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## FRANCIS BALODIS IN SARATOV (1918–1924)\*

This work is devoted to the life period of a distinguished historian and archaeologist F. V. Balodis whilst in Saratov (1918–1924). It describes the scientist's exploration of archaeological hoards in the Lower Volga Region, his works on Egyptology, and his pedagogical and social activities in Saratov.

*Key words:* F. Balodis, Saratov, archaeology, Golden Horde, Egyptology

“On the top of Uvek people saw ruins and barrows. Baudek (an archaeologist) and Ordynin (a painter) came with a crew of men to excavate it. The excavation was into its third week already, and the centuries past were ‘coming out of the ground’. The remains of an ancient town were found on Uvek: benched stone ruins of water-raising constructions, stepped foundations, sewage systems... Someone unknown came here from Asian steppes, founded the town and disappeared forever. . . . Stone vaults were dead, no smell. Every entering made the thoughts clear and calm, and filled the soul with sorrow. The top of Uvek was covered with stones, it was bare and the wormwood grew like a silver dusty bristle. The air was bitter. The centuries. They teach like stars, and Baudek knew the joy of bitterness. The ideas of archeologist Baudek were mixed by the centuries. A thing always tells not only about life, but also about art – and everyday life is already an art. Baudek measured life by art, like every artist. . . . And bitter was the air on Uvek” (Пильняк 1979, 100–101).

In 1921, a famous writer Boris Pilnyak made Frol Baudek one of the characters of his novel *Miserable year*. His prototype was a real man – the professor of Saratov University in 1918–1924 Franz Vladimirovich Balod (his name was pronounced in this way during his stay and work in Russia).

There is little known about F. V. Balodis's stay in Saratov. Balodis himself briefly mentioned it in his memoirs (Balodis 1941, 98–110). Very little written evidence of his work remains, for almost all the

Regional Archives written on the history of Saratov University were destroyed by fire in 1974.

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Saratov University was opened in 1909. At that time it consisted of the only one Medical Department. After the February Revolution, A. A. Manuylov, minister for public education of the Provisional Government, announced the opening of the Historical and Philological Department, Physical and Mathematical Department, and the Department of Law beginning with 1 July 1917.

Soon the teaching staff was enlarged by the addition of many famous Russian scientists from Petrograd, Moscow and Tomsk. A well-known researcher of ancient history M. E. Sergeenko wrote in her memoirs: “A life in a satiated and abundant town far from the battlefield and the cruel mess of the capital-city, with the favourite work and students – all this was attracting and tempting” (Сергеевко 2001, 295).

Among those who contributed to the foundation and development of the department were its first professors: philosopher S. L. Frank, historians V. I. Veretennikov and V. A. Butenko, and philologists V. M. Zhirmunsky, N. K. Piksanov, M. R. Fasmer and S. V. Melikova. They were later joined by: philosopher N. S. Arsenyev, philologists N. N. Durnovo and G. A. Ilyinsky, and archaeologist P. S. Rykov. Among them was the private-docent of Moscow University, Franz Vladimirovich Balod (Balodis). On 25 May 1918, he became elected

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Professor of the Art Theory and History Section of the Historical and Philological Department (ГАО. Ф. 332. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 2 об.).

From his first days in Saratov F. V. Balodis actively joined the scientific and social life. His gift for teaching became evident. He read lectures and conducted seminars. In the 1918/1919 academic year, Balodis read a series of lectures on the History of the Ancient East at the General History sub department of the Historical and Philological Department. He also conducted a seminar on Ancient Egyptian language and the decryption of hieroglyphic texts. At the Art Theory and History sub-department he read lectures on the History of Egyptian Art and conducted a corresponding seminar (Кузнецова 2006, 81).

In spring 1919, the Historical Department became independent from the Historical and Philological Department and together with the Department of Law formed the Department of Social Sciences. Under the initiative of F. V. Balodis, the sub-department of Art History and Archaeology was opened at the Historical and Philological Department (ГАО. Ф. 332. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 5 об.). Thus, thanks to F. V. Balodis, teaching of archaeology began at Saratov University. In the 1919/1920 academic year, he read lectures on the History of Ancient Art and Italian Renaissance Art at the newly opened sub-department. He also conducted a seminar on the History of Ancient Eastern Motifs in Ancient and Christian Art (Обозрение преподавания на историко-филологическом факультете 1920, р. 3).

The high scientific authority of F. V. Balodis allowed him to become Dean of the Historical and Philological Department in April 1919. He remained at this post until May 1921, when the Department was closed down.

In the 1921/1922 academic year, F. V. Balodis read lectures on the History of Art at the Department of Social Sciences. At the same time he taught at the Saratov Institute of Public Education (ГАНИСО. Ф. 6107. Оп. 1. Д. 21. Л. 6, 16). After the reorganization of the Department of Social Sciences in 1922, F. V. Balodis became professor of the Pedagogical Department. He remained at this post until he left Saratov in 1924.

The Revolution deeply affected the Russian science. Scientists suffered many difficulties during this time, such as persecution from the government, arrests, and a lack of suitable working conditions.

In 1920–1921, a terrible famine struck the Volga region. In autumn 1920, Saratov University applied for “academic” rations for scientists. However, until November 1921, the professors at Saratov University received only part of the rations. Only

beginning with 1 November 1921, did they begin to receive them entirely (11 lbs of grain, 11 lbs of meat, 5 lbs of fish, 3/4 lbs of tobacco, 2 lbs of sugar, 3/8 lbs of coffee, 3.5 lbs of fats, 5 lbs of matches, 1 lbs of soap) (ГАНИСО. Ф. 6107. Оп. 1. Д. 31. Л. 22–22 об.). The financial situation of the University teaching staff was poor. The municipal government employees received 60–90 lbs of bread monthly, the scientists – only 38 lbs. In 1921–1922, the University teaching staff did not receive shoes and fabric for sewing clothes in time (ГАНИСО. Ф. 6107. Оп. 1. Д. 16. Л. 4).

In spring 1922, the scientists in Saratov decided to form a Committee for Improving the Living Conditions of Scholars. Professor S. V. Yushkov was appointed to the position of head on 17 March 1922. F. V. Balodis became his deputy and effectively worked at this post. In 1923 alone, the Committee supported 221 scientists (ГАНИСО. Ф. 6107. Оп. 1. Д. 16. Л. 10).

The conditions for academic work were also very difficult. The University buildings were insufficiently heated, therefore, students listened to lectures with their coats on, whilst professors were given felt boots (‘valenki’) and military jackets. Students and professors were forced to do compulsory community service. E. N. Kusheva recollected a time when the students were assigned to dig trenches and build barbed wire entanglements near Saratov (Кушева 1993, р. 131). Professor V. D. Zernov recalled F. V. Balodis took part in felling trees near to Sodomovskie dachi when A. I. Denikin attacked the town (Зернов 2005, 224).

International charities supported the scientists of Saratov. According to archive documents, around 60 lecturers including F. V. Balodis received parcels from the American Relief Association. In February 1923, the Belgian Red Cross issued F. V. Balodis with a suit (ГАНИСО. Ф. 6107. Оп. 1. Д. 20. Л. 1 об., 35 об.).

However, in such dreadful conditions the professors continued their research and attracted more students. The administrative ability of F. V. Balodis was shown during the arrangement of the University’s first archaeological expeditions. In 1919–1922, in spite of famine, poverty and war, he continued his archaeological research in the Lower Volga region. “Cholera, spotted and enteric fever, famine, unexpected cold: all those determined the conditions of work,” he recalled later (Баллод 1923b, 11).

In winter 1919, the board-members of the Museum sub-department suggested they would carry out archaeological excavations on Uvek. The place chosen was no coincidence. A railway bridge over the Volga

River and a military fort were planned to be built there. Building would have ruined the unique relics of the past. The area near the Nobel storehouses was chosen for excavation. In 1913, the territory nearby had already been excavated (Баллод 1923b, 5).

Both the Historical and Philological Department (Saratov University) and Pedagogical Institute suggested they get the students involved in an archaeological expedition. The idea was approved, and F. V. Balodis enthusiastically began to make arrangements. While preparing the summer practice he read a course in Eastern Europe Archaeology (Баллод 1919, 2). Thus, F. V. Balodis established the tradition of involving students in archaeological expeditions, a tradition which still exists today.

The council of war of the Saratov fortified region gave the permission for excavations and the mapping out of the territory near Uvek. On 10 June 1919, F. V. Balodis along with 50 expedition members moved to the excavation site. The expedition lasted until 25 June (Баллод 1923b, 5-6).

The excavations again proved the rich cultural heritage of the Golden Horde, the work of artists and craftspeople (mainly Tatars, but also foreign people, "amongst whom Russians") (Баллод 1919, 34).

Due to F. V. Balodis's enthusiasm, "all the difficulties were overcome and the excavations were brought to the desired end" (ГАСО. Ф. 332. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 10 об.). The results considerably enriched the knowledge about Uvek. F. V. Balodis discovered two kilns used for making glazed tiles and found there was a highly developed tile production facility on Uvek. Glazed tiles did not originate from Central Asia or Persia, it was made on site (Баллод 1919, 26). The pictures of tiles, which look similar to the Ryazan hoards design (11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries A.C.) and found in the cemetery jewelry allowed the conclusion that Russian Art greatly influenced the Art of the Golden Horde (ГАСО. Ф. 332. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 10 об.; Баллод 1919, 32–33).

After finishing the excavations, F. V. Balodis gave a public lecture, which attracted a big audience. On display were colour photographs and small items found on Uvek. All discovered items were presented to the University Museum, which was opened twice a week according to the resolution of the Professors Council (ГАСО. Ф. 332. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 10 об.). After F. V. Balodis's report, professor V. M. Zhirmunskiy suggested "they showcase the rich scientific heritage of the local area as completely as possible with the help of professors and students, for this is one of the main goals which Saratov University should aim for" (ГАСО. Ф. 332. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 13 об.). The Historical and Philological Department agreed with the professor. An idea

of opening a new department was put forward, which would study the Eastern culture and people, but this idea never materialized.

The excavations on Uvek opened a new page in F. V. Balodis's scientific biography, connected with the study of the Golden Horde culture. His archeological work in the Lower Volga Region became respected in academic circles. The scientist claimed that "proper study of the Golden Horde culture and examination of remaining examples of its architecture is the urgent task of science" (Баллод 1923a, 61).

In 1920, F. V. Balodis suggested three expeditions in the right-bank area: near the Ternovka hill fort (not far from Kamyshin), near Danilovka and Krasniy Yar, and near Tsaritsyn including the excavation of the hill fort of Mechetnoe; and also a field archaeology expedition near Saratov (Баллод 1923b, 7). In March 1920, the Historical and Philological Department supported the initiative of F. V. Balodis. The registration of the volunteer students began in April.

The excavation in Ternovka under the guidance of F. V. Balodis took place on 30 May – 5 June 1920. The expedition members excavated two barrows and carried out field archaeology on local dunes. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of June, they returned to Saratov. The excavation near Danilovka took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June – to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. A lot of interesting discoveries were made. The third stage of excavation took place on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August – to the 4<sup>th</sup> of September: the hill-fort of Mechetnoe was excavated, three barrows were found, a panoramic view of the necropolis was taken and the excavated ruins of Horde constructions were measured.

The expedition members had to deal with difficult working conditions. By the end of August they still had not received their bread rations. However, they finished the excavation thanks to the courtesy of the unusually kind and generous peasants, who brought them food (Баллод 1923b, 9–10).

In 1921, F. V. Balodis continued to study the stratigraphy of 10.5 km long area along the Volga River. He intended to begin a large-scale expedition to study the Volga from Kamyshin to Tsaritsyn, from the source of the Akhtuba River to Tsarev and Eruslan. The Tsaritsyn Provincial Executive Committee and Provincial Department of Political Education provided the necessary funds for the expeditions. However, they were only received in Saratov in autumn, when the archaeological work should have already been completed. Together with his companion B. V. Zaykovskiy and five students F. V. Balodis conducted only a short expedition. They investigated the right-bank area from Sarpa

to Balykley and collected material to help them reveal the stratigraphy from Tsaritsyn to Kamyshin (Баллод 1923b, 11).

Before F. V. Balodis's excavations in the Volga Region there had been many gaps in the archaeology of the Golden Horde. To investigate one of them in 1922, he arranged an expedition to the Tsarev region and the hill-fort of Selitrennoe. The aim of the expedition was to uncover the mystery of the Golden Horde capital cities. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, V. V. Grigoryev, J. von Hammer and H. D. Fren suggested that the Golden Horde had only one city, Sarai, which was situated near the hill-fort of Selitrennoe. New Sarai was either a suburb of Old Sarai or the city palace. G. S. Sablukov, however, questioned this hypothesis and suggested that the Old Sarai ruins were situated near Selitrennoe, whereas the New Sarai ruins were near Tsarev. There had been few excavations of hill-forts before F. V. Balodis's expeditions. The expedition was financed by the People's Commissariat of Education of Tatarstan.

On 10 July 1922, F. V. Balodis, B. V. Zaykovskiy (an archaeologist) and A. I. Gorshenin (an engineer) moved to Tsarev through Tsaritsyn. The expedition lasted until the 21<sup>st</sup> of July.

F. V. Balodis hired workers to help with the excavation and paid them himself (Баллод 1923a, 14). He made a plan of the hill-fort and divided it into different areas. In the northern part of the hill-fort he discovered slags, ruins of kilns and ovens, and a small copper tube inlaid with silver, suggesting expensive items for the nobles were made there. He also discovered ruins which he defined as a workshop as small copper ingots were found there, together with part of a cast-iron cauldron, pieces of pottery with typical Horde decoration, and glazed tiles.

F. V. Balodis found signs of a developed water-supply system. The most interesting was a dam which was constructed to create a pond. A lockage system allowed control of the water supply. "We were astonished by the sophistication of the waterside structures. And if all this was built under Uzbek or his successor Dzhaniybek, the Golden Horde had a right to be proud of its capital city," F. V. Balodis wrote in his report (Баллод 1922, 732–733; 1923a, 27–28).

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of September, F. V. Balodis and B. V. Zaykovskiy moved to Selitrennoe. In Astrakhan they visited a local museum to see the antiquities of the Golden Horde and local archives to study documents on the region history.

Archaeological excavations lasted from the 15<sup>th</sup> of September until the 7<sup>th</sup> of October. During those three weeks, F. V. Balodis achieved a lot: it was the first real scientific excavation of a hill-fort and

the first time one was mapped out. F. V. Balodis divided the town into seven areas and gave social characteristics to all of them. Shepherds and children helped to find coins. Professor used a very interesting excavation method: "at first, the trenches were dug in the direction of the required hill to define the inner walls, and only then the whole object was excavated in all area extent" (Рудаков 2000, 180–191).

As in the site near Tsarev, there were discoveries of glazed tiles, beads, water pipes, bricks, ruins of ovens used in potash production, foundries, remains of ponds and ditches and pottery. F. V. Balodis wrote in his report, that "the examples of architecture, which we discovered, demonstrate the high level of technical knowledge and high living conditions of a Golden Horde town" (Баллод 1923a, 60). The coins found are evidence of lively trade with other Tatar towns: Bulgar, Khadzhi Tarkhan, and Azak.

F. V. Balodis's excavations proved the great role of Old Sarai and New Sarai in the cultural and economic life of the Horde and the high level of living conditions in the Volga Region, "the earlier viewpoint of the Golden Horde culture and towns changed" (Баллод 1923a, 62).

In 1922, at the General Meeting of the Saratov Society of History, Archaeology and Ethnography, F. V. Balodis reported: "The results of the excavations and field archaeology near Tsarev (the former New Sarai, Golden Horde capital city)" (ГАСО. Ф. 407. Оп. 2. Д. 328. Л. 7.).

In Saratov F. V. Balodis continued his study of Egyptology which he began before the Revolution. But he did not have enough material and books and, more importantly, he did not have access to the Egyptian antiquities. On the basis of the lecture course, which he read in the 1921/1922 academic year at the Department of Social Sciences, he prepared his *Essays on the History of Ancient Egyptian Art*. The book was published in 1924 in Moscow and soon became popular among the readers (Баллод 1924b). It represents a short popular scientific essay on the development of Egyptian Art from the prehistoric period to the Saite period (7<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.)

In 1922, F. V. Balodis took part in the All-Russian Congress of Egyptologists. On 18 August 1922, he made a report on "Akhenaten Art", where he categorized the development of art history under this Pharaoh into periods and marked the role of individuals in the forming of new artistic images. Famous scientists took part in the discussion after the report, including V. V. Struve, T. N. Kozmina-Borozdina, N. D. Flitgner and others (Бороздин 1922, 544–545).

In Saratov F. V. Balodis wrote and published an interesting article on the cult of Osiris and mythical



processes in his honour (Баллод 1924a). He tried to trace whether the dramatic poetry existed in Egypt. He was guided by the text of Ikhnofret's stele, which was made under Senwosret III (19<sup>th</sup> century B.C.). It was discovered during the excavations in Abydos in 1887. Supposedly, F. V. Balodis saw it whilst working in Germany during 1910. He included the translation of the stele text in the article. Having analyzed all the available data, F. V. Balodis concluded that the annual performances in the honour of Osiris were not related to the dramatic poetry.

In addition to scientific work and teaching, F. V. Balodis also took part in social and educational activities.

Together with a famous history professor V. I. Veretennikov, F. V. Balodis took part in the forming of a sub department of museum affairs and protection of the remaining examples of ancient art and antiquities. In 1919, he was head of his scientific section. In May 1919, he became head of the Museum of Art Theory and History, which was opened at the Historical and Philological Department (ГАСО. Ф. 332. Оп. 1. Д. 3. Л. 11 об.).

On 27 October 1918, F. V. Balodis became a member of the Saratov Scholarly Archival Commission, soon renamed the Saratov Society of History, Archaeology and Ethnography. He became head of the Historical and Archaeological Museum of the Society. He took charge of the Museum's scientific work, made plans for archaeological expeditions and accomplished them (ГАСО. Ф. 407. Оп. 2. Д. 419. Л. 1; Д. 433. Л. 7; Малов 2006, 11).

F. V. Balodis was a research assistant at the Archaeological Research Institute of Saratov University. In 1921–1924, he became its head. The Institute studied the antiquities of the Lower Volga Region and of the Golden Horde in particular. F. V. Balodis was a member of the Commission on the study of the Tatar culture, which carried out ethnographic and archaeological research in the Volga Region near Saratov (Бесъ Саратов 1925, 383).

F. V. Balodis was pro-rector (1920.26.X–1921.9.V) and vice-chancellor (1922.29.XII–1924.5.II) of Saratov University for some time, but there is no written evidence of it. As well as this, he was also an academic secretary of the University Research Library. There is documented evidence of his appeal to B. A. Turaev to send books to Saratov University (Томашевич 2001, 379).

While in Saratov, F. V. Balodis maintained contact with his colleagues in Moscow. In October 1923, he was appointed a full member of the Institute of Research of Art and Archaeology. In 1923–1924, he delivered two reports at the meeting of the Institute's archaeological department: "Stages of the Develop-

ment of the Art in Akhenaten's period" and "Roots of the Art reformation in the Akhenaten's period". F. V. Balodis planned a working visit to Berlin and together with V. A. Gorodtsov and A. S. Bashkirov intended to visit Turkey, Greece and Egypt to study the relationship between the ancient cultures of those countries and the cultures in the South of the USSR. He also planned to take part in the International Scientific Congress in Cairo in 1925. Unfortunately, these visits did not take place (Кулаков n.d.). In 1923, F. V. Balodis became editor of the journal *Ancient World*, which was published in Moscow.

In February 1924, F. V. Balodis left Saratov forever. The exact date and reason for his departure is not yet clear. It is possible that the political situation in Saratov was the main reason. The intellectuals were strongly persecuted by the government. At the beginning of the 1920s, many of them were forced to leave including S. L. Frank, N. S. Arsenyev, M. R. Fasmer, V. E. Seseman, and G. P. Fedotov, who eventually became emigrants. Political tension is most likely the main reason why F. V. Balodis left.

F. V. Balodis continued to maintain contact with his colleagues from Saratov. In the library of chair of archaeology and ethnography N. M. Malov found the reprint of F. V. Balodis's article which was published in Riga in 1928 (Малов 2006, 13). It contained the author's dedicatory inscription. However, this appeared to be the only documented evidence of his connection with Saratov University after he left.

It is difficult to imagine what the scientist's life would have been like if he stayed in Saratov. However, F. V. Balodis was lucky. He left for Moscow and later returned to Latvia, his motherland, thus escaping the fate of the remaining Saratov archaeologists. Most of them died in camps or lived in exile under Stalin. In 1930, P. D. Rau committed suicide. P. S. Rykov, N. K. Arzyutov, and N. N. Dmitriev were repressed and died in the camp. T. M. Minaeva was sent to the Orenburg Region and P. D. Stepanov was forced to leave Saratov. All that was a heavy blow for the Saratov archaeological school, which it would not recover from for a long time (Малов 2006, 8, 35).

Undoubtedly, F. V. Balodis was a distinguished scientist and teacher. All his research in the Volga Region did not pass unnoticed. He established the "tradition of collecting source archaeological material, based on field archaeology and the investigation of the main antiquities" (Кузнецова 2006, 82). F. V. Balodis was one of the founders of the Saratov archaeological school and helped to establish humanitarian education in Saratov.

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### FRANCIS BALODIS SARATOVĀ (1918–1924)

#### Kopsavilkums

Raksts veltīts ievērojamā vēsturnieka un arheologa F. Baloža dzīves Saratovas periodam (1918–1924). Tajā aplūkoti zinātnieka arheoloģiskie izrakumi Volgas lejteces reģionā, viņa pētījumi ēģiptoloģijā, pedagogiskā darbība un sociālās aktivitātes Saratovā.

*Atslēgas vārdi:* F. Balodis, Saratova, arheoloģija, Zelta Orda, ēģiptoloģija

F. Balodis bija profesors Saratovas Universitātē no 1918. līdz 1924. gadam. Laikposmā no 1919. līdz 1922. gadam viņš organizēja izrakumus Uvekā, Vecsaraļā, Jaunsaraļā un citās Zelta Ordas pilsētās. Saratovā F. Balodis lasīja lekcijas Ēģiptes mākslā un publicēja virkni nozīmīgu rakstu. Viņš bija

Arheoloģijas institūta direktors, Saratovas vēstures, arheoloģijas un etnogrāfijas biedrības biedrs un ieņēma vadošu posteni Saratovas Universitātē. F. Balodis bija viens no Saratovas arheoloģijas skolas dibinātājiem un palīdzēja veidot humanitāro izglītību Saratovā.