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**EDITORIAL BOARD**

*E. Rezvan*

**PETER THE GREAT KUNSTKAMERA — 290 YEARS**

*“I want the people to look and study”*  
Peter the Great

Above the city designed by Peter the Great, and built on his order, hover its three symbols — the angel on the spire of Peter-and-Paul's Cathedral, the ship on the Admiralty building, and the planetary (armillary) sphere on the tower of the Kunstkamera. Three symbols — of Christian faith, of conquering the enemies, and of comprehending the Universe. And though the armillary sphere was lost in the fire of 1747 and reappeared on the tower of Kunstkamera only 200 years later, Russia's first public museum, despite all changes, has preserved the spirit of the Age of Enlightenment by taking part in the grandiose task, willed by Peter [1], of making an inventory of the Universe.

Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences (MAE RAS) is one of the largest and oldest ethnographical museums in the world. It is the successor to the first Russian state museum, the famous Kunstkamera of Peter the Great, founded by his decree in 1714. The priceless ethnographical, anthropological and archaeological collections housed in the Museum are among the most complete and fascinating in the world. They contain about two million exhibits and reflect the cultural diversity of the Old and New Worlds, forming an integral part of the cultural heritage of all humanity. The Kunstkamera is the oldest museum building in the world. Its outline is used as the symbol of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The history of the Russian Academy over the last three hundred years is linked closely to that of the Museum. The museum shared with the country many important milestones for Russian science and culture, including Peter's breakthroughs, the rise of Catherine the Great's epoch in the 19th century, and the achievements of the “great age” of Soviet academic research. We remember our colleagues — many outstanding researchers who were lost to Russian science in the years of wars and revolutions, Stalin's terror [2], and during the fearful years of the Blockade of Leningrad [3]. The most important historical guidelines for the research of the Museum's staff have always been the primacy of science in the system of cultural values of Russia, and what Cl. Levi-Stross once defined in a maxim — “anthropology is the humanism of the 21st century”.

Throughout its history the Museum occupied a special place in the structure of the Academy of Sciences. Among the people who headed the Museum in different periods were outstanding scholars: the naturalist, zoologist, traveller, member of the Academy L. I. Shrenk; famous orientalist and historians V. V. Bartol'd, B. A. Dorn, V. V. Radlov, V. V. Struve, A. A. Shifner, N. A. Kisliakov, R. F. Its; specialist in Africa, and correspondent member of the Academy D. A. Ol'derogge; philologists and members of the Academy E. F. Karskiĭ and I. I. Meschaninov.

The scientific activity of many outstanding Russian researchers of the 19th century was connected with the Museum, among whom were the founder of Russian and European anthropological sciences, member of the Academy K. M. Baer, and traveller, scholar and public figure N. N. Miklukho-Maklaĭ (traditional cultures of Australia and Oceania). In the Museum, Russian research schools were formed connected with the names and the heritage of such scholars as I. I. Zarubin (Central Asian studies), N. V. Kiuner (traditional culture of East Asian peoples), R. F. Barton (the Philippines), L. I. Lavrov (Caucasian studies), D. A. Ol'derogge (African studies), and Iu. V. Knorozov (deciphering of ancient languages). One can not overestimate the role of the outstanding ethnographers, specialists in Siberian studies, among who were L. Ia. Sisternberg, V. G. Bogoraz and V. I. Iokhelson, who played an important part not only in the development of Russian Siberian studies, but also Russian ethnographical science generally.

Today the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography is not only an academic museum, but also one of the leading research centres of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Here the traditions of the outstanding Russian ethnographers and anthropologists of the 18th—20th centuries are followed. According to the Decrees of the President of the Russian Federation, the MAE RAS ranks among the particularly valuable objects of cultural heritage of the peoples of the Russian Federation.

Today more than 120 researchers work in the Museum, and many of them have been awarded with Russian and international scientific awards and prizes. Many of the Mu-

seum's researchers are also professors and lecturers at the leading higher educational institutions of St. Petersburg.

The Museum publishes a series of specialized periodical editions. Among them is "MAE Collection" which has earned authority among several generations of ethnographers and museum specialists (established by V. V. Radlov and published since 1900, so far 48 volumes have been issued) [4].

Since 1993 an anthology has been published called "Kunstkamera. Étnograficheskie tetradī" ("Kunstkamera. Ethnographical Notes"), and since 1995 — "Kur'er Petrovskoi Kunstkamery" ("Courier of Peter's Kunstkamera"). In 2004, in cooperation with the European University (St. Petersburg) and the Centre for European Research of Oxford University, Kunstkamera Museum began to publish the Russian and the English versions of a journal called "Antropologicheskii Forum" ("Forum for Anthropology and Culture") (chief editor Prof. A. K. Baiburin).

Each year the researchers of the MAE RAS publish 25—35 books — monographs, collective monographs, thematic collections of articles and materials of scientific conferences, as well as 300—400 articles in Russian and other languages [5]. In 2004 a monographic series was started called "Kunstkamera Petropolitana".

Each year the Museum organizes a series of specialized scientific conferences in which our colleagues from Russia, as well as those from abroad, take part. Regularly the MAE holds the "Radlov's conference" (annual concluding session of the Museum); "Lavrov's conference" (Central Asian and Caucasian studies); "Maklaī's conference"; "Ol'derogge's conference"; "Zelenin's conference"; "Kiuner's conference"; and a conference called "Ethnography of St. Petersburg—Leningrad".

In 2005, together with the Association of Ethnographers and Anthropologists of Russia, the MAE is organizing the 6th Congress of Ethnographers and Anthropologists of Russia, the largest and most authoritative scientific forum in which over 500 specialists from Russia and abroad normally take part.

Since 1998, information about the Museum is available on its web site, which for a number of years was ranked by experts among the five best museum sites of Russia [6]. At present we are working on creating a new version of the Museum's site which will meet all exacting requirements.

The Museum's researchers have a unique opportunity to realize the results of their studies not only in the form of articles and monographs, but also in a number of exhibition projects followed by detailed catalogues. Among the exhibition projects realized in 2004 and dedicated to the 290th anniversary of the Kunstkamera Museum, I would like to mention one closely connected with a topic that has been discussed on the pages of our journal several times. The exhibition "'Jeynov — We Arrived' (The Arabs of Uzbekistan — Images of Traditional Culture)" is the first in a series of exhibitions under the common title "The Expeditions Are Not Over". The exhibition series will be devoted to the results of contemporary expeditions organized by the Museum. The projects are characterized by the broad use of new informational and media technologies [7].

The first Arabs came to Central Asia in the 7th century AD in the wake of victorious Muslim armies. Since then, many preachers, merchants, scholars and warriors continued to arrive in the region from Arab countries. At the end of the 15th and start of the 16th centuries, several Arab tribes were forced to migrate to the region from Northern Afghanistan by the decree of a new ruler. The Arabs brought along their holy relics, including one of the most ancient Qur'ān manuscripts. Muslims believe it to be the very first copy of the Holy Scripture.

It was this manuscript that led us to a Jeynov *qishlāq*. We were looking for descendants of the Arabs who arrived in this region long ago. The anthropological forecast was quite unfavourable — traditional Arabic culture was supposed to have disappeared in the Central Asia region. Yet it turned out that Arab culture, their language, customs and traditions still exist. Thus, natives interpret the *qishlāq* name (Persian: *jā-yi naw* — "new place") as the Arabic *ji'nā* — "we arrived".

The exhibition, which represents a journey around the Jeynov *qishlāq*, is an attempt to understand the lives of ordinary people inhabiting the region, and to look at the world from their point of view. We use both traditional museum and modern media technologies to represent ten images of traditional culture: the Qur'ān, mosque and prayers, wedding, children, woman, bread, man, cotton, carpet, clay. More images could have been used, but this list reflects our conception of the way of life of these people, in the way we saw it, during the spring and autumn of 2004 [8].

The exhibition will soon be shown in Tampere, and several other venues will follow in 2005—2006. Attached to the current issue you can find a CD-ROM containing video material presented at the exhibition.

Beside the articles of our Moscow colleagues and friends Acad. Alexander Kudelin and Dr. Maria Reisner, which are publishing in a series that provoked serious interest among our readers, articles presented in the current issue were written by specialists in Oriental and African studies now working in the Kunstkamera Museum. We hope that these works will help our colleagues worldwide to appreciate the true values of both the collections of the Museum, and its scholarly traditions.

People will usually treat their own family albums with special care and attention. An ethnographical museum on the scale of the St. Petersburg Kunstkamera is a family album for the whole of humanity. The Museum is not a cemetery of culture. Cultural heritages accumulated within the museum live and tell their stories first to researchers, and then to its visitors. The stories are endless, and many future generations of scholars will discover their specific worlds here.

Today the Museum is undergoing large-scale reconstruction. We hope to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Museum, the jewel of the Russian Academy of Sciences, in a renewed and well-equipped research and museum centre that is able to fulfil its mission to foster study, and preserve and popularize the heritage of the cultures and civilizations of the Old and the New Worlds.

## Notes

1. We are indebted to Prof. Mikhail Rodionov for this passage.
2. For more details see: A. M. Reshetov, "Repressirovannaia étnografiia. Liudi i sud'by" ("Repressed ethnography. People and fates"), *Kunstkamera. Étnograficheskie tetradī*, IV (St. Petersburg, 1994), pp. 185—222; *idem*, "Repressirovannaia étnografiia. Liudi i sud'by. Chast' 2" ("Repressed ethnography. People and fates. Part 2"), *ibid.*, V—VI (St. Petersburg, 1994), pp. 342—69.
3. For more details see: *idem*, "Otdanie dolga. Chast' pervaiia. Pamiati sotrudnikov Instituta Étnografii AN SSSR, pogibshikh v blokadnom Leningrade" ("Paying the debt. Part 1. In the memory of the researchers of the Institute of Ethnography AS USSR killed in blockaded Leningrad"), *Étnograficheskoe obozrenie*, II (1995), pp. 40—62; *idem*, "Otdanie dolga. Chast' vtoraiia. Pamiati sotrudnikov Instituta Étnografii AN SSSR, pogibshikh v blokadnom Leningrade" ("Paying the debt. Part 2. In the memory of the researchers of the Institute of Ethnography AS USSR killed in blockaded Leningrad"), *ibid.*, IV (1995), pp. 3—24; *idem*, "Otdanie dolga. Chast' tret'ia. Institut Étnografii AN SSSR vo vremia Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (nekotorye voprosy istorii)" ("Paying the debt. Part 3. Institute of Ethnography AS USSR during the Second World War (some historical questions)"), *ibid.*, VI (1995), pp. 3—17; V. N. Vologdina, "Iz istorii Kunstkamery. Muzeinye rabotniki v gody voiny i blokady" ("From the history of the Kunstkamera. Museum staff in the years of the War and the Blockade"), *Kunstkamera. Étnograficheskie tetradī*, IV (St. Petersburg, 1993), pp. 161—84; *Iz istorii Kunstkamery* (From the History of the Kunstkamera), compiled by V. N. Vologdina; ed. by A. S. Myl'nikov (St. Petersburg, 2003), 319 P.
4. For more details see: V. N. Kisliakov, "Osnovnoi pečatnyi organ Museia antropologii i étnografii (K 100-letiiu so dnia vykhoda pervogo toma 'Sbornika MAE')" ("Main organ of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (On the 100 anniversary of the first volume of 'MAE Collection'), 285 let Peterburgskoi Kunstkamere. Materialy itogovoi nauchnoi konferentsii MAE RAN, posviaschennoi 285-letiiu Kunstkamery. Sbornik MAE, XLVIII (St. Petersburg, 2000), pp. 61—3. V. N. Kisliakov has prepared for publication the bibliography of the "MAE Collection".
5. A bibliography of works published in the last ten years by the Museum see in: *Bibliografiia trudov Museia antropologii i étnografii im. Petra Velikogo (Kunstkamera) RAN. 1992—2002* (Bibliography of Works of the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) RAS. 1992—2002), compiled by T. I. Shaskol'skaia, N. M. Sysoeva; ed. by V. N. Kisliakov (St. Petersburg, 2004), 220 P. This bibliography can be viewed on the Museum's web site at the following address: <http://www.kunstkamera.ru/library/MAE9202.htm>.
6. Please, visit [www.kunstkamera.ru](http://www.kunstkamera.ru).
7. The exhibition has been organized by the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) Russian Academy of Science in cooperation with the Rosbalt Information Agency, and the Saint Petersburg—21st Century Producer Centre, with the assistance of the International Arab Culture Centre "Jeynov" and the "Uqra" printing house, St. Petersburg. The exhibition is timed to coincide with the publication of the book, "The Qur'ān of 'Uthmān (Katta-Langar, St. Petersburg, Bukhara, Tashkent)".
8. Please, visit <http://www.kunstkamera.ru/jeynov/> and <http://www.mushaf.spb.ru>.