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The Bukovina Expedition 1916–1917. A Documentary Framework for Studying the Activities of Russian Scientists in the Protection of Cultural Heritage during the First World War

During the First World War, the Academy of Sciences organized a 'Commission for Supervision' to oversee the 'Preservation of Historical Monuments and Scientific Collections' in areas of military activity. Special representatives were appointed to the Western, Caucasian, and Turkish fronts. In 1914–1918, within the frame of our project, some interesting expeditions were conducted of which little is known of their fieldwork, and of the materials they collected.

During the First World War the historical region of Bukovina, which was part of Austria-Hungary at that time, had been occupied by the Army of the Russian Empire. In 1916–1917 the Imperial Archaeological Commission, Academy of Sciences and the Saint Petersburg department of Society for protection of monuments in Warsaw organized an expedition for the monitoring and protection of cultural and historical heritage in the area of conflict. It was headed by Piotr Pokryshkin, an Architecture academic. Architects, artists, archaeologists, ethnographers and historians from Russia and Ukraine were involved in the complex expedition to Bukovina. They compiled descriptions of monuments and sites, and collected objects from archives, museums, libraries, churches and historical buildings. They recorded their state of preservation and collected ethnographic material, amongst other activities.



1. Members of the Bukovina Expedition, December 1916. (Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg [IHMC RAS], Photo Department, Neg. I 84510)

The most significant parts of the expedition's documentary materials are well preserved in the Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, part of Russian Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg. They include reports, diary notes, drawings and photographs taken by

expedition participants. The pictures of the painted Bukovina monasteries are especially remarkable.



2. Kimpolung. Museum at the School of Fine Arts. Ethnography collection, December 1916 (Materials of the Bukovina expedition. Photo Department IHMC RAS, Print O.475/74)

The archive of the expedition is an important source both for the study and restoration of architectural monuments of Bukovina, and in obtaining information on the collections of local museums. It is also valuable for investigations of the history of epochal political changes of 1917 in Russia, and the events of the First World War. A comprehensive publication of the materials (reports, diaries, correspondence) demonstrates the success of an international collaboration in the sphere of the preservation and investigation of monuments during a time of political trouble. The scientific publication of these unique photographs will allow us to see the architectural monuments of Bukovina, many of which are now registered in the UNESCO World Heritage List, through the eyes of the researchers of the early 20th century.