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NEW RESEARCH ON GOLDEN HORDE ERA MAUSOLEUMS

This article reviews the monograph by G. N. Garustovich and A. I. Nechvaloda entitled 'Medieval Stone Mausoleums of Bashkortostan: History, Archaeology, Bioanthropology'. The book provides an analysis of gathered data concerning medieval stone mausoleums in the Chishminsky district of the Republic of Bashkortostan in the Russian Federation. The authors focus on historical, archaeological, and anthropological issues, delineating the relationship between these monumental Muslim monuments and the comprehensive Islamization policy of the country purposefully pursued in the 14th century by the Golden Horde khans Uzbek and Janibek. The book contains photo portraits of facial reconstructions from people buried in the mausoleum of Hussein Bek and Maly Keshene, made on the skulls by one of the authors. Initial facial reconstruction within Central Asia was developed by the anthropologist, Mikhail Mikhailovich Gerasimov. This monograph is intended for historians, archaeologists, ethnographers, anthropologists, and a wide range of other readers such as anyone who might be interested in the dissemination and advance of Islamic monotheism in the South Ural region, as well as the medieval cultural of the Bashkir people.

Key words: Golden Horde, Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, mausoleums, Islamic architecture, archaeology, bioanthropology.

Citation: Emma Zilivinskaya (2021) New Research on Golden Horde Era Mausoleums, Bulletin of IICAS. Issue 31. 131-135. DOI: 10.34920/1694-5794-2021.131-135

Article link: <https://doi.org/10.34920/1694-5794-2021.131-135>

IN THE BASHKIR steppe, not far from the village of Chishmy, are two amazing, roughly cut stone structures that are known to be mausoleums from the Golden Horde era. The Tura Khan mausoleum has survived practically unchanged with its square base transitioning to an octahedron through triangular obliques. The octahedron is crowned with an octahedral pyramid. A portal with a vaulted ceiling is attached to the southern wall. The Hussein-Bek mausoleum was renovated in 1911 and now has the appearance of a square with a low prismatic structure covered with a hemispherical dome. Despite its lack of elegance in architectonics, both buildings make a strong impression precisely because of their pristine ruggedness and distant location placed among the uncultivated, needle-grass steppe far from any residential area. These buildings have attracted researchers' attention since the 18th century. Many authors not only described the monuments, but also gave varying, often fantastical, legends associated with them. Naturally, modern researchers have not ignored the mausoleums. Gennady Nikolaevich Garustovich (1957-2017) an archaeologist from Ufa (today's regional

capital of Bashkortistan) devoted many years to their study. Under his leadership, he conducted excavations at the Hussein-Bek mausoleum as well as a the third mausoleum Maly Keshene, whose ruins are located not far from the Tura Khan mausoleum. Garustovich authored and published many articles over time devoted to various aspects of these Bashkir mausoleums. Eventually, in conjunction with anthropologist Alexei Nechvaloda, he wrote this monograph under review that summarized his years of research (*Garustovuch, Nechvaloda* 2020). This book, published in 2020 – though Garustovich, unfortunately, never live to see it publish – can certainly be regarded as a memorial to the researcher and a worthy completion of his scholarly life.

The scientific editor of the book, D. V. Vasiliev, rightly noted that this monograph is not a simple publication of the results from archaeological excavations and architectural measurements of tombs but is a deep and comprehensive study that raises our knowledge on the Golden Horde era in the South Urals to a new level. The authors stated that the question of the emergence of cult memorial architecture,

specifically stone mausoleums, should be considered “from the standpoint of four scientific disciplines - history, architecture, physical anthropology, and Islamic studies” (Garustovich, *Nechvaloda* 2020: 17). It is this integrated approach which, in effect, is the great strength of this work.

The monograph consists of five chapters, a conclusion, and several appendices that supplement the data presented. The first chapter, the largest in the book, surveys the history of the study of these particular stone mausoleums which is not surprising given the interest in them ever since the second half of the 18th century up to the present. Garustovich distinguishes three stages in the study of the monuments: the pre-Revolution stage (from the second half of the 18th century – early 20th century); the “local history” stage (from the 1920s-1950s); and the scientific and academic stage (latter half of 20th century – early 21st century). In fact, the first mentions of the mausoleums, revered as “holy sites,” date to the Middle Ages, yet the data on their construction and the personality of one of the interred, Hussain Bek, are legendary. The first comprehensive descriptions were given in the mid-18th century in *The Topography of the Orenburg Province* by a Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, P. I. Rychkov. Later, the academicians P. S. Pallas, I. I. Lepekhin, I. G. Georghi, and N. P. Rychkov (P. I. Rychkov’s son) also described them. At this time, the interpretation appeared that one of the mausoleums served as a “House of Court” or the “Palace of Tura Khan” which proved very tenacious and endured until the 20th century. Researchers V. S. Yumatov, P. Pavlovskiy, writing during the first half of the 19th century, not only described the mausoleums, but also provided their architectural measurements. The orientalist V. V. Velyaminov-Zernov translated the epitaphs, a task of great importance. The book mentions at least a dozen other local historians who showed interest in the Bashkir mausoleums and researched them. This book’s section provides extensive extracts from published works and archival records. Garustovich critically examines them in detail, thus separating described reality from speculation.

In early Soviet days, some of the czarist Russian researchers, including representatives of the clergy, continued their work. Simultaneously, new Soviet Eastern scholars emerged who studied the origins of the stone mausoleums of Bashkiria along with written sources that shed light on them including the inscriptions on the gravestones. Many researchers of this period lacked investigative experience which gave rise to numerous compilations and the desire to view all cultural phenomena through the prism of “class warfare.” Only in the second half of the 20th century did researchers emerge who consistently sub-

jected the available data to a thorough analysis. Thus, K.V. Salnikov took notice in Bashkiria of both stone and brick mausoleums. A.P. Smirnov expressed his opinion about the alleged 14th century promulgation of Islam by the Bulgars in the Bashkir steppe. He went further and connected the Bashkir mausoleums with the those among the Bulgars. B.G. Kalimullin produced a professional survey of the various mausoleum building plans and described them architecturally. G.V. Yusupov actively engaged in studying the Bulgar-Tatar epigraphy and deciphering the grave-stone inscriptions. Yet, their research was not free of shortcomings and some of their conclusions erroneous. Garustovich’s analysis in the book convincingly proves this in detail. He also reveals obviously blatant and unscrupulous hypothetical creations from some authors of the period.

Garustovich provides a separate section devoted to the analysis of articles and monographs pertaining to the monuments of Tatarstan during the Golden Horde period. They rightly note that these mausoleums had a direct impact on the shape of the stone mausoleums from the South Urals. Due to the detailed critical analysis of their predecessors’ works, critically identifying of their merits and demerits, allowed Garustovich to advance his own views concerning a wide range of subjects associated with the stone mausoleums of Bashkortostan.

The next two chapters are directly devoted to the mausoleums of Tura Khan, Maly Keshene and Hussein-Bek. Garustovich notes their measurements and architectural characteristics as well as discusses the construction materials and techniques used in building the monuments. The research material from the excavations conducted over the years, including those of the author himself, are also published in detail. All descriptions are accompanied by numerous photographs, top plans, cross-sections, along with masonry and burial sketches. These chapters provide a complete set of information concerning the mausoleums.

In addition to burials within the mausoleums themselves, these chapters provide data from excavations on the surrounding cemeteries near Tura Khan and Maly Keshene. A study is also made of the Akziarat necropolis near the Hussein-Bek mausoleum in which various researchers have described, photographed, and sketched all the gravestones and translated the inscriptions on them. These burials indicate that between the 14th century until the early 20th century, these mausoleums were revered as Muslim shrines. Adherents of Islam desired to be buried next to them and as a result the entire necropolis was perceived as a holy site (*awliya*). The 1911 Hussein Bek mausoleum renovation at the expense of the local Muslim community emphasized its significance in their eyes. It also emphasized, as Garustovich rightly



the presence of triangular obliques as an important detail citing the Gulistan mausoleum in Azerbaijan and the mausoleum in Akhlat (Armenia) as similar structures. Yet, G. N. Zasytkin's hypothesis about the connections between the stone architecture of Tatarstan and Seljuk Asia Minor, Garustovich considers to be unfounded (*Garustovich, Nechvaloda* 2020: 124). Moreover, in his opinion, "the Muslim mausoleums of Azerbaijan, Crimea, and Seljuk Anatolia are local-territorial schools of Central Asian memorial architecture" (*Garustovich, Nechvaloda* 2020: 27). As a result, he concludes that "the origins of the Bulgar mausoleums' architecture are based on the creative interpretations from Armenian architecture in the same way as the design features of the Muslim stone mausoleums of Azerbaijan, Crimea, and Asia Minor" (*Garustovich, Nechvaloda* 2020: 189).

Meanwhile, in all general research, both foreign (for example, Hillenbrand 1994) and domestic (*Borodina* 1969), the Anatolian architectural school is regarded as one of the most significant in all Islamic architecture. Combining the elements of architecture from the Christian countries of Armenia, Byzantium, and Syria (but not Central Asia); the architecture of Anatolia (Asia Minor) as early as Seljuk times became quite distinctive and influenced neighboring regions such as Crimea and the countries of the Caucasus. Triangular obliques are a characteristic element of Seljuk architecture forming a transition from the cube to the octahedron, often called the "Turkish triangle" in architecture (*Rice* 1961: 138-139). In addition, during the Seljuk period in Anatolia, pyramidal trumpets were widely used and these can be seen in the interior of the Bulgar mausoleums. These characteristic techniques, along with other details (for example, stone carving motifs), make it possible to associate the Bulgar mausoleums with the Anatolian architectural school (for more details: *Zilivinskaya* 2014: 100 108, 156 159).

Garustovich also misuses the term "centric mausoleum." He describes "centric" as all buildings which are square in plan and have no portal (*Garustovich, Nechvaloda* 2020: 177, 178, 196). However, a building with four identical facades can be called centric. Most often, such buildings have four entrances, one on each side, or entrances along a two-on-one axis. Therefore, only the Black Chamber in Volga Bolghar is considered a centric building (without any subsequent building extensions). As for the Khan's tomb, the Tura Khan mausoleum (prior to the addition of a portal), the Maly Keshene, and the Hussein-Bek mausoleums in their current state all have only one entrance, thus, they should be referred to as façade-type mausoleums.

The author's reasoning about the orientation of the Urals mausoleums seems altogether strange.

notes, the importance of the study of these cemeteries as a part of understanding Bashkir history including the dynamics of Islamification together with the ethnographic aspects related to changes in funerary rites. Reading the epitaphs on the gravestones is very important for the development of linguistics, paleography, and literary studies in the region.

Despite meticulousness, thoroughness, and the high quality of this publication, some chapter conclusions are objectionable. First, pertains to the architectural analysis of the structures. Garustovich compares the architectonics of the Urals mausoleums to the portal-type buildings with tent-roofs and pavilions of Central Asia and draws a conclusion "about the undoubted unity between the Islamic religious architecture of Central Asia with that of the Ural-Volga region (*Garustovich, Nechvaloda* 2020: 159). Thus, he quite rightly notes that the triangular outer obliques (the author erroneously calls them "squinces") which serve to transition a square base into an octahedral drum are not typical for Central Asia. He considers the similarity with the architectural forms of the Bashkir stone mausoleums and the Bulgar mausoleums to be undeniable; and it is impossible to disagree with this position. It is justifiable that the book contains a large section with detailed descriptions of the mausoleums from Bulgar. Further on, the author examines the architectonics of the Bulgar and Ural mausoleums, in light of the works by V.V. Yegerev and S.S. Aidarov. Both architects note

Garustovich states that the Bashkortostan mausoleums' different orientations are a vestige associated with the early stages of Islamic formation in the steppe, thus, adherents possessed an insufficient acquaintance with the norms of Sharia (*Garustovich, Nechvaloda* 2020: 189-190). Thus, he refers to the work of G. M. Kerimov who writes: "All prayer houses (mosques), tombstones, and the graves of Muslims face towards Mecca" (*Kerimov* 1978: 38). Everything in this statement is absurd. First, mosques face towards Mecca not by their frontal facades, but according to their mihrabs. It is also unclear what types of facades tombstones and graves possess. Of course, grave pits had a specific orientation with the deceased interred in such a way that their faces turned towards Mecca. In the Golden Horde, this position is head to the west and face to the south. But no such regulation existed for mausoleums. Suffice it to recall the well-known necropolis and cult center of Shah-i-Zinda, located in the reasonably orthodox section of Central Asia, consisted of a corridor formed by two rows of mausoleums which face each other with their facades. Therefore, the entrances of one half are oriented to the west/northwest, and the other to the east/southeast. The mausoleum of Khoja Akhmad, located at the end of the corridor, faces southwest.

The fourth chapter of the monograph was written by anthropologist, Alexei Ivanovich Nechvaloda. In this chapter, he describes in detail various aspects of the study of anthropological materials from the Hussein-Bek and Maly Keshene mausoleums. He notes their importance for the history of medieval Bashkortostan, primarily since one of the burials belongs to a relatively well-known historical figure, Hussain Bek, who left a salient mark on the history of region. Moreover, his impact was significant enough that his burial location became an object of worship.

Nechvaloda provides a thorough description of three skulls from the Hussein-Bek mausoleum applying craniological techniques making age and ethnic identity possible. He devotes a separate section to the racial-genetic aspect of the study of skulls from the stone mausoleums of Bashkiria. The author compares them with various criteria from a series of skulls in Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, and Bulghar, along with samples from rural settlements in Volga Bulgaria and from Golden Horde towns. Nechvaloda's detailed descriptions of the research principles and methods make his results understandable for even non-specialists. The craniological study is complemented by the osteological study of postcranial skeletons along with the molecular genetic analysis given in the appendices.

This chapter ends with a detailed description of Nechvaloda's cranial reconstructions which provide a model for the external appearance of the people

buried in the mausoleums. Particularly impressive is the detailed demonstration of all the intermediate stages of the reconstruction. The author rightly notes that thanks to this recreation of these peoples' images from a distant era, they cease to be "faceless, soulless players of history" (*Garustovich, Nechvaloda* 2020: 299), and history itself draws closer and is more tangible to us.

The fifth and final chapter of the monograph is the most significant regarding the study of Bashkortostan's medieval history. Garustovich characterizes the historical and religious situation in the South Urals via the 14th century prism of the personality of Hussain Bek, interred in one of the mausoleums. The chapter also provides a broad picture of the influence of the Ulus of Jochi (Golden Horde) on the territory's various regions. The chapter initially describes Hussein Bek's homeland, the city of Taraz, a significant medieval cultural center on the border of the Muslim world. Garustovich assumes that Omarbek and his son Hussein Bek were forced migrants or displaced persons who fled feudal strife and revolts that tore apart the southern regions of the Kok-Orda (Blue Horde), seeking the stability and calm of the Golden Horde during the first half of the 14th century. Then, based on written sources, scientific research, and analysis of the gravestone epitaph, Garustovich debunks numerous myths associated with this semi-legendary personality. In his opinion, Hussein Bek Haji held high status in the feudal hierarchy (thus the title, *bek*). He was a pious Muslim who performed Hajj to Mecca (*haji*) and was a representative in the Golden Horde administration since he had the right to sit as a judge. Indeed, under Uzbek Khan – who made Islam the official religion of the State – the administration needed educated and reliable Islamic officials, many of whom came from Khorezm.

The author pays specific attention to the purported idea that Hussein Bek was a missionary, preaching Islam particularly in Bashkortostan as a Sufi devotee and disciple of Khoja Akhmet Yasawi. Based on archaeological findings, Garustovich demonstrates that by the first half of the 14th century, most of the region's population was already Muslim with no need for missionaries. In addition, despite the spread of Sufism in the Golden Horde; Hussain Bek, as a government official representing the administration, could not have been a dervish, but instead, represented the orthodox state theology. It is possible that he may have sympathized with the teachings of Yasawi. Despite his youth (he died at the age of 25-30), Hussein Bek managed to accomplish much in his position and a mausoleum was erected over his grave, most likely with state funds.

Garustovich questions the reasons for this remote burial location of such a famous person being

interred at the site with his family along with, perhaps, another high-status person with the stone mausoleums erected over their graves. Having examined these cemeteries in context with other archaeological sites, he concludes that this location near the village of Chishmy during the 13th-14th centuries was a political center of the Bashkir ulus of the Golden Horde. This conclusion, based on his deep and comprehensive study of seemingly separate individual monuments, is quite revolutionary. It presents a significant contribution in understanding the medieval history of Bashkortostan.

The book, however, is not devoid its deficiencies. Garustovich almost never uses research from the recent decades in his work. All his sections devoted to the general political situation in the Golden Horde are based exclusively on the works of B. D. Grekov and A. Yu. Yakubovsky. While these are classic works, they are already largely outdated. When analyzing architecture, he considers only the well-known Central Asian “story-line,” based on the classical works of G.A. Pugachenkova of the 1970s. Given all the pub-

lications since the turn of the century which address issues related to the study of Islam and the Golden Horde found in both monographs and articles in journals such as *Golden Horde Civilization* and *Golden Horde Review*, he uses only research from the collection *The Golden Horde in World History* (Hakimov, ed. 2016). Perhaps, the reason is that in his last years, Gennady Nikolaevich, was seriously ill and could not follow all the latest research.

Despite these existing shortcomings, the monograph *The Medieval Stone Mausoleums of Bashkortostan*, which is a thoroughly fundamental and comprehensive work of research drawn from archaeological methods, history, and bioanthropology; is a significant scientific contribution. It is important not only for the history of medieval Bashkortostan, but also for our entire country. I would like to note especially the excellent design of the book, its abundance of illustrations, and its outstanding print quality. Largely due to these factors, the book will attract both specialists as well as a fairly wide-range of readers interested in history.

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