

# Strengthening the Practical Orientation of Studying the History of Southern Kazakhstan by the Means of Museum Pedagogy

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## Abstract

**Background/Objectives:** The paper aims to determine the functions of museum pedagogy which is implemented through open-air museums in teaching 'The History of Medieval Kazakhstan'. It also demonstrates the essence, significance and the ways of the effective use of open-air museums in history teaching. **Methods:** The authors analyzed the literature on museums and their cognitive potential, as well as scientific and methodological works related to the issue under consideration and carried out studying, collecting, processing, summarizing and analysis of the experiences in learning 'The Medieval History of Kazakhstan' that is being taught in higher education institutions. **Findings:** Based on the analysis of the principles of museum pedagogy and the cognitive and educational potential of open-air museums, the following conclusions were made: the implementation of the principles of museum pedagogy contributes to value comprehension of reality, involves students into an active learning process, since it enables to manipulate objects personally; it allows extracting the information inherent in them, drawing conclusions and making a their own choice, and enables to include universal human values in the inner spiritual world, reinforce the knowledge gained so that the knowledge becomes personal acquisition, it also enables the persons to get a holistic view of the world, stimulates their creativity and interest in the world around them. Cultural and aesthetic education with the help of museum resources is possible only on the basis of the knowledge and taking into account the peculiarities of human perception, strict adherence to the psychological and pedagogical principles developed by domestic and foreign experts. **Application/Improvement:** Introducing museum culture to children, development of aesthetic perception and artistic taste are the most important challenges facing teachers of educational institutions in our time.

**Keywords:** Educational Function of Museums, Methods of Teaching 'The Medieval History of Kazakhstan', Museum Pedagogy, Open-Air Museum

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, due to the general democratization of cultural life, theoretical problems are actively posed in the world practice of museology, and the need for studies related to the updating of the conceptual framework is increasing. In this regard, the concept of 'museum pedagogy' is of substantial interest.

Museum pedagogy is a branch of museum management studies, which tends to present itself as

a scientific discipline at the confluence of museology, pedagogy and psychology. This is due to the fact that museum pedagogy combines the aspects of theory and methodology and has a close relationship with practice. The subject matter of a new scientific discipline is to study the patterns, principles, and methods of work of a museum with its audience. Its main object is the cultural and educational aspects of communication, i.e. a special approach to various dialogues existing at the museum, which set a mission to participate in the forming of a

free, creative, proactive personality, capable of becoming an active participant in the dialogue. Therefore, in terms of the object, museum pedagogy coincides with the theory of museum communication, and, in terms of the method, it coincides with pedagogy and, being taken more widely, it is congruent to psychology. Like general education science, museum pedagogy not only sums up the experience, but also projects new techniques, and creates museum and pedagogical programs. Because of its interdisciplinary nature, museum pedagogy as a scientific discipline primarily handles the categories of museology and psychological and pedagogical disciplines (for example, 'museum object', 'museum culture', 'museum communication', 'education', 'didactic', 'museum education', 'museum educator', and 'visual thinking'). Having been included in the conceptual framework of museum pedagogy, they often get additional interpretation or new aspects.

The concept of 'museum pedagogy' was formed and introduced into scientific use in Germany in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Initially, it was interpreted as an area of museum activity and focused mainly on work with students.

In the post-Soviet space, the concept of museum pedagogy began to be used from the beginning of the 1970s and was gradually gaining ground. In 1982, at a conference devoted to the interrelation between 'Museum and School', Soviet historian and museologist Avraam Moiseevich Razgon was the first to tell about museum pedagogy. The creation of such a scientific discipline as museum pedagogy 'that is at the confluence of the whole complex of sciences, now seems to be not a distant prospect, but a vital practical task'<sup>1</sup>. There existed serious historical background for the development of museum pedagogy. In fact, the global theory of museum pedagogy began to form in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and was underpinned to the fullest degree in the works of the founders of the excursions school<sup>2-5</sup> and the supporters of the wide use of pedagogical, school and children's museums for education<sup>6</sup>. During the formation of museum pedagogy as a scientific discipline, their views enriched with the concept of a new pedagogical thinking (formed by the end of the 1980s), based on the ideas of humanization and humanitarization of education through addressing to world culture, history, spiritual values, became particularly relevant.

Contemporary museum pedagogy is developing in line with the problems of museum communication and aimed primarily at solving the problems of activating

the creative abilities of the personality. For the purpose, a variety of methods of working with school children, changing their role and position in the museum and pedagogical process, is being developed.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Why Do We Need Museum Pedagogy in Educational Institutions?

It can render an inestimable aid in the process of education, help a child become a creative personality, live not only his/her own life, but also hundreds of other people's lives, and it involves the child into the field of culture, where there is no place for vandalism: destroying is not attractive, because it is interesting to create.

The distinctive features of learning in museum pedagogy are informality and voluntary participation. The special thing about the learning is the opportunity to achieve capacity and meet interests to the fullest extent, since it is stimulated by the expressiveness, variety and authenticity of museum objects. Learning can be carried out in the form of excursions, activities, and museum lessons.

Museum pedagogy makes it possible to:

- Realize an unconventional approach to education, which is based on the interest of children to research activities;
- Combine emotional and intellectual impacts on students;
- Reveal insight into the importance and practical significance of the material that is being studied;
- Try each child's own strength and fulfill himself/herself;
- Explain difficult material through simple and illustrative examples;
- Organize interesting lessons and additional, elective and extracurricular activities, as well as research work<sup>7</sup>.

In development and execution of events and mass cultural activities within the study of history by means of museum pedagogy, the following principles should be taken into account: interactivity, a differentiated approach to students, compliance with the principle of individualization, careful attention to the interests and abilities of each student. The most effective forms of work with students as part of strengthening the practical

orientation of museum pedagogy are mass, group, and individual ones.

'The History of Medieval Kazakhstan' is an important part of education in Kazakhstan and also intended to address the major objectives of the State Standard of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The use of the means of museum pedagogy makes it possible to significantly extend the opportunities to study medieval history and helps to accomplish educational goals more effectively. The assistance provided by the materials obtained in the course of archaeological excavations in open-air museums that have sufficient visual material is undisputable.

## 2.2 The Ways of Using the Pedagogical Potential of an Open-Air Museum

An open air museum is a group of museums whose main sites and expositions are located outdoors, in open areas. Open-air museums are created based on immovable monuments of history and culture in the place of their location in the natural environment or bringing such monuments to the designated area from other places. Today, the term 'open-air museum' is mainly used in relation to the museums created on the base of the monuments brought, or to a mixed type museum; as a rule, open-air museums created on the basis of conservation, restoration and museumification of architectural ensembles, landscapes, settlements, etc. are now called museums-preserves. One of such museums seeking to be 'an open-air museum' is the State Historical and Cultural Reserve Museum 'Azret Sultan' representing an entire complex of archaeological and architectural monuments. The ancient city of Turkestan (its historical name being Yasa) which houses the Reserve Museum 'Azret Sultan' is, in the truest sense of the word, surrounded by priceless monuments of the past, which allowed it to become a kind of symbol of the medieval history of Kazakhstan, and the center of pilgrimage and historical tourism.

The monuments of the city of Turkestan have always attracted the attention of scientists and museum experts. As early as in September 1978, the mausoleum of Ahmed Yasawi served as the basis for opening 'The National Architecture Museum Complex of Ahmed Yasawi', and 11 years later, it was decided to include all the major architectural monuments and museums of the city of Turkestan in a single organizational space. Thus, in 1989, the State Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve 'Azret Sultan' was introduced.

Undoubtedly, the historical and architectural monument of the fourteenth century, i.e. the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, the spiritual guide of Turkic peoples, popularly known as Saint Azret (Hazrat) Sultan – Sultan of All Saints, became the gem and the main object of the Reserve. This is the only medieval architectural monument that has survived to the present day. The Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi is the first monument of the history of Kazakhstan, which was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in June 2000.

In addition to this magnificent ancient building, the Cultural Reserve Museum 'Azret Sultan' includes eight other historical monuments-museums that are linked with a single organizational and scientific infrastructure. The Reserve 'Azret Sultan' includes:

- The Khoja Ahmed Yasawi Museum, 14<sup>th</sup> century (the display area – 654.98 sq. m).
- The underground mosque 'Khilvet', 12<sup>th</sup> century (702 sq. m).
- The 'Juma Mosque' Museum, 18<sup>th</sup> century (603.6 sq. m).
- The 'Hamмам' Museum (130 sq. m).
- The Turkestan city Museum (1,050 sq. m).
- The Archaeology and Ethnography Museum, 14<sup>th</sup> century (140 sq. m).
- The Museum and Mausoleum of Rabia Sultan Begim, 15<sup>th</sup> century (62 sq. m).
- The 'Street of Turkestan city' Museum 19<sup>th</sup> century (452 sq. m).

The total display area of the museums is 3,794.52 sq. m.

At present, the Museum includes 114 historical, cultural, religious and spiritual, archaeological and architectural monuments, among which one item is of international importance, 50 ones are of national importance, and another 63 monuments are of local importance. The total area of the protected areas is calculated to make 529.4 hectares. The basic reserve fund of the museum includes 13,800 pieces, and the scientific library has over 5,000 books.

The State Historical and Cultural Reserve Museum 'Azret Sultan' is the most visited tourist attraction in the region and the most important place of interest throughout Kazakhstan that welcomes more than 350 thousand visitors annually.

The Otrar State Archaeological Reserve-Museum

located in the Southern Kazakhstan was created by the Decision of the Council of Ministers of Kazakh SSR on May 11, 1979, and in 1982, the Museum was open to visitors. The Otrar Museum has become a major research center and repository of archaeological artifacts found during the excavation of a unique historical monument – the site of the ancient settlement of Otrar which used to play the role of the economic and commercial center of the region for more than 200 years.

The Reserve-Museum covers a total area of 3,048.5 sq. m. It consists of 4 archaeological monuments of national importance and 216 archeological monuments of local importance. These include the ancient cities of the Otrar oasis: Otrartobe, Kuyryktobe, Kokmardan, Altyntobe, Aktobe, Jalpaktobe, Arystan-Baba Mausoleum, and other historical monuments.

The museum exhibition is divided into two sections: archaeological and ethnographic. The archaeological room houses the earliest exhibits belonging to the Bronze Age. They are mainly pottery and other utensils found during the excavations in Otrar city and the site of ancient settlement and necropolis of Kokmardan. Among the most curious exhibits there are amulets in the form of animal figures, most often in the form of a ram, dog, or horse. The room exhibits include many remnants of tools, indicating the development of agriculture and nomadic cattle breeding. The exhibition presents a wide range of exhibits of ceramics. Most of them have been restored by the hands of conservators. The timeless colors and strength of the material are amazing. Khums are the main items among the utensils for storage and transportation of water and food. The pottery consists of lanterns, a dastarkhan (a Turkic word meaning 'tablecloth' or 'great spread') dated 11-12 centuries AD, kumgans (narrow-necked water jugs), buckets, clay bricks, tiles used for tiling the walls of mosques and the floors of public baths. The high level of development of the city infrastructure is evidenced by fragments of the water distribution system.

Ceramics, fragile porcelain, iron tools, gold, silver and copper coins, remains of wheat and cotton, carved wooden panels, glass, bricks and facing terracotta tiles date the late period of the development of Otrar – the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The ethnographic section houses exhibits of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries donated by the local population: household items, jewelry, musical instruments, and tools associated with nomadic cattle breeding, agriculture, fishing, and hunting. There are items for falconry, closely related to

the spiritual culture of the people, and adornments of the yurt. The most valuable exhibits are inlay made of bone, a gilt silver belt, and jewelry – earrings, rings, plait charms – sholps. They give a special luster to the exhibition. At the museum, there is also the Abu Nasr al-Farabi Library. It stocks more than 3,000 publications, the works of al-Farabi and his followers.

These reserve museums are very attractive by the fact that they could be easily turned into open-air museums. In this regard, archaeological handling, conservation and restoration of the architectural monuments and sites located on the territory of the reserves are being carried out. They are the material evidence of the life of Kazakhs in ancient times, their worldview, culture, level of social development. All of them are well-preserved remains of architectural structures with organized opportunities for their seeing. Direct communication with a monument which is part of the remote past generates a sense of belonging to history. Familiarization with the archaeological finds provides a real opportunity for this.

It is necessary to involve children in the work in open-air museums through social project planning, research effort and activities related to local studies and, via actual examples, to instill in schoolchildren a sense of patriotism and interest in the study of history and devotion to their native country. The activity of open-air museums is characterized with a wide variety of forms and methods of work with museum materials in the educational process, enriched by new forms that were suggested by modern times. It is interesting to give and have history lessons at the open-air museums, where the very atmosphere 'immerses' the listeners into the world of the culture and way of life of Kazakhs and helps to adopt the topics such as: 'The Peculiarities of the Development of Medieval Towns and Kazakhs' way of life'; 'The Socio-Economic Situation of Medieval Towns'; and many others.

The transformation of the medieval towns and archaeological sites in southern Kazakhstan in open-air museums has a high potential, considerable historical significance and bears great information load, in particular:

**First**, discovering traces of irrigation canals, finding tools used in agriculture says that the medieval towns were the centers of the sedentary lifestyle, irrigated agriculture and urban civilization;

**Second**, the fortification systems built in the medieval

towns of Kazakhstan evidence that engineering science was highly developed. The cities and towns of Southern Kazakhstan were divided into three parts: the citadel, shakhristan (a part of the ancient city located within the municipal walls but outside the citadel), and rabad (trading and industrial suburbs of the medieval city), each of which was surrounded by defensive walls;

**Third**, the residents of medieval towns and cities were engaged not only in agriculture but also in livestock husbandry, which is evidenced by the animal bones found in some premises within the city limits and in cattle-pens outside the city limits;

**Fourth**, a new direction began to develop in the medieval archeology of Kazakhstan – Muslim archeology, which studies places of worshipping Allah, namely mosques located in the medieval towns of Sauran, Syganak, and Otrar; centers of science and education, i.e. madrassas; the underground cells of Sufis, the medieval followers of Islam, located in the city of Turkestan; the grave of one of the first saints on the Kazakh land – Kumchik-Ata; the Mausoleum of Khodja Ahmed Yasawi, one of the founders of Sufism. The widespread occurrence of such landmarks demonstrates not only of the importance of religion in the life of society, but also is an evidence of the highly-developed science and education concurrently with the advancement of religion. These archaeological sites have been considered to be holy from ancient times, and they are also place for repentance;

**Fifth**, a large number of pottery and handiworks of ancient craftsman have been found, which indicates highly-developed traditional handicraft;

**Sixth**, obtaining new information on medieval numismatics indicates highly-developed trading relations.

Open-air museums will be created on the basis of the above information, which will make them distinct from other museums, and the visitors will be able to see the differences in their natural environment, to feel and touch them. Each museum may be regarded as the center, where children will be able to acquire new knowledge, young people will be able to collect necessary information, and artists will create their works; moreover, such museums will be a resting place for the human soul, and a research center to broaden and deepen people's knowledge. Thus, we can say that the archaeological sites and medieval towns that are of considerable historical importance will meet all the above criteria.

### 2.3 The Methodical Base of Using Open-Air Museums

Let us give an example of statements of scientists from countries where open-air museums have become a frequent practice. According to John Dewey<sup>8</sup>, a philosopher, teacher and psychologist, 'The use of visual aids pale in comparison with the original and with a touch to nature'. The famous Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget<sup>9</sup> advises to use every opportunity to touch and feel the specifics of archaeological sites while studying examples of material culture and puts the following idea, 'The concept of any object is formed in a child after he or she will feel it in his or her hands and work with it using own efforts'. These thoughts are complemented by views of the famous Swiss educationist Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, 'In the process of learning, the hands, the heart and mind of the child must work together'<sup>10</sup>. In summary, we should say that a person's ability to think and perceive is based on the following system: 'I quickly forget what I hear, I remember what I see, and if I do anything with my hands, I understand it trying to discover its meaning'.

If we express a person's memorative faculty by specific numbers, we will see that people remember only 10% of what they hear, since despite the fact that they are able to present a general view of the object or phenomenon that is being explained, they have not seen this object or phenomenon with their own eyes. People however remember 50% of what they see<sup>11</sup>. In other words, people do not have a complete picture of an object or phenomenon, so the information about objects or phenomena that are not connected with each other cannot be developed and used by the human mind when necessary. Therefore, the third way of education is the most effective in this system, namely, tourist trails around open-air museums, when 90% of the information remains in the memory of the students. The tourist trails around medieval towns organized in accordance with an appropriate plan in order to accomplish a specific purpose effectively have a direct impact on the minds of students and the younger generation in general, helping them to define their place in the world, while maintaining the impression of a tourist route for a long time and enabling to discover a new value and content of the studied subjects and phenomena.

The famous Italian educator Maria Montessori took into account these features of human memory and drew

conclusions based on her own experience, where she was guided by the following: 'the basis of learning and educating is sensory education'<sup>12</sup>, which again necessitates creating open-air museums based on the concept of 'the opportunity to turn the clock back'.

The importance of open-air museums based on the above concept, for education especially, was also pointed out by the German educator G. Kerschensteiner: 'a museum must create the conditions so that a visitor could see by virtue of images or visually the whole technological or creative process using available 'additional pedagogical means'<sup>13</sup>, and the famous specialist in museum management of the early twentieth century M.V. Novorussky regarded the museum as an effective means of education, bringing the idea to the fact that the museum occupies an important place among the educational institutions, as it works with inanimate objects that are unable to give any information by themselves<sup>14</sup>.

In order to fully utilize the potential of open-air museums with the help of tourist trails in museum pedagogy, it is necessary to consider the following: the *methodical organization* will bring the educational program that is being implemented in the museum environment in line with the age characteristics and general cultural level of the visitors and allow the educator-museologist to master pedagogical and psychological knowledge, as well as the lore that is unique to museology; in the course of the tour or lesson, *sense of touch and perception* will awaken positive emotions during the study of the museum exhibition made up of the samples of creative activity, and the creative interest, cognitive and creative activity of visitors and students will increase; preparing the *content* of a pedagogically oriented excursion will enable the educator-museologist to bridge the gap between an exhibit of the museum and cultural history; going beyond the rigid framework of the educational *process* in the museum will enhance thinking, emotionally liberate the student, and will give the opportunity to experience the environment of a specific era<sup>15</sup>.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 The Effectiveness of Using Open-Air Museums in Museum Pedagogy

In his speeches, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan pointed out that the creation of open-

air museums based on the above concept, 'requires determining the importance of each museum and establishing its status and direction of the tourist trail'<sup>16</sup>. However, the museum should be based not only on the overall regional geographic exhibition; on the contrary, each of these objects must present a particular period in the history of Kazakhstan. To sum up, it should be noted that the exhibits of open-air museums should not stand silently, they must bring across the mood and atmosphere of the era presented and become an environment where visitors will be able to satisfy their spiritual needs and expand their knowledge and capabilities.

Global experience confirms the usefulness of excursions around open-air museums, taking into consideration their specialization or the use of certain displays in the study of specific topics of the curriculum on 'The Medieval History of Kazakhstan'.

The novelty of the museum pedagogy lies not in forming new techniques and methods of an educator's activity, but in an attempt to improve them in the process of the joint project planning activity of the educator, parents and students to promote their cognitive, research and creative activities, thereby improving the quality of students' knowledge.

In the process of design and research activities, all the components of the content of education are formed: knowledge, skills, experience of creativity, experience of emotional and value attitude to the world.

Forming the techniques of research, cognitive, and creative activities that are based on museum pedagogy is brought to the forefront.

Thus, the use of museum pedagogy in the development of the cognitive interest of students in the study of 'The Medieval History of Kazakhstan' promotes:

- Developing the motives of the students' educational activity and their cognitive needs related to the history of the region.
- Developing the ability to analyze and evaluate the phenomena of social life, as well as improving creative and searching capabilities.
- Forming the attitudes and outlook of students as citizens of Kazakhstan.

Thus, the field trips to the open-air museums that have been created on the sites of medieval towns aim to perform the following tasks:

- To teach a child to see the historical and cultural

context of the surrounding things, i.e. to evaluate them in terms of development and culture;

- To form an understanding of the relationship of historical epochs and the students' belonging to the new time and different culture through interaction with historical and cultural monuments;
- To form the ability to reconstruct the image of a certain era based on converse with cultural heritage, as well as creative perception of reality;
- To develop the ability to aesthetic contemplation and experience;
- To form the feeling of respect for other cultures and willingness to understand and accept the system of different values.

The content of the excursions given at open-air museums helps visitors create the most complete picture of the world in their imagination, make their own small discoveries on the way of comprehension of the centuries-old culture of humanity, feel themselves as the heirs of this treasure. Using particular material and existing items provides visitors with an opportunity to reflect on the following issues:

- what is the subject of a museum and what properties it has;
- what aesthetics a thing has, whether it has a special value as an ancient object;
- where the essence, consistency, and continuity of historical time lie;
- which object or phenomenon expresses the relationship between the time, thing and person;
- how to explain the concept of a historical, cultural, or nature *monument*. Think about the variety of monuments. A monument is a thing, myth, legend, fairy tale, folk art product, or a natural object.

The criteria for selection of the material are determined by the degree of its compliance with the issues under consideration. The educational aspect serves as one of the most important criteria in the selection of material for the excursion. The cultural heritage that has come down to us as the ruins of medieval towns must serve as an antidote to the pseudo-values of mass culture that have received wide advertisement today<sup>17</sup>.

## 4. Conclusion

Medieval towns and cities turned into open-air museums are a wide-ranging topic that requires serious research. However, we can already say that the archaeological monuments found during the excavations that have been carried out in the towns and cities since the nineteenth century require special care, which proves the need to establish open-air museums. In addition, open-air museums and plans for their thematic exhibition will open the way for the efficient use of the history of medieval towns in museum pedagogy. And museum pedagogy, in turn, will create conditions for students' deeper exploration and understanding the knowledge on the country's history. Museum pedagogy will present the historical significance of each item in the human environment, make people appreciate and preserve the originals of particular items, give impetus to forming the national historical consciousness at a high level.

The relevance of the research work related to the history of medieval towns allowed us to consider the entire process from the historical and educational point of view and make the following conclusion:

*First*, the medieval towns and cities are the rich spiritual heritage we received from our ancestors, and it is up to us, i.e. the younger generation, whether to reveal all this wealth or, conversely, to neglect and condemn it to oblivion;

*Second*, exploring the history of medieval towns, we must recognize that they used to be large spiritual, commercial and administrative centers of their time;

*Third*, turning the medieval towns in open-air museums will greatly enhance their role in the formation of national historical consciousness;

*Fourth*, secondary schools, vocational and specialized secondary and higher education institutions are still feeling the need for innovative methods of teaching and giving classes, and this gives us grounds for saying that field trips to open-air museums are an effective tool for students' assimilation and digestion of educational material;

The above findings have allowed putting forward the following suggestions and recommendations:

- The conversion of medieval towns and museums-

reserves in open-air museums and their use in teaching will increase the efficiency of the organization and implementation of educational and learning processes;

- The materials of this research can be used in the teaching and educational process in order to form national historical consciousness.

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