovered the largest number of mausoleums in the valleys of the Sarysu, Kengir, Nura, Ishim, Turgai rivers, as well as in the oases of Betpakdala. The architectural monuments are located at a distance of 5 to 20 km from each other and indicate the presence of remnants of medieval settlements and towns along the Sarysui tract.

A new stage in the study of Saryarka memorial monuments covers the 1990s of the twentieth century and the first decade of this century. It is associated with surveys, discoveries, and archaeological studies of mausoleums dated to the Golden Horde period. Over the past two decades, the archaeological expeditions of the K.A. Akishev Institute of Archaeology (Astana), A.Kh. Margulan Institute of Archeology (Almaty), the Margulan Center (Pavlodar), the Saryarka Archaeological Institute (Karaganda) have been repeatedly organized.

**Key words:** Saryarqa, Golden Horde, Ulus Jochi, mausoleum.

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### Сарыарқадағы Жошы ұлысы дәуірінің ғұрыптық архитектура ескерткіштерінің зерттеуі

Мақалада Алтын Орда уақытындағы Сарыарқаның ғұрыптық-мемориалдық кешендерінің зерттелу тарихы туралы айтылған. Бастапқы исламның таралу үдерісінен пайда болған бұл ескерткішкер жөнінде зерттеушілердің көз қарастары жазылған.

Революцияға дейінгі кезеңде ең жарқын және ірі ортағасырлық кесенелер, мазарлар мен қыш тақтайларымен жабылған құрылыстардың орналасуы анықталып, сипаттамасы берілген. Кесенелердің сипаттамасын өлкеміздің табиғи байлығын анықтауға жіберілген барлаушылар, саяхатшылар мен топографтар жасаған.

Зерттеу тарихының екінші кезені ХХ ғ. екінші ширегімен байланысты (1940 ж ортасы-80-шы жж.). Марғұлан Ә.Х. Сарыарқадағы керуен жолдарында орналасқан мемориалды кешендерді белгілеп сипаттаған. Сарысу, Кеңгір, Нұра, Есіл, Торғай өзендерінің алқаптары мен Батпақ даладағы кесенелердің ең көп шоғырланған аймақтары ашылған. Осындағы архитектуралық ескерткіштердің арақашықтығы 5-20 км құрайды және Сарысу керуен жолындағы ортағасырлық қоныстар мен қалашықтардың қирандыларын белгілейді.

Сарыарқаның ғұрыптық-мемориалдарының зерттелуінде жаңа кезең ХХ ғ. 90-шы жылдары мен ХХІ ғ. басын қамтып, Алтын Орда уақытындағы кесенелердің арнайы іздестірілуі, ашылуы және археологиялық зерттеуімен байланысты.

Өткен онжылдықтар бойы Алтын Орда дәуірі кесенелерінің орындарын тауып-анықтауына бірнеше рет К.А. Ақышев атындағы археология ғылыми-зерттеу институты (Астана қ.), Ә.Х. Марғұлан атындағы археология институты (Алматы қ.), Марғұлан Орталығы (Павлодар қ.), Сарыарқа археологиялық институтының (Қарағанды қ.) экспедициялары қатысуда.

Түйін сөздер: Сарыарқа, Алтын Орда, Жошы ұлысы, кесене.

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### Изучение культовой архитектуры Сарыарки эпохи Улуса Жошы

Статья посвящена истории изучения культово-мемориальных комплексов Сарыарки эпохи Золотой Орды. Анализируются точки зрения исследователей относительно данных памятников, возникших в процессе распространения первоначального ислама.

Дореволюционный период характеризуется документацией и описанием наиболее выдающихся и крупных остатков средневековых мавзолеев и строений, которые были украшены поливной плиткой. Описания составляли путешественники, топографы и исследователи, занимавшиеся изучением природных богатств региона.

На втором этапе истории исследования, который пришелся на период с середины XX века до 1980-х годов, А.Х. Маргулан провел фиксацию и описание мемориальных сооружений, расположенных на караванных маршрутах Сарыарки. Он обнаружил наибольшее количество мавзолеев в долинах рек Сарысу, Кенгир, Нура, Ишим, Тургай, а также в оазисах Бетпақдалы. Архитектурные памятники находятся на расстоянии от 5 до 20 км друг от друга и свидетельствуют о наличии остатков средневековых поселений и городов вдоль Сарысу́йского тракта.

Новый этап изучения мемориальных памятников Сарыарки охватывает 1990-е годы XX века и первое десятилетие нынешнего столетия. В этот период активно проводились поиски, открытия и археологическое изучение мавзолеев времен Золотой Орды. Различные археологические экспедиции из таких институтов, как НИИ археологии имени К.А. Акишева (г. Астана), Института археологии имени А.Х. Маргулана (г. Алматы), Маргулан центра (г. Павлодар), Сарыаркинского археологического института (г. Караганды), неоднократно отправлялись на поиски культово-мемориальных памятников золотоордынского периода.

**Ключевые слова:** Сарыарка, Золотая Орда, Улус Жошы, мавзолей.

#### Introduction

In the 13th-14th centuries, the process of spreading Islam took place in the territory of Saryarka. Due to the lack of direct written sources on the spiritual culture of the population in the steppe regions, archaeological material becomes key to studying this process. According to archaeological data, during the 13th-14th centuries, the architectural appearance of cities changed, showing features of Islamic architecture, such as mosques, madrasas, and baths (Khabdulina, Bilyalova, 2018:18). The emergence of mausoleums and the practice of burial rites following Muslim canons indicate the adaptation of Islam to the local traditions of the population. Thus, archaeological data allow the reconstruction of the Islamization process and an assessment of its impact on the spiritual culture of the population in the steppe regions of Saryarka during the Golden Horde era.

Despite the prohibitions of orthodox Islam, mausoleums began to appear in the Muslim world in the 9th century. In early Islam, which preached principles of equality, it was recommended to create a small mound of earth at the grave, no higher than four fingers, so that it would be difficult to distinguish the grave from the surrounding landscape from a distance (Kerimov, 1978: 50).

For the successful spread of the new religion, missionaries had to adapt it to local traditions and rituals. A similar phenomenon was observed with the ancestor cult of the Turkic-speaking peoples. The appearance of mausoleums in the Saryarka steppe was initially associated with the large-scale policy of Islamization of the Jochi Ulus. The beliefs of the Eurasian peoples were distinguished by a strong ancestor cult. During the adoption of Islam, this cult was transformed into the veneration of Muslim saints, leading to the construction of luxurious mausoleums over their graves. The nomadic nobility, having accepted Islam, were not satisfied with simple burials under mounds, so magnificent mausoleums – kumbeses – were erected for the burial of their representatives, becoming the pinnacle of nomadic architecture. These cult structures are monuments of Islamic culture.

From the very beginning, monumental structures in the steppe region acquired the status of objects of public significance, becoming sacred places where ancestors were worshipped and symbols of ancestral territories. The mausoleums were intended for the family burials of the nomadic elite of the empire. By erecting mausoleums, the state sought to attract members of the aristocratic class to its side, aiming for their loyalty and acceptance of the new mono-

theistic religion, which became the state ideology. However, Islam did not immediately take root in the Jochi Ulus, going through a period of dual faith in the 14th century. This is evidenced by the presence of significant numbers of artifacts in Muslim mausoleums that indicate pagan remnants, such as jewelry, clothing, weapons, etc. (Garustovich, 2014: 95-96). Graves were always located on elevated places, near caravan or nomadic roads, as well as near rivers or lakes. This was done so that travelers could recite a special prayer over the remains (du'a).

### Materials and methods

A diverse set of research approaches and methods were widely used in preparing this article. The main information was drawn from archival materials, publications, expedition reports, and museum collections. To process and systematize this material into a unified formalized scheme, methods of classification and systematization were used, as well as satellite maps. A key aspect was the application of retrospective and comparative-historical approaches. The theoretical basis for writing the article included scientific cognition methods such as the concrete-historical approach, the dialectical method, and analogy methods.

The research extensively examined the works of travelers and reconnaissance expeditions of the 18th-19th centuries, where the ruins of medieval mausoleums in Saryarka were noted. Additionally, the article includes materials from the archival reports of the Yesil Archaeological Expedition, which conducted research at the Bozok settlement, and the Ural Archaeological Expedition, which excavated the Zhaiyk and Sarayshyq settlements. Data from the "Margulan Centre" expedition at Pavlodar State University, which studied the Auliekol complex, were also used.

### Results and discussion

The study of architectural monuments in the Kazakh steppe began with the notes of various travelers, engineers, and researchers who studied the natural resources of Saryarka. Their collected materials were described in the works of such researchers as I.A. Kastanye, A.I. Levshin, P.I. Rychkov, Sh. Valikhanov, A.Kh. Margulan, L.F. Semenov.

The systematic study of cult and memorial complexes in Saryarka began in 1946. During expeditionary work from 1946 to 1949, A.Kh. Margulan documented and described the memorial monuments located along the caravan routes on the western side

of Saryarka. He found the largest concentration of mausoleums in the valleys of the Kengir, Sarysu, and Turgay rivers, as well as in the oases of Betpakdala. The architectural monuments extended at intervals of 5 to 20 kilometers and evidenced the existence of medieval settlements and cities along the Sarysu tract. Margulan highlights that a group of mausoleums in the Kengir River valley, built in the 13th century and earlier, deserves special attention. He justifiably compares these structures with well-known monuments of Central Asia. Outstanding examples of architectural structures, such as the mausoleums of Zhoshy and Alasha Khan, are comparable to the mausoleums of the 11th-12th centuries, such as Karakhan and Aisha Bibi. Many of the cult monuments described in the 18th-19th centuries have not survived to the present day. Additionally, many objects recorded in those centuries were lost forever. The 20th century also did not provide favorable conditions for the preservation of cult monuments.

The first mention of the mausoleum Bytygay (also known as Botagay or Totogay) was made by P.I. Rychkov, the manager of the Orenburg Expedition Office. In his 1762 researches, he noted that the ruins of the monument were located on the left bank of the Nura River, about 30 km from its confluence with Lake Kurgalzhin. According to the description of the topography of the Orenburg province, by 1745, the mausoleum site already had extensive quadrangular structures resembling a castle surrounded by a wall 3000 fathoms long, and a mosque and the ruins of several stone structures were discovered (Rychkov, 1762: 259).

P.I. Rychkov also describes a monument near the Zhuban Ana settlement on the eastern bank of the Kara Turgai River. P.I. Rychkov found "the ruins of an ancient structure resembling a temple built of brick and slab stone. The building is over 9 sazhen high and measures 7 sazhen in length and width, with two small windows. Near the building, there are many mazars, three of which have brick steps. The architecture of this structure displays the skill and craftsmanship of ancient builders" (Rychkov, 1762: 262).

From 1738 to 1739, a Russian army officer named Karl Miller undertook a journey through the Middle Zhuz on a special mission. During his journey from Orsk to Tashkent, he visited Kazakh auls, where he made detailed notes on various aspects of Kazakh life. He was accompanied by a surveyor named A. Kushelev, who mapped the route they traveled (Sembi, 2015: 149).

In 1742-1743, Karl Miller again set out into the Kazakh steppes, traveling south from Orsk to the

Sarysu River and southeast through the Zhetysu to Dzungaria. Unfortunately, K. Miller's diary describing the journey was lost, but some materials were studied by P.I. Rychkov. In 1850, a map based on K. Miller's research was published. His materials were also studied and used by V.N. Tatishchev and P.I. Rychkov. These sources likely served as the basis for the first written reports on the Bytygay mausoleum, presented by historian P.I. Rychkov (Sembi, 2015: 150).

In 1813, translator F. Nazarov, of the Separate Siberian Corps, on a diplomatic mission to Fergana and Kokand, mentioned the Bytygay mausoleum as the "ancient pyramid Botagay Tam," indicating its nature as a structure over the grave of the deceased.

In the report of A.V. Popov, published in the journal "Proceedings of the Orenburg Scientific Archival Commission" in 1906, there is data provided by N.G. Ivanov about the remains of a mausoleum in the Kara Yar area, located 200 meters from Lake Turgay on the bank of the Karynsaldy Turgay River (Popov, 1906: 21-22). The report compares the architecture with that of Central Asia, suggesting that these architectural structures made of fired bricks may date from the 14th-15th centuries (Khasenova, 2015: 54).

Information about the ruins of medieval structures in the Seletay River valley became known thanks to the research of Alikhan Bukeikhanov, who asserted that the cultural heritage of the Kazakh steppe was extensive. In his brief report, published in the "Bulletin of the Russian Geographical Society," he mentioned the discovery of ruins of medieval structures on the banks of the Seletay River. In the future, A.Kh. Margulan, studying the settled civilization of the steppe zone of Kazakhstan, suggested that medieval fortifications, settlements, and mausoleums might be found in the northern Saryarka. Consequently, the discovered remains of mausoleums in the steppes of Northern Kazakhstan correspond to the objects described in the article by A. Bukeykhanov about ancient finds in the valley of the Seleta River (Bukeykhanov, 1907: 1-3).

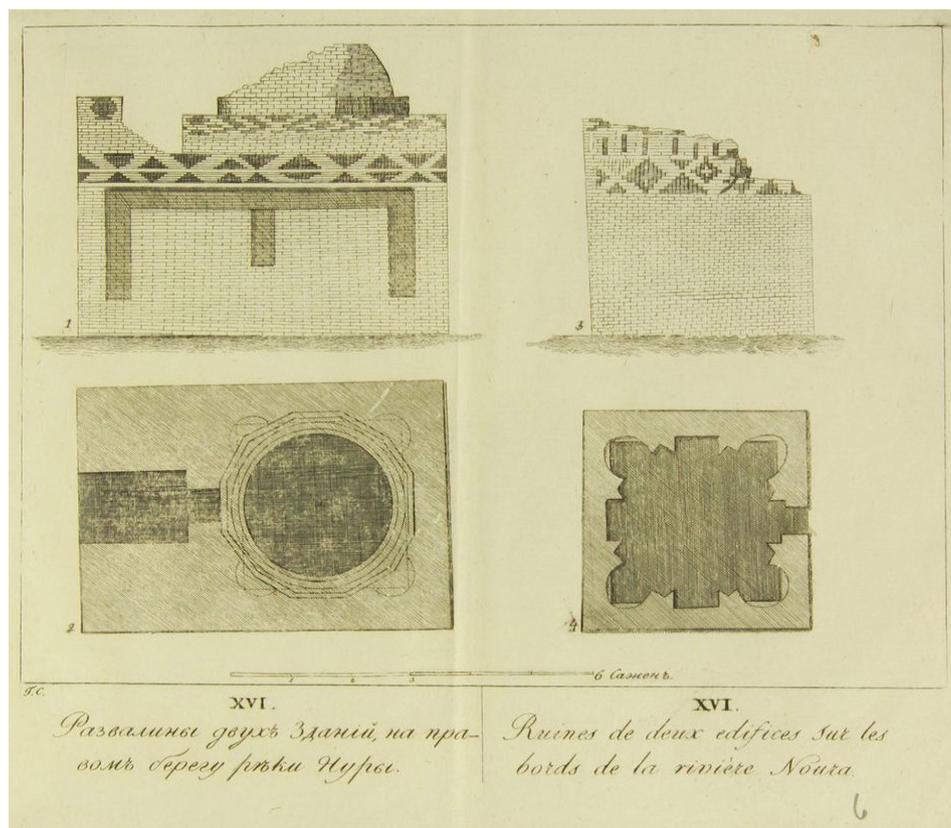
In the early 19th century, surveyor I.P. Shangin visited this area, where there were many historical monuments. The mining engineer described in detail numerous ancient monumental structures located in the valleys of the Nura, Zhaksai, and Zhaman Kona rivers. He provided the following description of the Bytygay mausoleum: "This mausoleum is built of brick; inside, there are pillars covered with alabaster plaster, as well as walls, where instead of ties, square pine beams with a diameter of two inches are

used, burnt and wrapped with reeds for additional strength" (Shangin, 1820).

G.I. Spassky, one of the early researchers of the historical topography of Kazakhstan, discovered architectural monuments of medieval Kazakhstan in the lower reaches of the Nura River. He reported: "Up the Ishim River, near Lake Kurkuljin, lie the ruins of the city of Tatigay (Botagay). Many of the preserved buildings still impress with their remnants of beauty and durability. Moreover, there are other historical monuments in this area as well." In 1816, these monuments were sketched by military artist Bulygin in the form of tables, and in 1830, they were described by A.A. Shakhmatov. The drawings were preserved in the archive of G.I. Spassky and were published by him in the journal "Siberian Herald" (Spassky, 1818: appendix XVI). He also described the monuments in Ablaykit, the Semipalatinsk buildings, the Kalbasun Tower, and mentioned the settlements of Zhetykala, Zhuan Ana, Belen Ana, and Tatigay (Bytygay). G.I. Spassky provided a detailed description of the "ruins of a temple in Tatigay" and attached drawings of the main facade, plan, and inscriptions made in an unknown script (in Arabic script). The ruins of two buildings (Fig. 1) covered with blue glaze, found on the Nura River (on the right bank) in the Korgalzhyn district of the Akmola region, stood out in particular. One of them was called "Syrly Tam" (the carpet mausoleum), and the other, according to G.I. Spassky, "Syrly Tam 2" (more accurately "Sulu Tam" – the beautiful mausoleum).

Major General S.B. Bronevsky was one of the researchers of the Kazakh steppe, spending nineteen years in the Siberian Kyrgyz Region. In 1830, relying on the data from his 1825 journey through Central Kazakhstan, he published an article in the journal "Otechestvennye Zapiski" ("Patriotic Notes"), in which he described the ancient remnants of urban culture in the lowlands of the Sarysu and Nura rivers, as well as in the Karkaraly Mountains (Bronevsky, 1830: 251-252).

During a military-strategic mission in 1831, Centurion A. Shakhmatov provided a detailed account of the remains of the ancient city of Tatigay (Bytygay), drawing the structure of its ancient buildings and thus offering a comprehensive description. In the same area, on the right bank of the river, 58 kilometers from Lake Korgalzhyn, I.P. Shangin discovered the ruins of a mausoleum in 1816. Similar ruins, which I.P. Shangin identified as remnants of a fortress, were found 42 kilometers northwest of Atbasar in the Akkairakty River valley (in the Belagash area).



**Figure 1** – Sketches of the ruins of the mausoleums of Sulu there and Syrly there (according to G.I. Spassky, 1818)

In 1832, A. Levshin inspected the ruins of two domed mausoleums made of fired bricks on the Yaksai Kon River (Jaqsy Qon), which flows into Lake Tengiz. In the same year, his work “Description of the Kyrgyz-Kaisak Hordes and Steppes” was published, which was highly praised by researchers of the ethnography of the Kazakh people (Sembi, 2015:150).

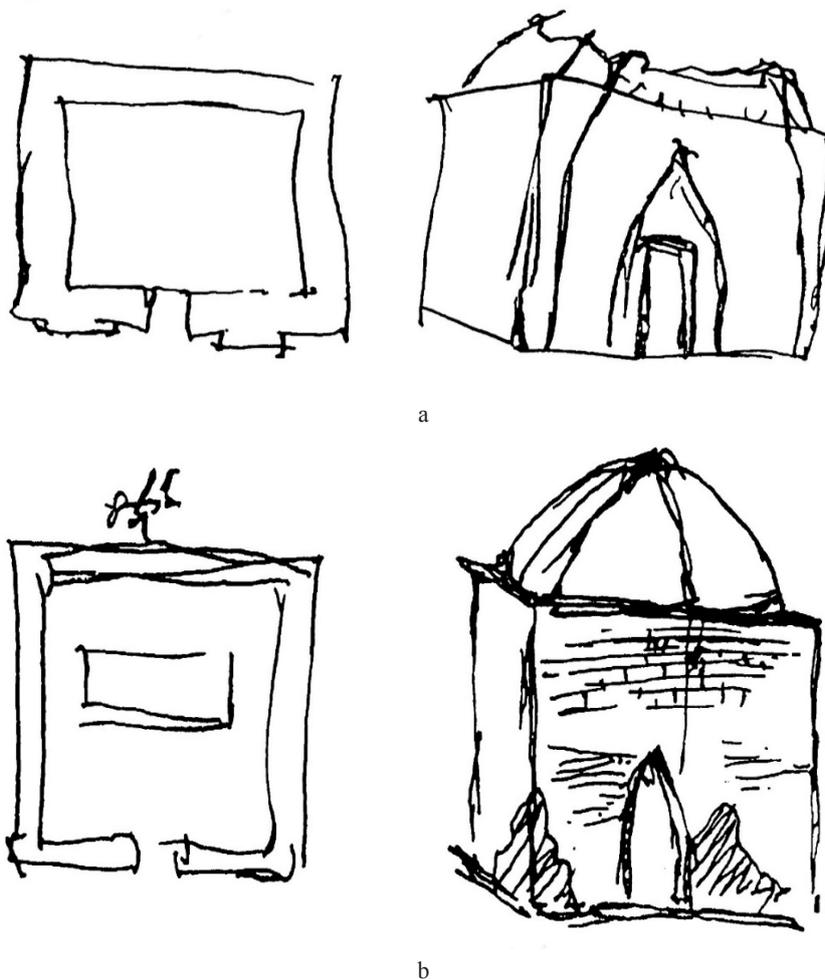
In the 1850s, the famous Kazakh historian and traveler Shokan Shyngysuly Ualikhanov drew attention to the cult-memorial monuments of Saryarka. He admired and highly valued these ancient structures, noting that the Turks built cities and left evidence of their long life, wealth, and trade in them. He remarked, “It is not surprising that in the distant steppe, near Ulytau, along the Kengir rivers, one can find numerous graves impressive in their architecture: Kamyр Khan, Alasha Khan, Dombaul, Bolgan Ana, and others. These monuments are truly unique, and you won’t find such things in the steppe, except on the Nura River, where the Bytygay mausoleum is located, about which I have no reliable information.” Ualikhanov wrote, “In the Kazakh grave and its surroundings, the entire character of the Kazakh

people is revealed, their mastery in the art of construction, their carving, and painting” (Valikhanov, 1984: 190-197). In his studies, Shokan Ualikhanov expressed the highest praise for the architectural craftsmanship of the Kazakh people. He described the mausoleums in Kengir as unique monuments that have almost disappeared from the steppe, except for the Bytygay monument on the Nura River, about which he lacked complete information regarding its architectural structure.

Shokan Ualikhanov identified two types of memorial monuments: the first represents fortress structures, and the second consists of pyramidal or tent-like towers. The images of the Zhuban Ana and Aitbulat mausoleums on the Sarysu River (Figure 2), as well as the Bytygay mausoleum on the Nura River, are contour sketches left by Shokan Ualikhanov. These sketches represent the contours or general outlines of these memorial monuments, which were recorded by the scholar in his research notes. The images may depict the general shape and exterior appearance of the mentioned mausoleums, making them an important source of data for studying the monumental art and history of that

period. Additionally, he described more complex mausoleums in terms of construction techniques, such as the Aitbulat mausoleum, which was built on corner supports (squinches). Shokan Ualikha-

nov not only described the external appearance of this impressive building but also sketched its internal structure, showing the transition from the square to the vault.



**Figure 2** – Sketches of the ruins of the mausoleums of a – Aitbulat; b – Zhuban Ana (author Sh.Sh. Ualikhanov)

In his work “Grave Structures of the Kirghiz Steppes,” I.A. Castagne, a member of the Orenburg Scientific Archive Commission, organized the systematization of grave monuments in the Kazakh steppes at the beginning of the 20th century. Castagne was one of the first scholars to recognize the importance of studying these structures. In his book, I.A. Castagne distinguishes between pagan and Muslim periods, starting from the 8th century (Castagne, 1911: 4). Based on his analysis of burial monuments in the steppe zone of Kazakhstan, including the Turgai region, I.A. Castagne identified up to 30 types of grave structures and described their constructions

and burial rituals. He also paid attention to specific types of structures, such as watch mounds used as landmarks and stone mounds called “oba,” created in memory of certain events. The researcher made an important conclusion that the diversity of mound types indicates the boundless respect for ancestors among the people who created them. This highlights the deep significance ancestors held in Kazakh culture and their important place in public consciousness (Castagne, 1911: 26).

In 1974, the Kurgaldzhin detachment of the Central Kazakhstan Archaeological Expedition, led by Academician A.Kh. Margulan, conducted exca-

vations of medieval structures in the valleys of the Nura River. Among these monuments were mausoleums such as Bytygay, Syrly Tam, and Sulu Tam.

Under the leadership of A.Kh. Margulan, the study of steppe monumental architecture began in 1946 as part of the Central Kazakhstan Archaeological Expedition (Central Kazakhstan Archaeological Expedition). Within the framework of these studies, A.Kh. Margulan documented and described the memorial structures along the caravan routes in the western part of Saryarka (Margulan et al., 1959). He noted that the largest number of mausoleums was found in the lower reaches of the Sarysu, Kengir, and Turgai rivers, as well as in Betpak-Dala. The distance between these monuments ranges from 5 to 20 kilometers, and they represent the remains of medieval settlements and cities along the Sarysu route. Margulan paid special attention to the group of Kengir mausoleums, whose construction dates back to the 13th and earlier centuries. These mausoleums are grand and monumental, comparable to well-known monuments of Central Asia (Margulan, 1950: 116). Among the outstanding examples of religious structures, similar to the mausoleums of the 11th-12th centuries, such as Karakhan and Aisha Bibi, the mausoleums of Zhoshy and Alasha Khan hold a special place. Unfortunately, many architectural monuments that were known in the 18th-19th centuries and documented by Kazakh architects in the mid-20th century have not survived to the present day.

In the mid-1980s, the Ural-Kazakhstan Archaeological Expedition conducted a supplementary investigation of Western Saryarka as part of a project to reconstruct water supply routes from Siberian rivers to the Aral Sea (Khasenova, 2015: 54). As part of this work, reconnaissance and excavation activities were carried out in the area of the proposed canal (Khabdullina, 1985; Khabdullina et al., 1986). The expedition studied three raw-brick and fired-brick mausoleums and excavated the Domolaker brick mausoleum on the left bank of the Uly Zhylanshyk River, where a burial with a fragment of a mirror was discovered. Additionally, the expedition analyzed the tent-shaped portal raw-brick mausoleum Atchergat, where two burial pits containing Muslim burials were identified (Khabdullina, 1985: 33–34). In 1989, the Ural-Kazakhstan Archaeological Expedition investigated the sacrificial and memorial structure Aksak (Babekov, 1996: 245-251).

During the Soviet period, local historians and museum workers collected and recorded data on architectural structures from the 14th to the 19th centuries (Shivrina, 2005: 53). However, this infor-

mation remained largely unknown to the broader scientific community and the public. Archaeology became the primary source for the partial restoration of the historical and cultural landscape of the steppe regions of Kazakhstan during the medieval period. Действительно, культово-мемориальные комплексы на юге Казахстана привлекают внимание исследователей в связи с богатой средневековой городской культурой этого региона. В последние десятилетия интерес к изучению культово-мемориальных памятников степной части Казахстана значительно возрос, и этому посвящается более интенсивное исследование.

A new phase in the study of sacred monuments in Saryarka spans the last decades of the 20th century and the first decade of the current century. This period is marked by active searches, discoveries, and archaeological studies of mausoleums from the Golden Horde era. Various archaeological expeditions from the K.A. Akishev Archaeological Research Institute, the A.Kh. Margulan Institute of Archaeology, the Saryarka Archaeological Institute at the E. Buketov Karaganda State University, as well as researchers from the Margulan Center at Pavlodar Pedagogical University, have been actively involved in this research area.

The Bozok settlement is a significant archaeological site in Kazakhstan. Located on the outskirts of Astana, surrounded by the swamps of the left bank of the Ishim River, the settlement was discovered by archaeologist K.A. Akishev and has attracted the attention of scholars for many decades. Since 1999, the Yesil Archaeological Expedition of the K.A. Akishev Archaeological Research Institute has conducted excavations at the Bozok settlement (Akishev, Khabdullina, 2008: 25-26). Over the course of these studies, five mausoleums were discovered and investigated. Near two of the mausoleums, built of fired bricks, brick kilns were also found, presumably used for firing the bricks.

The mausoleums at the Bozok settlement are represented by high platforms on which square, single-chamber structures were erected. The walls of these mausoleums were constructed without foundations and have an uneven shape, with a thickness of about 0.8-1.2 meters (Khabdullina, 2010: 386-390). The entrance to them is located on the southern side. Due to the lack of information about the height and structure of the roofs, it is assumed that the vaults of these structures have not been preserved. The brick mausoleums were likely adorned with ceramic finials, similar to “kubb,” glazed in dark green and bright blue colors. This is typical decoration for such architectural monuments. Local materials were used to make

the bricks and finials, as evidenced by the presence of brick kilns near some of the mausoleums.

In the early 2000s, initial reports emerged about medieval cultic and memorial complexes discovered in the Pavlodar region of the Irtysh River basin (Artykbaev et al., 2004: 43-53). In 2001, through organized and targeted searches, the Zhayyk settlement was discovered in Western Kazakhstan. Research at this site led to the discovery and study of two mausoleums from the Golden Horde period (Ahatov, 2018: 2013). From 2003 to 2005, the Irtysh Archaeological Expedition, involving scientists from the A.Kh. Margulan Institute of Archaeology and Pavlodar State University (headed by T.N. Smagulov), conducted research at the Kalbasun Tower. The excavations revealed two significant monuments from the 14th-15th centuries. Artifacts and burial rites indicate that these ruins were structures of the Muslim nomadic elite of Eastern Saryarka. The research results, including materials on the Kalbasun Tower excavations, the necropolis, and the Auliye-Kol residence, were summarized in the monograph "Kalbasun Tower" (Smagulov, 2012: 131-133).

Ruins of a previously unknown fired brick mausoleum in the Zhanthai area of the Aktogay district, Pavlodar region, surveyed by archaeologist T.N. Smagulov, suggest the presence of a new neighborhood with elite monuments from the Golden Horde period in the Selity River valley. Of particular interest among the monuments of the Selity microdistrict are the brick mausoleum in the Mortyk area and the ruins of settlements and mausoleums made of fired brick in the Baynyaz and Kyzylloba regions, located at the junction of Akmolinsk and Pavlodar regions (Smagulov, 2012: 112). These finds are significant for studying the history and culture of the region during the Golden Horde period.

Since 2007, the A.Kh. Margulan Institute of Archaeology of the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan, in collaboration with Pavlodar State University, has been conducting regular scientific research at the Auliye-Kol complex as part of the state project "Cultural Heritage." The monument is located northwest of the city of Ekibastuz, in the Karoba area, where the Olenya River flows into Auliye-Kol Lake (Smagulov et al., 2009: 228). The research uncovered a mausoleum consisting of two chambers, constructed of fired and mud bricks. The structure measured 19 by 12 meters, with walls having an impressive thickness of 1 meter. The entrance was on the southern side. The walls of the monument were richly decorated with ceramic tiles and carved bricks, and the portal and dome were covered with blue glaze. The mausoleum comprised

two rooms: a ziyaratkhana, an octagonal structure located centrally, and a gurdhana, which contained two burials in wooden coffins and one earlier in a ground grave. The burials followed Islamic rites, with some pre-Islamic customs typical for burials from the 14th to 16th centuries.

In 2009-2010 and 2020, the Yesil Archaeological Expedition of the K.A. Akishev Institute of Archaeology investigated the remains of a cultic and memorial monument near the village of Korgalzhyn in Akmolinsk region (Khabdullina et al., 2011). On the southern shore of Lake Zhanibek-Shalkar, the remains of a mausoleum were represented by a low mound strewn with fragments of fired bricks and broken pieces of polychrome terracotta with green glaze. During the study, rectangular tiles with stamped floral patterns were discovered. Academician K.M. Baipakov analyzed the ornamental style and dated the monument to the 14th-15th centuries. The archaeological excavations revealed five burial pits, one of which contained a double burial, as well as thirteen 14th-15th century coins with Arabic ornamentation, bronze pendants, earrings, and beads (Kasenalina, 2020: 4). New data on burial rites and the architectural characteristics of the 14th-15th century memorial structure allow for the reconstruction of the mausoleum's appearance, determination of its characteristics, and integration into the historical and cultural landscape of medieval Kazakhstan.

In the fall of 2018, researchers from the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan conducted comprehensive studies on the mausoleums of Jushi Khan, Aykamy, and Bolgan Ana in the Ulytau district of Karaganda region. These monuments date to the Golden Horde period. Excavations of the Bolgan Ana mausoleum uncovered the burial of a woman of high social status. Her burial was found in a wooden sarcophagus filled with exquisite accompanying artifacts. Radiocarbon dating of remains from the mausoleums indicated that these structures date to the 13th-14th centuries (Kasenalina, 2019: 53).

In 2019, scientists from SKSU named after M. Kozybaev, in collaboration with the Margulan Center at Pavlodar State University, discovered the remains of seven mausoleums in the lower reaches of the Selity River in North Kazakhstan. At the Kyzyl Oba necropolis, bricks of various sizes, gold jewelry, ceramic dishes, and household items were found. Archaeological surveys, aerial photography analysis, and the identification of numerous signs of ancient irrigation systems such as dams and ditches, as well as fragments of ceramic vessels related to water-lifting mechanisms, were recorded. Researchers believe that the mausoleum, dating to the mid-

late 14th century, may contain burials of members of the ruling Juchi Khan dynasty, belonging to the Chinggisid dynasty.

In 2021, a complete archaeological investigation of the production center at the medieval settlement of Bytygay was conducted for the first time (Sakenov et al., 2021: 134). Archaeological artifacts indicate that a full technological cycle was operational here during the Middle Ages, including raw material extraction (*gancha*), preliminary processing using stone mills, slaking of the raw material in special containers, melting of the material in a special kiln for glaze production, and firing bricks in kilns. The presence of waste and defective products indicates not only a complete production cycle but also its long-term existence. The found samples of carved terracotta and glazed bricks point to a generation of craftsmen who were recognized specialists in medieval architecture.

### Conclusion

Thus, the territory encompassing the valleys of the steppe rivers Nura, Ishim, Sarysu, Kengir, Shiderty, and Seleta stands out for its significant number of architectural monuments. This abundance of monuments is explained by natural and climatic

features, historical heritage, and its advantageous location on caravan routes connecting the northern and southern regions. These factors indicate a developed material culture in the region since ancient times, as evidenced by burial rituals and the presence of tomb structures. The development of medieval steppe architecture in Kazakhstan was largely influenced by early Islam. The mausoleums combined Islamic architectural elements such as domes and arched forms with local traditions and styles, creating a unique regional appearance. It is traditionally believed that mausoleums appeared with the adoption of Islam. However, archaeological findings in Saryarka and the Aral Sea region trace the genesis of mausoleum architecture back to the late Bronze Age. These proto-mausoleums were built from raw bricks, had a square foundation, and domed vaults. Only further research on this issue will shed light on the history and culture of medieval Saryarka.

To date, the remains of more than 30 mausoleums have been recorded and archaeologically studied on the territory of Saryarka. In addition, searches and compilation of a collection of mausoleums of the Golden Horde period of Saryarka are underway, which allows us to expand our knowledge of the cult and memorial monuments of this region during the Golden Horde period.

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