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Investigation of the USSR Academy of Science Expedition to Establish the Exact Location of the Battle on the Ice (1957–58): Archival Materials

Abstract

Study of archival documents of the Combined Expedition to Establish the Exact Location of the Battle on the Ice maintains increasing interest in Alexander Nevsky's life and impact of his military victories. Expansion of the source base on this topic is the authors' key goal. They draw on unpublished journals of the expedition head Karaev G. N. in order to clarify most important aspect of the work conducted under his direction – large-scale exploration of the lake Peipus (Chudskoye) basin in 1957–58. According to the sources, this work was performed by specialized agencies; underwater diving was performed by professional divers. Initial locations of the search were set using information obtained from locals and results of the sounding. All results were recorded in acts, especially those not witnessed by Karaev himself (he could neither dive, nor work with special equipment). As early as in 1957, a “flat rock” was found in the shallow waters between Stanok and Vorony Islands, which was formed by a 30x10 m sandstone rock with an adjacent wall. In 1958, the artificial origin of this wall was proved; it was built in the 15th century and became submerged when the waters had risen. Survey of its stone showed that it rose above the surface in the 13th century, thus being a visible milestone, probably, the “Crow rock” (Voronii kamen') of the chronicle. Due to structural features of the rock it rapidly deteriorated after the water level rise. Presently, the former “rock” remains only as a sandbank. No artifacts related to the 1242 events were found. This fact was scientifically described and documented by physicists who studied the rock with metal detectors. We need to consider the expedition acts in assessment of Karavaev's results. It makes publication of these materials quite significant.

Keywords

Historical sources, archival documents, Battle on the Ice of 1242, Alexander Nevsky, G. N. Karaev, Combined Expedition of 1957-1958 of the Site of the Battle on the Ice of 1242.

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