PRESENTING THE COLLECTION

V. Kisliakov, T. Moiseeva, E. Rezvan, M. Rodionov

"RETURNING FROM DISTANT JOURNEYS": ON THE HISTORY OF GATHERING THE MUSLIM COLLECTIONS OF MAE RAS (NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST). I [1]

A museum is a grandiose "three-dimensional encyclopedia" of countries and peoples, traditions and religions. The invaluable ethnographic, anthropological and archaeological collections kept at the Museum are some of the fullest and most interesting in the world. They number around two million items, reflect the full diversity of the cultures of the Old and New Worlds, and are a part of the cultural heritage of all mankind.

But what are the Islamic collections of the Kunstkamera? And can they be called treasures, if their mothers are not one of the 18th century, but the Kabinetten, the pavilions of the Hermitage, the younger relative of our Museum?

The personality of the collector has enormous importance to assess this evidence. Before the October revolution, the names of collectors and donors were inscribed on the exhibit of our Museum with "special inscriptions on a red background" [3]. In Soviet times, they were not made public, because among them were the persecuted poet N. S. Gumilev (the collector of the Ethnographic collections), members of the house of the Romansov, Tsarist grandees, generals and admirals, diplomats and officials. Some items requisitioned by the Bolsheviks were sent to the Kunstkamera from the Expert commission and other institutes. People who sold ethnographic items to our Museum often concealed their names, to avoid the attention of the punitive bodies. Historical justice forces us to give proper attention to collectors of Islamic ethnographic treasures.

These MAE collections are not united in a single whole, but are categorised in several departments — ethnography of the peoples of South and Southeast Asia, ethnography of the peoples of Africa, the M. V. Lomonosov Museum, and also ethnography of the peoples of Central Asia, the peoples of South and Southeast Asia, and the peoples of the Caucasus. The collections of South and Southeast Asia (Dangaus, Malays, etc.) remain outside the scope of our description, while the collections of the Central Asia Department will be discussed in the special article to be published in our journal.

The Middle East collections of MAE RAS formed over almost the entire history of the first Russian general access museum and accumulated a series of wonderful monuments connected with the traditional culture of the Middle and Near East. The history of the formation of this collection, like the history of individual exhibits, is closely linked with the history of Russia's relations with countries in the region, with the history of scientific expeditions, diplomatic and trade journeys to the Muslim East [4].

The "oriental vector" of the policies of Peter the Great, and later of Catherine the Great [5], the wars of a dynamically developing Russia with its eastern neighbours, and the strengthening of diplomatic and trade contacts between Russia and countries of the East naturally found their reflection in the collections of the Kunstkamera [6]. In this period, Russia acquired enormous territories populated by Muslim peoples, and conducted intensive talks on border and trade issues with its Muslim neighbours. In the 18th century, the Kunstkamera held the keys of conquered Turkish and Persian cities, trade weapons, presents from diplomats from Middle Eastern countries who visited Petersburg etc [7]. The items of this kind were received by the Museum also through the 19th and 20th centuries (see the front cover and fig. 1).

The first Islamic collections of the Kunstkamera came to the Museum in the time of Peter the Great, when Russia opened up to the world around it, including the Muslim East. Peter not only laid the foundations of the city on the Neva, but also of mental studies, academic and university. Peter brought the first printing press with Arabic script to Russia, and encouraged the study of Islam and the Arabic language.

To do this he went to oriental scholarship, sending students to Turkey and Iran, and to western European scholarship, hiring Dr. D. G. Messerschmidt (1665-1715), who knew Arabic, from Danzig. During a journey along the Volga River, Peter realised the importance for Russian history of oriental scholarship sources seemingly of second importance such as Muslim coins and gravestones maintained throughout the history of the Petersburg Academy of Sciences, semitologist Z. T. Bayer (1694-1738) used Arabic sources to write the history of Kievan Russia.

The first professional Arab specialist working in Petersburg (from 1732) was German scholar G. J. Ker (1687-1761) as an interpreter (also from Persian and Turkish) at the College of Foreign Affairs, compiled a catalogue of oriental coins at the Academy and taught oriental languages. His ideas to unite theoretical and practical, which were far ahead of their times, were valued by M. V. Lomonosov. The Russian scholar and encyclopedist was amazed by the achievements of the Arabs in medicine, natural science, geography, and one of the living examples was the diverse work of the Arab doctor, naturalist and historian of the 12th—13th centuries "Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadhi.

Under Catherine the Great, Russia knew to grow Muslim culture more closely. In 1782, teaching of Arabic was introduced at several institutions of study in the south of the Empire, and mass publications of the Qur'an were printed in Arabic script, which were acknowledged as the best in Europe.

At this time,彼得burg newspapers and journals printed articles about Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. Men of letters who knew nothing about oriental languages wrote the note "translated from the Arabic" under their works. For example, the great Russian poet G. R. Derzhavin wrote under his famous ode in praise of Catherine the Great.

Closer ties with the Islamic world were helped by the Mediterranean expeditions of the Russian navy. Russian ships entered the ports of Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, where direct contacts were established with local rulers and the population. The expansion of the Russian Empire could not help but contribute to the development of Islamic studies. In the 18th century, the Museum held the keys to captured Turkish and Persian cities, trophy weapons and presents from diplomats of the countries of the Muslim East.

In 1735, at the "Imperial Museum" (Музей Императорский) — as the Kunstkamera was called in 1726, — the "Kabinetten" of the Hermitage, among the Academy of Sciences. This collection contained Persian copper cups, a wash-stand, shoes, Turkish bows and a knife. In 1740, the numismatic collections came to the Kunstkamera from members of the circle A. P. Volynsky, who was executed on charges of conspiring against the empire. Their collection contained several Persian coins [8].

At the end of the 18th century, the Kunstkamera held several items of Persian calligraphy.

"Persian clothes kept at the Kunstkamera consist of: a lower silk semi-calf with multicoloured herbs, and on the hems of both sides a silver edging with 27 silver buttons was sewn for fastening; an upper dress consisting of a gold brocade with multicoloured herbs, with a marten by the gate and on the fields; in a multicoloured belt woven from silk paper material, with a gold fringe hanging on it etc." [9]

A small collection of Persian shoes was also part of this collection. A picture, at least, of part of this collection has been preserved. Among the items of the collection are a series of diverse headwear and decorations for them [10], vessels of various functions [11], writing accessories [14], cold steel weapons [12], guns [16], tobacco and smoking accessories [47]. There are also works ("tooth for scraping the skin (Scaplor))" (Turkey, 18th century (No. 786)), and the above-mentioned keys from conquered cities [18]. Among the collections of various items of the pre-Islamic period [19], which come from the region we are studying.

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In those years, as today, the Museum was one of the most remarkable places in Petersburg and most loved by city residents:

"Hello, dear friend! Where have you been?"

"At the Kunstkamera, my friend! I spent three hours there; I looked at everything, from surprise.

From the beginning of the 19th century, an interest in the romance of the Orient began to grow in Russian society. Muslim themes were increasingly turned to by Russian writers, poets, journalists, artists and architects. This time was also marked by a fundamentally new stage in the history of Russian scholarship as a whole and Oriental studies in particular. A systematic study of the countries of the East began. In this period an entire system of institutions was created to work thoroughly on Russia's eastern policies.

Middle East themes took quite a solid place in the universities of the Russian Empire — in Kharkov, Kazan, Moscow, Derpt and Vilno. From 1819, Arabic was taught permanently at the St. Petersburg University. A year earlier, the academic Asian Museum was founded in the capital, where a very valuable collection of Middle East (Arabic, Persian, Turkish) manuscripts quickly accumulated. Since then the manuscripts were collected also by several other state institutions including Kunstkamera (fig. 2). A circle of Petersburg scholars formed around Arabic scholar Ch. Fraenck who collected professionally with the languages, culture and history of the Muslim East. From this time, one can talk of the formation of the Petersburg school of Arabic scholars, whose tradition continues uninterrupted to this day.

In order to pursue an active Eastern policy, the Russian capital required special government institutions. Tsar Paul created a special department at the College of foreign affairs “dealing with Asiatic peoples”. But only with the creation of the Asiatic department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1819 did serious official work on studying Muslim countries begin. In 1823, Alexander I signed a decree on the creation of an Educational Section of Oriental Languages at the Asiatic Department. By oriental languages, the three main languages of the Middle East and North Africa were meant — Arabic, Turkish and Persian. Future diplomats who studied at the Section had to speak Arabic and know the rudiments of Muslim law. Military oriental studies were developed at the General Staff and Military Ministry in Petersburg. A corps of military topographers (1825) created maps of Iran and the Ottoman Empire. Practical ties with the Arabian East were further strengthened after the foundation of the Russian Geographic Society in 1845 and the Russian Archaeological Society with its Oriental Section in 1846. And finally, in 1855 the Faculty of Oriental Languages with a Department of Arabic Language and Literature was created at the Petersburg University.

In the 1830s, on the basis of the Kunstkamera collection, seven academic museums were created. In 1879, two of them — the Ethnographic and Anatomic Museum — were united into the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, which later (1903) was named after the founder of the Kunstkamera — Peter the Great. During these years, the Islamic collections of the Kunstkamera were given to other museums, above all the Hermitage and the Asiatic Museum. A clear idea of the treasures that our Museum lost is given by the catalogue of the temporary exhibition “From the Collections of the Petrine Kunstkamera” organised by the State Hermitage in 1992. Among the exhibits were Iranian daggers of the 17th—18th centuries (Nos. 107, 108—110), a Turkish aromatic vase of the 17th century (No. 161), and a box to hold the Qur’an of the 16th century (No. 163) etc [20].

Despite all these losses, Islamic collections of our Museum continued to form constantly. In 1838, the director of the Asiatic Museum, academic Ch. Fraenck, gave the Museum an Arabic collection of 35 items, which is now held at the MAE Department of African Ethnography (No. 4) [21]. It includes several door locks, utensils, wallets, and women’s and children’s jewellery from Egypt and Syria.

In 1844, the Museum received a large collection of items of clothing and weapons of various peoples of the Caucasus [22] from the Czech botanist F. Kolonatí, who went on an expedition commissioned by the Academy of Sciences. By the beginning of the 20th century, many items from this collection had been lost, and currently only six elements of a male costume of the Kurds have been preserved [23].

The collection of items received at MAE contains a note about an acquisition in 1873 from mineralogist A.F. Gebel, a participant in the expedition by M.V. Khanykov to Iran (1858) [24] to the Iranian collection, registered as No. 93. But its contents and location are not known at present.

In 1891 MAE received extensive collections from the reorganised museum of the Russian Geographic Society. Among them was the systemised collection of renowned traveller B. Grombchevskii [25], which he collected in Kanjut (a small principality in the Hindukush mountains) (No. 333). The collection consists of 162 items, with excellent representation of male, female and children's clothes, jewellery, weapons, utensils and musical instruments.

The first Middle East exhibits which came to the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography and which are still kept there appeared at the very end of the 19th century. Thanks to ties which the Museum administration established with the Faculty of Oriental Languages at the Petersburg University, with the Russian Geographic Society and with diplomats in Middle Eastern countries, the Middle East collection of MAE
quickly grew and by 1917 already numbered several hundred exhibits [26].

At the same time, the structure of MAE did not have a separate Middle East Department. All the collections for this region were concentrated at the Section of Cultural Peoples of Asia. The first Iranian collection registered at MAE (No. 397) was acquired in 1896 from a Persian prince, aide-de-camp to the Imperial Court Rûdî-qiyl Mirzâ, participant in the government Âmû Darya expedition of 1873. It consists of 20 items (several writing sets, writing quills, scissors, knives, women’s shoes etc.) (see the back cover and fig. 3, cf. fig. 4). Next year the founder of Russian Arabic studies, academic V. R. Rozen gave a MAE samples of cotton seeds, several reels of thread, silkworm cocoons, pieces of soap, knife-sharpening plates, a plaster amulet, a porcelain dish, a jade cup etc. (coll. No. 491, 19 items). After Ge-
bie’s death in 1899 the MAE was given his Iranian collection (No. 522, 8 items: women’s shoes, silver brac-
lets, glass beads, rosary beads).

The second half of the 19th century is the time when Russia finally secured the Caucasus and was in active conflict with Ottoman Turkey. These events could not help but add to the special collections of the Museum. In 1895, for example, the Museum received Turkish cold steel weapons from the collection of military governor of the Karâk Oblast, Lieutenant General P. I. Tomsich (No. 290/1 – 341). His collection consisted of 65 items and included several types of shoes (both male and fe-
male), weapons, vessels, utensils (copper and wooden), a model of a children’s cradle and other items. Four years later, at the bequest of Admiral K. N. Porets, the Museum received his extensive collection (No. 477), which in-
cluded several Turkish items.

The turn of the 19th-20th centuries was marked with major diplomatic activity of Russia in the area of the Persian Gulf, connected both with Russia’s entry to Iran and the idea of receiving a “port in the warm sea”, and with the project to build the Baghdad railway, which was developed in Germany. This project was seen as extremely dangerous for Russian interests. Russian military vessels were sent to the Persian Gulf, Russian diplomatic offices were opened here, and there were in-
creased visits here by Russian scholars, journalists and intelligence agents [27]. It is not surprising that at the beginning of the 20th century, the Museum collec-
tions [28] were filled with the collections of Russian diplomats working in the region. The second dragoon of the Russian mission in Tehran, A. R. Baranovskii, gave items of Persian clothing (No. 821) to the Museum. In 1909, the secretary of the Russian consulate in Bandar ‘Abbâs, D. D. Beliaev gave MAE a Baljîjîyâr men’s costume (two caftans, a calico shirt, wide trousers, a shawl, and a felt hat, No. 1499. In 1911, A. A. Adamov, an outstanding Russian diplomat, who did a great deal to establish and strengthen Russia’s ties in the Persian Gulf region [29], contributed over 40 items (two ceramic saucers for sweets, bracelets and rings, playing cards made of paper-mâché, fabric items and two model boats (Nos. 1843, 1844, 1846) [30].

In 1907—1908, MAE received a large ethnographic collection from various peoples of the Earth. It was pre-

sented by S. A. Taretskaia, the widow of the leading Russian medical scholar, president of the Military Medi-
cal Academy, founder and head of the Anthropological society at this Academy, A. I. Taretskii.

Among the Iranian section of this collection (No. 1273) one can note two hookahs, a copper jug, a box for antimony and a silver ring.

The growing interest and increased capabilities of Russia in the Middle and Near East naturally led to ac-
tivity by the Museum to add special collections. In 1913, outstanding Russian Islam expert V. A. Ivanov, who later lived in India for a long period, where he studied the Pirs and the Ispahans [31], brought a large ethnographic collection from Iran (over 200 items), which he was commissioned to collect by MAE [32]. Among these items, of special note are the Persian bridal cot-
tame (No. 2805/26 – 33), the children’s bride doll (No. 2082/23 – 35), clothes and items of darvâzhâ, and a rare example of a musical instrument (No. 2082/61, 66 – 68, 27).

A prominent role in the formation of the pre-revolutionary Iranian collection of MAE was played by the graduate of the Faculty of Oriental Languages A. A. Romadkevich, who on assignment from MAE collected several hundred valuable ethnographic items [33], including examples of male and female clothes of Gabrs (descendants of ancient Zoroastrians) (No. 2267/11 – 23; 2437/2, 5), several dolls and toys (No. 2267/19, 20, 27; No. 2436/35 – 40, 41, 42, 43, 112), examples of embroidery, a collection of watercolours, paper and stone amulets and talismans (No. 2456/55 – 101, No. 2447/19), a cup for incantations and a circle for fortune telling (No. 2436/95, 123) darvâzhâ accessories (No. 2436/125 – 133) and many other things.

The Iranian collection was the richest in the Middle East collection of the MAE in the pre-revolutionary years. Other parts of this collection were significantly smaller. For example, the Turkish [34] collection only had around 100 items. On the Arabs of Asia, until the end of the 1920s, MAE had a single collection, which was received in 1908 from Petersburg University student S. V. Smogoretzhevskii: the traditional women’s costume of the Iâvarâ Druzes (Syria) (No. 1324). As for the people of Afghanistan, until the Revolution the Museum had just one item (a shield) which was acquired in 1908 as part of the collection of A. I. Taretskii (No. 1274).

After the October revolution, and particularly in the 1930s, the Middle East collection of MAE (including the Iranian collection) increased significantly. This hap-
pended in many ways thanks to the selfless work of the small Museum staff (by the end of 1918, just 13 employees remained in Petrograd), and the director of MAE academic V. V. Radlov, who died in 1918 and called for collection work to be combined with scholarly work, and stayed faithful to his vows [32].

Besides the usual methods of acquiring ethnographic items (expeditions, gifts, purchases), oriental items were acquired which were requisitioned by the authorities in searches and arrests. Everything was confiscated which
could be considered to be a weapon, regardless of its age and condition. The list of items acquired by the Museum from the Cheka in 1919 speaks volumes: "Persia: saber, sabre, shield, arm guard, leather dagger with sheath, shield, gun case, axe (No. 2723/14—20)." "Turkey: cold-steel weapon of the 18th—19th century, yataghan in a wooden scabbard (No. 2724/18—25)." Other Persian items from the Museum of the Jointed State Political Directorate (OGPU KGB predecessor) (acquired in 1929: shishak (heavem), shield, mail armour, weapon, para coat of arms) were also removed. In 1919—1929, items (mainly to the Iranian collection) also came from other organisations, such as the Museum of Fine Arts (No. 2811, 3672), the Expert Commission (Nos. 2773, 2872, 2955), the former Solovetsky Museum (No. 2972), Pushkin’s Dom (No. 3033 from the collection of the Abamelek—Lazareva, etc.).

As in the past, the growth in quality and quantity of museum collections was in many ways linked with the general political situation, in this case with the concerted efforts of Soviet Russia to "collect and expand ties with the Muslim East, which was seen by the Commissariat as an important reserve in the fight against colonial powers [36]."

It should be noted that in 1918 at the Museum, the Department of Muslim Peoples of Central Asia was created (reformed in 1925 as the Near and Middle East Department) headed by the prominent ethnographer and linguist I. I. Zarubin [37]. At that time, the Iranian collection of MAE grew significantly. By 1919, V. A. Zhukovskaya, widow of the leading Iranian scholar V. A. Zhukovskiy, joined the collection with 10 items (No. 1069) which were collected in Iran during several trips in the 1880s (Nos. 2704, 2717) [38].

In 1928—1929 G. Chernkina-Koroleva, an employee of the Botanical Gardens of the USSR Academy of Sciences, arrived in Iran to study the cultural flora of the east of the country. She also amassed ethnographic collection which she gave to MAE (No. 3157).

Iu. N. Marr, a researcher working at the Asiatic Museum, was sent to Iran in 1925. His wife S. M. Marr went with him. The goal of the trip was to restore ties with the country’s scholars. The couple stayed about one and a half years in Iran (from March 1925 to September 1926). Among other things, they gathered significant collections which were later acquired by MAE [39].

The collections brought by the Marrs number up to 600 items. Of particular value were the full sets of male and female costumes of representations of different sections of society (peasants, traders, merchants, etc.) from different Persian cities and provinces, including the clothes of Muslim δηjąδνδ (priests (No. 334/14—192). A feature of the time the Iranian national theatre, Palvan Kagalh [40] were brought from Iran, and also a large number of children’s dolls and toys. Many watercolours with depictions of national Persian types were collected.

In general, it may be said that in the contents and quantity of the collections, the collection of Iu. N. and S. M. Marr was the most complete and systematically selected throughout the entire time that the collection was formed [41].

For Muslim ethnography, exceptional value is provided by the collection of male clothes, whose mysteries on festivity days of one of the most important Shi’ite festivals — the moharrum. The basis of our collection is formed by the Marr’s collection (No. 334/1—200), which was added to in 1928 by a substantial part of the collection assembled by R. A. Galunov, an employee of the Soviet trade mission in Iran (No. 3923). There is a detailed description of the collections for moharrum and for the funeral festival itself.

R. A. Galunov gathered his collections on the special assignment of MAE. They include over 150 items, of which the most valuable is the full set of accessories of a Persian man (No. 1069), No. 3760, which was formed during the trip in 1925 with the participation of the African Department from artists V. P. Schneider (No. 5546). We make special note of the collection of the male and female Palestinian clothing of E. N. Ludwing (No. 5752) in 1939, which academic Iu. Iu. Krachkovskiy took part in describing [42].

Among the few post-war acquisitions of the Iranian collection, the greatest number would be given to the large collection (over 300 items) collection (No. 6370) of the leading national parastasologist, academic E. N. Pavlovskiy, which he gathered in Palestine in 1941—1943 he made three epic and para-epidemiological expeditions to Iran and Iraq (No. 6370, figs. 5—7, see also fig. 8).

In the post-war years, the Afghan collection was added to MAE, among which the collection of MAE employee R. R. Rahimov should be mentioned, who was in Afghanistan in the mid-1970s. This collection (No. 2924), which numbers over 20 items, includes clothes, agricultural tools, religious attributes, etc. In the mid-1990s, thanks to MAE employee I. V. Bogoslovskaya, the Museum received items of the everyday life of Afghans, etc. (Nos. 7046, 7081).

Mention should also be given of the large collection on the traditional culture of the Turkestans (No. 6488), received in exchange from the Copenhagen Museum in 1962 [51].

The strengthening position of the USSR in the Middle and Near East, and the appearance of the Soviet sphere of influence, helped to have an effect on the Arab part of the MAE collection, which increased significantly in the post-war period, especially in the early 1970s—90s. In 1970, journalist and diplomat O. G. Pereyepkin (Gerasimov) gave the Museum a large collection from Yemen (No. 6676): 40 items, including male and female clothing, jewellery, utensils, agricultural utensils, an anchor and a boat. From this time, the Yemen collection of the Museum, which previously consisted of one item (sandals, No. 3927, year 1920) steadily grew. In 1978, a small Yemen collection (No. 6083, clothing, gifts) was given by M. B. Piotrovskiy, now the director of the State Hermitage. In 1979, Moscow Orientalist V. V. Naumkin gave the Museum several everyday items of the inhabitants of Saqra island (No. 6823).

A separate page in the Yemen collection of MAE is connected with the activity of the Soviet-Yemeni common culture project (NOYCE), a major humanitarian expedition project of the USSR Academy of Sciences [52], which was for many years the passion of the outstanding Russian Arab scholar and Islam expert P. A. Belyayev. From 1983, for many field seasons, Museum employees worked in the south of Yemen — ethnographers P. I. Pogorelskii and M. A. Rodionov and physical anthropologists V. I. Bogodanova, I. I. Gokhman and Iu. K. Chudnov. Several hundred ethnographic exhibits were brought to the Museum, which made it possible to hold a representative exhibition at the Museum dedicated to the South of Arabia.

From 1983—2003 M. A. Rodionov, besides illustrative material, gave over 220 items to MAE (Nos. 6878, 6920, 6927, 6986, 7009, 7112), including male, female and children’s clothes, weapons, utensils, tools, traditional volume measures, rosaries etc [54]. In 1984, P. A. Pogorelskii gathered more than 50 items (No. 6901): woven vessels, ceramics, candles, locks, amulets etc.

Noteworthy Turkish items acquired by MAE in the post-war years include a set of attributes of the Turkish doll theatre. In 1974, the Museum (No. 6333) (fig. 9) and a large collection (over 20 items) of clothing and domestic items (No. 7017), which was mainly composed of existing materials [56] acquired with the help of the Turkish ambassador to Russia, Mr. Vakan Vural [57].

We can also say that our Museum has quite a large Turkic collection (No. 7063), mainly clothes and domestic items. It was mainly formed in the second half of the 20th century. The items were mainly acquired from Kurds (both residents of our country and foreign countries).

In the 20th century, items from the Middle East collection were exhibited several times both at permanent MAE exhibitions and at other museums and exhibition spaces. The history of these exhibitions is interesting in itself.

After MAE received additional space in 1925 during the preparations for the 200th anniversary of the Academy of Sciences, a new large exhibition was opened there. Among other things, there were exhibits on the everyday life of the Persians, on darwighism, and Muslim cults. Both leading Oriental specialists (S. E. Malov, A. N. Samoilovich), and donors (Muhammad Baghir khan Afzal, Mirza Ibrahim Muhammad-zada and others) took part in organising this exhibition [58].

In 1929, the exhibition on the peoples of the Middle East was updated. Exhibits were put on display on the ethnography of the Persian (religious processions, doll theatre), mountain Tajiks, Turks, and Tatarians. This exhibition existed until the mid-1930s, when preparations began for the Second World War Exhibition, which was disrupted by the war [59].

In March-April 1927 at the Great Exhibition of the USSR Academy of Sciences, "Theatre of the Peoples of the Orient" was opened, where all Leningrad museums with appropriate exhibits took part. The head of the MAE Indian Department,
In 1993, the Arab collections were shown at the temporary exhibition “The Arab World on the Shores of the Neva” displayed at the Museum of the History of Petersburg [62] on the initiative of M. A. Rodionov, and three years later (1996) at the temporary exhibition “Ethnography of Hadramaut” at the MAE Anthropology Department. In 1994, the above-mentioned collections on nomadic peoples of Central Asia were shown at a large exhibition in Dresden [63].

In the last years of the 20th century, the significance expansion of the Middle East collection (mainly from Yemen collections) made it possible to start working on creating a new permanent exhibition on this region. In 2000, the exhibition “Islam: Book and Sword” was opened at MAE, where exhibits on peoples of Arab countries, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia were shown. The head of this project was M. A. Rodionov.

The Muslim collections of MAE RAS continue to be added to today as a result of systematic scholarly and expedition activity [64]. Among the most recent projects we may note the exhibition “The Arabs of Central Asia connected to a traditional theme for MAE, which was linked to the name of I. N. Vinnikov (director of the Institute of Ethnography (as the Museum was called then) in 1940–1952) [65]. The exhibition project (authors — E. A. Rezvan, V. V. Makarov, T. M. Fedorova) is based on the materials of the historical-ethnographic exhibition by E. A. Rezvan (2004) and includes photos, videos and ethnographic materials. The project opened a series of exhibitions called “Expeditions are not over”.

II

Sa’id in Egypt [66]. While the boats were passing through the Suez Canal, the Tsarévich and his companions made a trip down the Nile to modern Assuan and back, looking at the monuments of Ancient Egypt. Numerous collections were gathered in various countries (both official presents and personal acquisitions), a large number of which were given by the Tsar to the Museum in 1896, where they are still kept. Among them were Egyptian items (No. 308). On the whole, this amazing collection in many ways reflects the world view, tastes and preferences of the last Russian Tsar, thus providing a unique opportunity to look at the world through his eyes. Currently the Museum is preparing a large international exhibition project connected with this collection entitled “Face to Face: the Journey of Tsarévich Nicholas to the East” [67].

Among the people who did a great deal to add to the Egyptian collections of the Museum, we can name the famous collector of Museum instruments N. I. Vorob’ev (No. 1046, 1906), director of the Caucasian Museum A. N. Kazakov (No. 1964, 1912), and artist V. P. Schneider (No. 5546, 1935), etc. Among the collections on the Arabs of the Sudan, the most important is the collection of the famous traveller in Northeast Africa in the 1870s, V. V. Junker [68] (No. 5523, over 130 items). At the end of the 19th century, Museum exhibitions, telling of distant

A. M. Mervart, was the general director of the exhibition. 26 types of folk theatres of Asia were exhibited, from Japan to Turkey. The Middle and Near East were represented by two types of Turkestan doll theatre (from the collections of the State Russian Museum), the Turkish doll theatre Qaragöz (from the collections of the Museum of State Academic Theatres). Leading Oriental scholars read lectures for visitors. E. E. Bersenev read the lecture “On the Persian theatre (the Shaj‘ate za‘ziya mystery and the buffoon theatre of Persia)”, and A. N. Samolovich read a report “On the Turkish theatre (the shadow theatre of Qaragöz and its role in Turkish life)”.

In the first post-war years, after major renovation work, new permanent exhibitions began to open at MAE. Among them, a leading place was taken by the exhibition on the peoples of the Middle and Near East, which was opened in 1946 and existed until the mid-1970s [60]. It contained exhibits on the peoples of Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, and Arab countries. Part of the exhibition was dedicated to the traditional culture of the Baláğiš, Hazíra and Jamgísh (gathered by members of the Central Asian Ethnological Expedition of 1925—1927) [61]. At the beginning of the 1960s, the exhibition was expanded with the collection on Núrishtánts.

After this exhibition was closed, the Foreign Asia Department organised an exhibition of part of the Middle East collection on a mobile temporary exhibition “Traditional culture of the peoples of the Middle East” in various cities (Alma-Ata, Tashkent, Frants, Kaliningrad, Novosibirsk).

The history of the acquisition of MAE RAS collections on the people of Egypt and North Africa deserves special examination. MAE collections on the Arabs of Africa were also quite rich in the pre-revolutionary era. According to tradition, the cultural border between Asia and Africa, which does not exist for the Arabs themselves, is observed by MAE scholars. Starting with the above-mentioned collection of academic Ch. D. Fræhn (1838, No. 4), the culture of the Arabs of Egypt is represented at the African Department with diverse jewellery, musical instruments and crockery.

The main collections of the North Africa stock of the Museum were formed in the first half of the 20th century. Currently there are over 30 collections at MAE RAS, comprising up to 400 diverse items, reflecting the traditional culture of the inhabitants of North Africa (Arabs, Táirregas, Kabyliaians and others).

The acquisition of Egyptian collections of MAE is also linked with the history of the journey to the East by Tsarévich Nicholas, the future last Tsar of Russia. In 1890—1891 Nicholas sailed from Trieste to Greece. From there he went to Egypt, India, Ceylon, Singapore, Java, China and Japan. Nicholas and his companions made the return journey through Siberia. This journey was an important event in the history of international relations of the end of the 19th century. The first stage of this long voyage was across the Mediterranean to Port
lands and peoples, preserved a living expedition atmosphere and gave visitors an amazing feeling of being involved with the romanticism of distant travels. For example, this is how the exhibition “Arab Tribes” looked, which was founded on the collections of V. V. Junker:

Implements of Arab tribes

Case 39

(i) Two ancient suits of chain armour and (ii) helmet with decorations attached to it, two silver spoons and one fork of European manufacture; (iii) various men’s hats; (iv) multicoloured wicker lids to cover food served on wicker trays (also see case 21); (v) baskets of wicker; one decorated with shells; (vi) embroidery; (vii) sectional ceramic items put together with clay screws and nuts; (viii) crockery made of pumpkin and clay; (ix) crockery made of an ostrich egg, braided with leather; (x) pillow covered in pearls to hold vials of perfume; small item of crockery made of pumpkin, decorated with pearls; skull-cap embroidered and woven from braids; multicoloured woven canes.

(xi) Items from north Egypt (belonging to Dr. Junker’s collection): wooden looms; combs; bronze pendant worn around the neck; earrings, ring; bracelet for adults and children; children’s headwear made of pearl; knife; wooden spoons; copper sandal.

Continuation of Dr. Junker’s collection:

Arab tribes. At the bottom of case. (xii) Whips made of hippopotamus skin, greased for flexibility with a mixture of tar and wood oil; (xiii) blue paper material of European manufacture, the main item of barters trade with the natives; (xiv) jug from which water needed for ablutions trickles out in drops.

In case 39. Flag raised above Junker’s house during stops in his travels around Africa.

Opposite case 39 in case 20 on the shelves, weapons of various Arab tribes. Spear with shafts wrapped in green morocco; parade maces, swords and daggers. Sickle-shaped “kulbeda” weapon; long Abyssinian sword used in elephant hunting to cut the sinews of their legs; small knives hung above the left elbow, sickle.

On the top at the end of the case, Arab leather shields. At the other end of the case, a tripod with leather water-trays—a travel item of the Arabs.

Case 21 at the bottom. Large travel bags and suitcases for loading camels; horse saddle with metallic decorations; wicker trays with large lids on baskets.

From 1993, the M. V. Lomonosov Museum was made a part of MAE RAS on the rights of a Department keeping to scientific themes, along with its collection stock. Today, this museum is an important centre for studying the life and works of the first Russian encyclopaedist in the context of Russian science and culture of the 18th century.

After the Academy of Science was founded in 1725, the Kunstkamera not only housed museum collections, but also an astronomical observatory, a physics cabinet, a library and an anatomy theatre. A very rich set of scientific instruments was gathered here. Today, an important place in the Museum collection is occupied by the collection of valuable monuments of science and technology and early scientific instruments. This is one of the richest special collections in the country. It is not very large, but is very diverse, and the time interval of the “birthdays” of these monuments encompasses five centuries.

The diversity of the collection of scientific instruments is connected with the special features of acquiring Museum stock, which in turn causes difficulties in identifying and dating early instruments. Most of the items were not accompanied by descriptions when they