

Archaeology and state power in the USSR of the 1920s: in search for new scientific ideology

Abstract

In the early 1920-s the Soviet state became a single possible sponsor for the archaeological science and protection of national cultural monuments. Its interest in these spheres was merely pragmatic, concerned either with political and ideological development or economical needs. Nevertheless from July 1922, a guideline became firmly established in the Russian Academy of the History of Material Culture for the practical cooperation with the state power. This guideline initiated the development of a new scientific ideology. Intending to make their science actual (and respectively financed), archaeologists started the search of directions that would be most promising in the new social, political and ideological context. These trends included the technological aspects of the archaeological materials, natural-scientific methods, prospects of materialistic analysis of problems of primeval thinking and cultural creation. All these branches finally allowed the scholars to preserve and develop further the national archaeological science.

Keywords: archaeology, soviet rule, russian civil war, ideology, academy for the history of material culture

Volume 3 Issue 1 - 2018

Nadezhda I Platonova

Department of Slavic and Finnish archaeology, Russian Academy of sciences, Russia

Correspondence: Nadezhda I Platonova, Department of Slavic and Finnish archaeology, Russian Academy of sciences, Russia, Email niplaton@gmail.com

Received: July 17, 2017 | **Published:** February 02, 2018

Abbreviations: IHMC, institute for the history of material culture; RAS, russian academy of sciences

Introduction

After the Red army's winning in the civil war, the Soviet power came to be the single possible 'sponsor' for the national archaeological science and preservation of cultural monuments. An obligatory condition of the development of these two spheres both was exactly the state's interest for the results of corresponding activities. Meanwhile, in Russia the very existence of archaeology during the period under consideration should be defined with a single word miserable. By the end of the military Communism this crisis had reached its apogee. The scientific community encountered an urgent task: to discriminate the directions in which the interested cooperation between archaeology and state power would take place.

The revolution and archaeology

It seems appropriate to describe in more details that historical and socio-political context in which Russian science was functioning at the turn of the 1910/1920-s. Initially this context was defined by the Russian Civil War. Representatives of scientific communities also were reckoned among the bourgeois, people's enemies and generally the wealthy. The leader of the revolution Vladimir I. Lenin quite quickly found an effective weapon against their passive resistance against the dictatorship. The program expounded by him deserves a very great attention: The grain monopoly, bread cards and the total labour conscription are in the hands of the proletarian state, in the hands of sovereign Soviets the most powerful means of accounting and control... Guillotine only intimidated, only broke the active resistance. It is too little for us. We must not just intimidate capitalists in the sense that they would feel omnipotence of the proletarian state and forget about an active resistance against it. We must break also the passive, undoubtedly still more dangerous and harmful resistance. And we have means for that the grain monopoly, bread cards and the

total labour conscription are these means. He who does not work must not eat – this is the basic, primary and most important rule...¹

Epistolary and autobiographical evidence of that period helps to understand how this principle was realized in practice. In the letter of Academician Alexey A Shakhmatov of January 19, 1918, we read: There is a famine here and generally, Petrograd is a doomed city. In Moscow, they said that the conditions are no better.² There are no doubts that the famine was artificial, corresponding entirely to the above outlined program of actions. There was no harvest failure in the country then. However provisions were brought to the cities on limited scale; any private commerce was strictly banned by the new authorities. Besides, it was prohibited to barter food from villages and bring it to the cities, even in small volumes for personal needs.³

The result of such a policy was that a considerable part of the scientific community of Petrograd found itself at the edge of death from starvation. Scientists (the wealthy) naturally had no large stores of provision at home and it became impossible to replenish them from anywhere. Under these conditions, the new authorities started a system of limited 'feeding-up' of intellectuals through new hastily founded scientific and creative unions. It is notable that exactly in the period of the 'war Communism', corporative establishment in the spheres pertaining to the humanities often was supported at the state level. The power in its own way stimulated and regulated this process which was part of Lenin's program: to make the scientific community controllable compelling it to work within the new organization and public frames. Within these frames, the especially valuable scientific personnel were in particular tied with the provision distributors in the disposal of the Soviet power.

The Russian Academy (or State Academy since 1925) of the History of Material Culture (RAHMK) also found itself among the number of organizations and associations which appeared, as if by magic, exactly when nobody had forces for real scientific studies. Naturally the project of the Academy was based on the old, still 'pre-

October' ground works and plans. However the primary goal of its foundation was in legalization of Russian archaeology within the system of the new power.⁴ This was necessary for the physical survival of the specialists in conditions of devastation, famine, compulsory mobilizations, 'confiscations' and arrests of hostages. New scientific organization structures, established in hurry, but inscribed haphazardly into the contemporary realities, were here of quite an effective help.

AA Shakhmatov mentioned in one of his letters: Scientists rations supported much our brotherhood. However now a campaign against these rations is conducted and we do not know whether they will survive.² Scientists' rations did survive but this has not saved the author himself of this letter: he died in Petrograd in August, 1920. Calculations of modern researchers demonstrate that even rations of the first category (workers' rations) provided the needs of normal nourishment only at approximately 20%. Meanwhile, scientists and cultural workers mostly received much scantier rations of the 3rd or at the best, 2nd category.⁵ During that very heavy period, the founding fathers of RAHMK manifested marvels of passionarity, endurance and ability to find way out from difficult situations. It seems that though under terror and uncertainty, their work was by nobody abolished. Science must survive under any conditions and the new Academy founded by them must exist under any government. If we peruse the registers of the sessions of the Board and Council of RAHMK in the second half of the 1919, we are convinced that in the most critical days, their work was continued with a rare persistence and firmness. The governing Board was assembled at least twice in a month, mostly once a week. The sessions of the Council were called with the same frequency but in other days.

In order to demonstrate in more details the historical context of these tumultuous activities we will list below the key historical events which occurred in the second half of the 1919, i.e. the first months of the foundation of RAHMK. The main was the offensive of Nikolay N Yudenich's army on Petrograd (September-October). The quick attack of the Whites provoked the strengthening of the Red terror and torture-chambers of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission (Ch K) gathered quite a party of hostages from the number of classical scholars. In the south-western suburbs of the city bloody battles were taking place; by the Lev D Trotskiy's order, every tenth Red-Army soldier was threatened with shooting for a retreat.⁶ In the centre of, urban skirmishes were prepared. Not only the Peter-and-Paul fortress but also the Anichkov Palace in the Nevsky Avenue became military objects while along the embankment of the Fontanka River, machineguns were ranged.⁷ By the late October, reserves of the Whites had been exhausted and the troops of NN Yudenich retreated.

The invariable 'background' of these events in Petrograd was constituted by ever increasing famine. In October, the bread ration for the civil population of the '3rd category' was a quarter of a pound a day an almost mortal rate.⁸ PA Sorokin presents a vivid episode in his memoirs: 'closing a regular session of the faculty meeting of the Petrograd University the chancellor addressed the attending with a speech saturated with very dark humour Gentlemen, I humbly ask you not to die so quickly. Departing to the other world, you are soothing yourself but evoke many problems for us. You know how it is difficult to provide you with coffins how expensive it is to dig a grave for your eternal rest. Think first about your colleagues and try to hold up as long as possible'.⁵

It may seem that, in such conditions, work would have stopped at all archaeological institutions. However, if the horror continues

for a long time, some protective reactions of the human psyche are activated. In fact, neither during the siege of the city nor later in the winter of 1919/1920, the activities for the establishment of academic structures and selection of the scientific conception, etc., was interrupted in RAHMK. Probably, these activities helped to survive: they restored the purport of life, allowed a person to abstract away from the present day and think about the future with a hope.¹ As to the everyday routine administrative work, it was not interrupted because the very life of the research workers depended on it.

A slight illustration of the staunchness of the founding fathers of the Academy in the face of the revolutionary reality is demonstrated by the following curious fact: in July-November, 1919, Academician Sergey F Oldenburg missed only one session of the Board of RAHMK. This day fell on the time of his imprisonment in the Shpalernaya Str. as a hostage. After he left the prison owing the petitions and guarantees of his colleagues, Sergey Feodorovich, looking older 20 years after two weeks of his imprisonment,² attended the regular meeting.

At the crossroads of 1921-1922

The year of 1921 was expected to be a crucial one because the civil war was ended. However the first steps of the Soviet state in the conditions of the ensuing peace did not inspire scientists with optimism. No mutual understanding with the new authorities was established, moreover even that which had existed before was lost. Without any, at least relatively serious, public financing of the field, experimental and restoration works, the share of the majority of assistants of RAHMK was only to study interesting for them problems through literature and simultaneously compile bibliographic and archive indices, glossaries, catalogues, etc.³

The higher echelon quickly became displeased by this type of activities. In the November, 1921, RAHMK received a directive to reduce the staff by 50%. There were talks about the total liquidation of the Academy. The Embarrassed Council proposed a counter number of 20% and started spasmodic attempts to carry out the staff reduction. Sergey F Oldenburg and Nikolay Ya Marr made a protest against it, while Iosif A Orbeli threatened to resign. Of note is NYa Marr's 'special statement' concerning this subject.

'The situation with the Russian Academy of the History of

¹Baroness MD Vrangell', who during the period under consideration was a scientific assistant of the Museum of the City, wrote in her memoirs: 'Service was my single delight; here I found oblivion from all the horrors of the life...'⁷

²The assistant of the Pushkin House EP Kazanovich wrote in her diary in September, 1919: 'From the tram window I saw Oldenburg... His gait was that of a person looking 20 years older and exhausted ... They wanted to put S(ergey) F(eodorovich) into punishment cell impeaching him that in a book sent to him by Karpinskiy there were found two postcards written by somebody to somebody. Finally the seaman of whom the fate of S (ergey) F(eodorovich) depended had mercy on him and decided to forgive him. Old(en)burg was imprisoned in Shpalernaya Street in the same ward with D Grimm (jurist, professor, in 1910-1911 the chancellor of the Saint Petersburg University- NP). In general, he was treated civilly. The most terrible for the prisoners were the moments when at night the unfortunates were called from the cell for shooting.'²

³Works of such a kind were conducted practically in all branches. Now it remains only to regret that the files compiled in the period under consideration have not all really survived until now in the archives of the Institute for the History of Material Culture RAS.

Material Culture is extremely dangerous' he stated to the Council of RAHMK. 'The danger is threatening in no way because of the now debated question of the reduction of its staff but because its fate is played around without understanding of its real meaning. Since the conditions of the modern situation independent from the Academy make it impossible to reveal all the importance of its work within the frame of its vital and practical necessity for the country (sic-NP), to the outsiders its tasks seem to be, at best a very interesting toy, feeble creation of scientific minds.

Nevertheless in the sphere of real public tasks conferred to it concerning scientific protection of the cultural values of the state, the Academy for the History of Material Culture is and shall be, using the term now popular, a striking institution. Since we believe that the current crisis is transient and we are advancing to the great future of the country, the Academy of the History of Material Culture must be strengthened and developed, but neither abolished nor, at least, weakened (*italic is author's-NP*)' (Scientific Archives of IHMK RAS. Archive 2, 1921, File 4. Sheet 86, 86 rev.).

The drawbacks of the speech reflected in the shorthand record do not overshadow the sense and clear line of NYa Marr's address. Periodically, skilfully using the Soviet 'newspeak', he operated by the notions clear and close to any Bolshevik careerist. At the same time, he emphasized vital and practical necessity for the country in the activities of the Academy. These were so far not 'understandable to all' but, undoubtedly, would be distinguished as soon as the wide economic development is started in the USSR.

In the beginning of December 1921, a representative delegation in the persons of academicians Nikolay Ya Marr, Aleksandr E Fersman, Sergey F Oldenburg, Aleksandr A Vasil'yev (the president of RAHMK) and Boris V Farmakovskiy (scientific secretary of RAHMK) went to the head of the Petrograd Board of Scientific Institutions (PUNU). The demand concerning 50% staff reduction was called off but considerable concessions still were needed. Having discussed the situation, the heads of RAHMK decided to start the reduction of the staff with themselves. Five workers voluntarily gave up their salary, until better times, but continued to attend their duties at the Academy. However, naturally it was not all needed.

In the first half of 1922, a tumultuous propagandistic campaign for confiscation of church property rolled throughout Russia. This event became a blow not only to the Russian Orthodox Church but also to the entire national culture. This campaign demonstrated almost complete misunderstanding of such 'obsolete' notions as 'cultural significance', 'cultural value', 'traditions' etc, by the new authoritative structures. The show trials of clergymen taken place in 1922 in Moscow and Petrograd just slightly affected the scientific institutions.⁹ Scientists suffered neither shooting sentences nor long imprisonments. However there were clearly threatening symptoms. The member of RAHMK KK Romanov who was entirely uninformed of the instructions received by Commission for Confiscation of Church valuables (KITsTs) from the very 'top' nevertheless evaluated very precisely the current tendency in the interrelations between the state and corporation of the humanities scientists who traditionally considered themselves responsible for the preservation of the cultural inheritance of Russia. Without beating about the bush he called the events of the spring of 1922 a 'devastation' and 'sale' of cultural values of the country.¹⁰ The two actions both were shamelessly before the very eyes of archaeologists; any 'protection' turned to be senseless.

Thus there were no doubts that the interest of state structures in the sphere of the archaeological science (in case it took place at all) would be strictly pragmatic, concerned either with political and ideological practices or with economic needs. Anyhow in this way it could be possible to attempt at making our science actual (and respectively financed). All other ways led only to new blows and losses. In 1922, at institutions concerned with archaeology, attempts were started to actualize the subjects and approaches which seemed promising in the social and political context of that time.

New directions: iosif orbeli's speech of July 17, 1922

On July 17, 1922, a month after the end of the Petrograd 'process of clergymen', a special meeting was convened at RAHMK. There unexpectedly, even without a preliminary notification of the president of the Academy (then AA Vasil'yev) and many members of the Presidium, a lecture of IA Orbeli was delivered about the modern situation in the Academy in the light of the last events. These events included:

- a. Expansion of the staff of the RAHMK itself up to 165 scientific assistants;
- b. Liquidation of the Moscow section of RAHMK (as it was just informed formally by the Head Scientific Board 'Glavnauka').

Two news were brought from Moscow by NYa Marr and SF Oldenburg. The liquidation of the Moscow Section as an independent institution was one of the consequences of the campaign for confiscation of church property.⁴ As to the decision for expansion at 15 positions in the staff of RAHMK it was a result of NYa Marr's 'policy' the goal of which can be understood from his November speech in 1921 (see above).

This news became known in the very critical moment after many blows and humiliations endured through both the staff reductions of the previous year and quite recently during 'confiscations' and barbarous ruination of old historical and cultural church ensembles in Petrograd. Only one and a half months ago, NYa Marr and SF Oldenburg were without ceremony not admitted to set foot on the threshold of the president of Petrosoviet Grigoriy E Zinovyev when they came to solicit against ruination of the silver iconostasis of the Kazan Temple.¹¹ Now, the small victory concerning the staff numbers suggested great expectations, viz. it was really possible to carry on a dialogue with the state.

Exactly of this conclusion the matchless public speaker Iosif Orbeli had to convince the members of the Council of RAHMK. In this question, Orbeli completely shared the views of his teacher NYa Marr. His speech is so important for understanding the situation at RAHMK in that period that it is impossible to omit extensive citations from the shorthand record. In his speech Orbeli stated inter alia: the increase of the number of the staff assistants makes it our duty to glance back to the traversed path, to think what we have achieved, what we should or could have done during the last three years.

⁴Stern words of LD Trotsky in his letter of 22.03.1922 about counterrevolutionary pro-clerical attitude at the Museum Board 'Glavmuzey' concerning confiscation of values, resulted in a severe trial over the group of closest assistants of Natalia I. Trotskaya at this office (materials on this trial are preserved in records of the case of Patriarch Tikhon at the Central Archives of the Federal Security Service, file 1780).¹⁰

The material that as we hope will be available for us in future, even in the near future, will be immeasurably wider and richer than the material which has been available three years ago (i.e. during the time of the civil war NP). When the scheme of organization of the Academy was projected we had to limit ourselves to the materials and territory of the Russian Republic which included only a few provinces. Now a large area of the former Russian Empire, except for its western districts, has been in some way united, including also the autonomous republics (Caucasian, Turkestan etc.). Now we are able to project organization of studies of the earliest cultures of the Mediterranean, including pre-Hellenic and other ones, which would be vital for a reasonable plan of studies of the Caucasus and northern and southern Black Sea regions.

Taking in consideration all above, I suppose that we are under an obligation to report carefully to ourselves what we have done during the three years. It is not the half-yearly and annual accounts which we regularly are hearing what we need in this case. From them we just learn that a particular registrar has ruled a particular number of thousands of cards (I recollect one such case) or that some registrar has filled a number of thousands of cards, but we not always know to whom and for what purpose these cards are needed. We must calmly and frankly give an account to ourselves of whether the work of each Department or Commission was regular, whether the work of each Department or Commission was united by a particular idea, theory or, at least, the material of the studies, or the work of this Department showed leaps from one subject to another which in the aggregate cannot give nothing integral. Now, however, we can do what we must have done long ago, viz. the organism wanting to live cannot preserve it's died out members. Those who left the Academy and, for any reasons, not only do not take part in the works of the Academy, but even are abroad, cannot remain among its staff. SS Luk'yanov and SG Yeliseev, must have been long ago struck out from the lists of the Academy even in order not to delude themselves. It must be done, in order that they would not believe that, returning to Petrograd, they could return to our ranks and to occupy the position supposedly belonging to them, to participate in the service they themselves have abandoned.⁵

Another situation is concerned with a very prominent Russian scholar who has not even been notified that the Conference elected him a member of the Russian Academy of the History of Material Culture and was not able to inform us whether he wants to do us the honour of entering our ranks. Therefore I propose when eliminating the name of NP Kondakov,⁶ from the lists of the full members where

⁵Sergey G Yeliseev (1889-1975) was a Russian orientalist. He belonged to the family of the merchants Yeliseevs well known in Petrograd. He was a member of RAHMK of the first membership (elected by the Conference of 5.08.1919). In 1920, he escaped USSR through the Finnish border. Afterwards he became one of the founders of the American school of Japan studies.

Sergey S. Luk'yanov (1888-1938) was a philologist, art historian and columnist. He was a member of RAHMK of the first membership (re-elected automatically from the membership of the Council of the Russian State Archaeological Commission). He published no important scientific works. In 1920, he did not return to the USSR from an academic mission. At emigration, he was occupied with journalism and public activities. The character of these activities and his subsequent repatriation leave almost no doubts that we are dealing with a Soviet agent. In 1927, Luk'yanov was deported from France back to the USSR. He served as editor-in-chief of the Moscow magazine 'Journal de Moscou'. In 1935 he was arrested, then executed by shooting.

⁶Naturally, NP Kondakov could not be informed about the elections in RAHMK, since in August of 1919, he was in the White-Army Crimea and emigrated there from.

he was introduced by misunderstanding and without his knowledge, to elect him the honorary member of the Academy and thus to pay our debt to the head of the Russian art science'.¹⁰

In this Orbeli's speech, a number of important statements strike one's eye. Here, possibly for the first time, the starting contraposition of the image of the 'Russian dispersion' or 'refugees' to those who remained in the Fatherland and endured its fate is outlined. This contraposition still was not definite then. As we see, IA Orbeli lays no claim to NP Kondakov who succeeded to get over to Prague from Vranghel' 's Crimea. However, Orbeli mentions with contempt those who still not long ago participated together with him in the foundation of RAHMK and then escaped abroad, leaving their post in the hard times.

Undoubtedly, the demand to strike out emigrants from the lists of members of RAHMK, was clearly an obsequious gesture towards the Soviet 'State'. Nevertheless it must not be considered that the interest in this case strongly contradicted the inner beliefs. You are a sentry at the post; the post is to be left only when you are dead thus it will be expressed by SF Oldenburg in 1925 addressing to IA Orbeli. This definition suited equally to NYa Marr and AE Fersman and to BV Farmakovskiy and to Sergey Feodorovich Oldenburg himself.

In the speech of IA Orbeli of the July, 1922, another fact is demonstrated, viz. the undisguised satisfaction with the successes of the Soviet power in the sphere of 'uniting of Russia' and the evident hope for the better future. The pathos of his speech must be unambiguously considered. The State increased the financing, so that the Academy had acquired the possibility to function. However it is impossible to go against the stream, it is needed to confirm its own necessity for the state. Otherwise the state will abandon in general the keeping of RAHMK and right it would be. The reaction of the members of the Council of RAHMK at this emotional speech of IA Orbeli turned to be a symptomatic one. The first who answered was N Ya Marr stating that the proposed action 'is defined by the current moment, the question is only about ways of its realization'.¹⁰ Vasilii V Bartol'd 'doubted that currently the conditions for collective works were more favourable than three years ago' (Ibid.). SF Oldenburg noted that the proposals heard were directly concerned with the agenda and that 'the questions proposed by IA Orbeli are very important and complicated, but they are to be resolved and, in addition, urgently.

The argument between Iosif A Orbeli and Sergey A Zhebelev turned to be the most demonstrative in terms of definition of the positions. The latter noted that the question 'proposed by the speaker is important to the Academy itself but casts down a doubt that given the uncertainty where we are found ourselves it would be possible to propose a definite answer to this question. First it must be cleared whether the Academy do exist and will exist and what means will be in its disposal, then we can take in account for us; whereas otherwise we will deceive ourselves and make nothing, the more so that sources and scientific literature remain unavailable for us.

Here Orbeli very emotionally objected: If we sometimes cheated, we must give account first to ourselves but no to the Commissariat (Ibid.). As to the unavailability of the materials, then in his words two positions are possible. On one side it is possible to complain: I am not able to study materials from Lake Van outside the borders of Russia, therefore I cannot do anything. The other position is: I cannot reach the area of Lake Van, therefore, waiting for that possibility, I will study the inscriptions found in the Caucasus. If, however, it is not possible to get to the Caucasus, I will study the materials kept in Petersburg and

who of us can state that in Petersburg there are no materials concerned with at least classical archaeology? Literature starts to arrive from aboard, the influx of books is increasing so much that we have no time to read them. If however we come to the Commissariat to ask for a certificate that we are existing, we naturally will receive the certificate that we do not exist!' (Ibid. Sheet 48, 48 ver.).

Finally, Orbeli's propositions were accepted. In the course of that session of July 17, 1922, first the position of a particular group of scientists within the management of the Academy appeared strictly intended for the practical collaboration with the Soviet state. At the same time, a split was obviously manifested: not all among the colleagues were psychologically ready for the game under these new rules.

One way or other, the above described events of the 1921-1922 started the development of a new ideology of the national archaeological science in order of establishment of its place in the changed world. In the situation arisen in the USSR during the period under consideration, the starting points for establishment of the new relations 'science-power' (as well as the first points of their contact) inevitably were:

- a. The materialistic approach to the history generally and particularly to the history of culture;
- b. A vividly expressed 'resource approach' implying that investigations of the monuments of history and culture (including those of archaeology) 'potentially can be of significance in providing some practical tasks standing before the modern society (becoming a resource of its kind)'¹²

There are no doubts that the Russian scientific community was ready for that turn. The ideas of materialism had impregnated the world-view of the scientific elite long ago before the Bolsheviks came into power. The official belonging to the Orthodoxy before the revolution was for the predominant majority of scientists only a tribute of political loyalty. The religious and philosophical searches of the 'Silver Age' had not touched our educated circles very deeply. Naturally, particular vivid exceptions were found. But these exceptions rather confirmed the general rule.

As to the resource approach, already the above cited statements of NYa Marr, IA Orbeli and SF Oldenburg leave no doubts that these notions provoked no rejection among the founding fathers of RAHMK (at least among the most active group which defined the policy of this institution). Previously, in the conditions of pre-revolutionary Russia, the resource approach was not applied to the sphere of humanities. Its actualisation began at the turn of the 1910/1920s, when historians of culture and archaeologists required proofs of the 'practical utility' of their activities.

Investigation of plans, reports and other documents of RAHMK/GAHMK of the 1920s shows that in that period a separate stress was put on the development of the following directions, which were considered as the most promising in the new social-political and ideological context:

- A. The technological approach including:
 - a. Development of natural science methods positioning the archaeological investigations on the 'firm foundation of scientific knowledge',
 - b. Study of ancient technologies which resulted in an independent source for the history of culture and society.

- B. The interdisciplinary integrated studies of particular regions both in geographical and historical terms and as well the real steps in that direction.
- C. Analysis of the problems of cultural creation and primeval thought in terms of materialistic notions.
- D. The prospect of these directions even before was considered more or less by the scientific community.

However the changed situation resulted that exactly these directions came into foreground although to the detriment of many other aspects, especially to the traditional humanitarian studies of Slavic-Russian and Eastern Christian antiquities.

Conclusion

At the turn of 1910/1920s, there appeared a 'team' who took upon itself the responsibility not only for the Academy but for the subsequent fate of the national archaeological science in general. This 'team' included very different person's viz. NYa Marr, SF Oldenburg, BVV Farmakovskiy, KK Romanov, IA Orbeli et al. Regardless of their personal position to the regime, they all chose a single cultural option, viz. they stayed in the Motherland and never left the science. Thus they took for them a very difficult mission not to allow ruining the science during the morbid break and 'reformatting' of the public structures in Russia. To fulfil this task, it was necessary, at least, to search for a common language with the new power, be able to find points of contact with it and occasionally, alas, shut eyes to the inevitable losses.

That was a hard process, resembling sometimes a developing attack, or sometimes a total surrender of the positions. In its course it was needed to 'play' actively themselves with the new power attempting to impose the own rules or to occupy their own field. As it is often occurs in such situations, scientists searched and really found the ways of coordination of their scientific activities with the state interests and the life practice in the country. Nevertheless, the selection of ideas consonant with the times was partly forced, reflecting mostly the actual preferences of the influential academic elite of the 1920s. In the contemporary academic media, the resource approach to the monuments was considered as quite natural by many. Nonetheless, the development of new directions, the intensified tendency to the interdisciplinary studies undoubtedly updated the archaeological science and opened new prospects before it.

Perhaps we must agree with Alexey V Bondarev's conclusion who noted that the birth of a new state and new system of life 'were considered by the most astute minds in the 1920s not only as an 'apocalypse' and the 'end of the world' but also as an explosion starting some new things'.¹³ The search for new approaches in the frames of a dialogue of the science and power in the 1920s allowed the scientists to determine and develop quite a series of the directions of archaeological thought which were pioneer ones in the first third of the 20th century. During all the hard charges of the subsequent 'critical' period, the archaeological science in the USSR finally had not just survived but also reached a new stage.

Acknowledgements

Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Conflict of interest

Author declares there is no conflict of interest in publishing the article.

References

1. Lenin VI. Will the Bolsheviks retain state power. Vol 34, Russia; 1969. p. 287–339.
2. Robinson M. Russian academic elite: Soviet experience (1910s-1920s). *Novoye literaturnoye obozreniye*, no.53, Russia; 2002. p. 159–198.
3. Fedchenkov V. At the turn of two eras. Russia; 2004. p. 618.
4. Platonova NI, Musin AE. IAC and its transformation in 1917-1919. In: Nosov EN, Musin AE, editors. *Imperatorskaya Arkheologicheskaya komissiya (1859-1917)*, St-Petersburg. Russia; 2009. p. 1065–1115.
5. Yarov SV, Musayev VI, Chistikov AN, et al. Petrograd at the turn of the ages. *The city and its inhabitants during the years of the Revolution and the Civil War*. Russia; 2013. p. 304.
6. Kondratov SA. Revolution and civil war in Russia: 1917-1923. Vol 3, Russia; 2008. p. 560.
7. Vrangel MD. My life in the communist paradise. *Arkhiv russkoy revolyutsii*, Russia; 1922. p. 198–214.
8. Kornatovskiy NA. The struggle for Red Petrograd. Russia; 2004. p. 606.
9. Platonova NI. RAHMK and the campaign to seize church values in Petrograd. *Ocherki istorii otechestvennoy arkheologii IV*, Russia; 2015. p. 105–118.
10. Pokrovsky NN, Petrov SG. Archives of the Kremlin Political Bureau and the church 1922-1925. Russia; 1997.
11. Chukov G. The diaries of 1918-1922, The last years of the bishopric of Metropolitan Veniamin, *Dnevniki 1918-1922 godov. Posledniye gody svyatitelstva mitropolita Veniamina, Sankt-Peterburgskiyeparkhialnyye vedomosti*, Russia; 2004. p. 32,70–81.
12. Tsyarkin DO. Formation of historical and documentary expertise in Russia: 1898-1963. Concepts, institutions, scientists. PhD dissertation, St.-Petersburg. Russia; 2009. p. 237.
13. Bondarev AV. History and main directions of development of Russian theoretical studies of cultural genesis. PhD dissertation, St Petersburg. Russia; 2009. p. 24.