



THE PRESERVATION OF THE EASTERN CULTURE HERITAGE IN RUSSIA

Since 16-17 centuries, the Russian academic elite formed strong scientific school of the Oriental studies, which focused on the issues of interaction between Russia and Asia. The Russian scientists were convinced that the historical destiny of Russia lies precisely in establishing close links with the Asian region. As a result, Russia had become home to a large number of famous scholars, whose researches and expertise on culture, languages, and philosophy of the peoples of the East. Furthermore, the Eurasianism concept, first appeared in 1921, recognized the necessity to renounce Russia's orientation to the West and to assume a revision of Russian international relations with a greater emphasis than before on the role of the East.

Especially three important institutes are forefront in Russia for the preservation of the eastern culture heritage in the region. One of these institutes is the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the other one is the State Museum of the East and the last one is The East Department at the Hermitage Museum. These three institutes have been significant in the research of cultural studies.

The main goals of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (IOM) of the Russian Academy of Sciences are the diversified fundamental research of the ancient and medieval East, the study of its history, philology, religion, philosophy and law by examining unique manuscripts and early printed books in the Oriental languages. The Institute was established on the basis of the Asian Museum in St. Petersburg, the oldest oriental research institution in Russia, founded under the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) in 1818. The Museum possesses a large collection of manuscripts in various Eastern languages, books on the history and culture of the East, as well as rarities belonging to different epochs and regions of the East including the manuscripts, block prints and lithographs of the Kunstkamera library (which was established by Peter the Great in 1714). Since 1917, the collections of the Museum have been one of the world's largest specialized collections of manuscripts and early printed

books of the countries of the East. The collection of manuscripts and early printed books includes more than 100,000 items in 65 languages. The IOM possesses also the Archives of the Orientalists that contain some documents and a specialized library of books, exceeding 800,000 volumes, on various branches of the Oriental studies.

Another major repository of the Eastern monuments is the State Museum of the East in Moscow, the only specialized museum in Russia, collections of which include artefacts representing more than 100 cultures of Asia and Africa including Far East, Middle East, South-East, South and Central Asia, North Caucasus and Transcaucasia, Siberia and Far North, Northern and Tropical Africa. The Museum possesses 150,000 pieces of art, nearly two-thirds of which are archaeological monuments. The vast majority of exhibits are originals dating from the Neolithic Age to the 21st century. The Museum was founded in 1918 and its name has changed several times (Ars Asiatica, Museum of Oriental Cultures, Museum of Oriental Art) constantly facing the risk of being disbandment. Nowadays, it turned into one of the important cultural, educational, research institution in the country, which holds a wide program of activities on an annual basis, including tea ceremonies, master classes and workshops, lectures, conferences for researchers and specialists in the Oriental studies.

The last institute that has a significant importance in preserving the Eastern cultural heritage in Russia is the East Department at the Hermitage Museum. The decision to create the East Department consisting of four sectors (the Ancient East sector, Middle East and Byzantium sector, Far East sector, Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Crimea sector) was made by the Council of the Hermitage Museum in 1920. Nowadays, the Department's funds include more than 150,000 exhibits. In terms of chronological coverage, the East Department's funds cannot be compared with the collections of other departments of the Hermitage Museum. In fact, since its foundation in 1754 the Hermitage Museum

collected a rich collection of the Oriental art keeping together private royal family collections (the most outstanding monuments related to Peter the Great and Catherine the Great collections), purchased artifacts and monuments acquired through archaeological expeditions.

The East Department at the Hermitage launched a large number of permanent exhibitions and expositions, namely, Ancient Egypt (since 1987); Mesopotamia (since 2002); India (since 2004); the Caucasus and the Golden Horde (from 2006-2009); Japan (since 2009); Central Asia in antiquity and the early Middle Ages (since 2010); Central Asia (from 2013). It should be mentioned that the recently opened expeditions were based on the archaeological researches that were carried out within the framework of six Hermitage expeditions that conduct excavations in Siberia and the Altai, Crimea, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Eastern cultures influenced the social, economic and cultural development of Russia. In the time of imperial Russia, the Russian authorities and academic community have laid a foundation for safeguarding and preserving the eastern culture heritage creating institutions that will form the core of the Russian school of the Oriental studies in future. Moreover, during the Soviet period the USSR authorities experienced a need for strengthening the soviet foreign policy toward the Eastern countries, which contributed to further enhancing the role of museums and research centers in preservation, research and popularization of the Oriental art and culture. Nowadays, Russia is interested in improving its state politics in the field of preservation of the eastern culture heritage by enhancing the legislative regulation of conservation, safeguarding, use and popularization of the cultural heritage monuments. Such an intention corresponds with announced in 2010 Russia's "Turn to the East" foreign policy aimed at boosting relations with Asia's growing economies.

Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- During his working visit to Sochi, the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, discussed the situation in Syria, joint fight against terrorism, as well as the issues of bilateral cooperation in particular in the context of the agreements reached at the sixth meeting of the Cooperation Council of the highest level that was held in Moscow in March.
- During her working visit to Sochi, the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, and the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, discussed the Ukrainian settlement agreeing that the Minsk agreements need to be given a fresh impetus.
- During his visit to the South Kazakhstan region, the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, and the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, discussed the matters of strengthening business relations in various economic sectors emphasizing cooperation in transport and logistics.
- During the 4th round of talks on Syria held in Astana, Russia's Presidential Special Envoy for the Syrian Crisis Settlement, Alexander Lavrentiev, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister, Hossein Ansari, and Turkey's Deputy Foreign Minister, Sedat Onal, together with the Permanent Representative of Syria to the United Nations, Bashar Jaafari, and the Head of delegation of the armed opposition, Mohammed Allush, discussed the plan to resolve the Syria crisis prepared by the Russian side that proposes the creation of "de-escalation zones" in militant-held areas in the Syrian provinces of Idlib and Homs as well as the Eastern Ghouta region near the Syrian capital.
- During the 6th Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Central Asia plus Japan Dialogue held in Ashgabat, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Fumio Kishida, together with his counterparts from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan discussed issues related to efforts in ensuring regional security, cooperation in trade, economic, investment, humanitarian and cultural spheres. As a result of the meeting, the parties signed a Joint Statement and adopted the Roadmap for Regional Cooperation in Transport and Logistics.
- During the Foreign Ministers meeting held in Moscow, Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian Heads of Foreign Ministries, Elmar Mammadyarov, Sergey Lavrov and Eduard Nalbandyan, discussed the prospects for the progress of the negotiation process on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict's settlement and stressed the need to implement the agreements reached at the summits in Vienna and St. Petersburg held in April and June 2016.
- During his visit to Ashgabat, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, Ali Suleiman Al Saidi, held consultations with high-ranking officials of the Minis-

try of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan. The sides discussed development of mutually beneficial cooperation and issues of bilateral cooperation in the trade, economic and cultural-humanitarian fields, as well as agriculture and textile industry.

- The Foreign Minister of Turkey, Mevlut Cavusoglu, reported that the country reached an agreement with Russia in principle on the delivery of Russian-made S-400 long-range surface-to-air missile systems to Turkey. The sides are negotiating on price and joint production issues.

Economy, Finance and Energy

- The Energy Ministry of Russia announced that the country exceeded its obligations to reduce oil production in May 1, 2017, decreasing the output by 300,790 barrels per day against the October 2016 level. It was noted that in April 2017 the production of oil in Russia decreased by 258,600 barrels per day on average.
- The Energy Market Regulatory Authority of Turkey reported that Azerbaijan exported 506.14 million cubic meters of gas to Turkey in February 2017 compared to 558.49 million cubic meters in February 2016. Azerbaijan's share in total volume of gas imported by Turkey stood at 9.64% in February 2017. It was also noted that Turkey imported 5.25 billion cubic meters of gas in February 2017, 3.75 billion cubic meters of which were imported via pipelines, and 1.5 billion cubic meters accounted for the LNG import.
- The British Petroleum announced about its plans to complete the Georgian section of the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) by mid-2018. It was noted that work on the pipeline has finished, with one compressor station 95% ready and the other compressor station 55% complete, while the construction of the metering station is underway.
- The Board of Directors of the World Bank reported about its decision to grant a new loan worth \$150 million to Ukraine aimed to finance export-oriented small and medium-sized enterprises in the country. The loan will be allocated to the Ukrainian state-owned bank, Ukreximbank.
- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported that it expects the non-oil GDP of Azerbaijan to grow by 0.6% and 2.2% in 2017 and 2018, respectively. It is forecasted that the country's GDP will reach \$38.6 billion in 2017 and will be \$42 billion in 2018.
- The Deputy Prime Minister for Industry of Turkmenistan, Batyr Ereshov, announced the country's plans to build a new seaport on the Caspian Sea in the Turkmen city of Garabogaz. The construction of a modern port facility in Garabogaz is envisaged by a large-scale project for building a chemical plant for production of 1,155,000 tons of carbamide per year.
- The Ministry of Finance of Azerbaijan reported that the country's state budget

amounted to 3.59 billion manats (\$2.14 billion) in the first quarter of 2017 exceeding the forecast of 3.4 billion manats (\$2.07 billion) by 3.4%. Meanwhile, the deficit of the state budget amounted to 321.2 million manats (\$191.5 million) or 2.1% of the country's GDP. It was also noted that in January-March 2017 the State Oil Fund of Azerbaijan (SOFAZ) transferred 1.52 billion manats (\$909.6 million) to the state budget.

- The Central Bank of Russia (CBR) reported about the reduction of the key interest rate by 0.5% to 9.25% per annum. The CBR stated that the annual consumer price growth is down to 4.3% in April 2017 from 4.6% in February 2017. It was also noted that under the moderately tight monetary policy the 4% inflation target would be achieved before the end of 2017 and will be maintained close to this level in 2018-2019.
- The Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan stated that inflation measured on the consumer price index in January-April 2017 amounted to 2.7%. Kazakhstan's inflation rate in April 2017 reached 0.5%, while year-on-year inflation hit 7.7%. It was also noted that in January-April growth of prices for food products totaled 3.8%, while non-food products and paid services reached 2.1% each.
- The Prime Minister of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev, signed an order on writing off \$240 million of Kyrgyzstan's debt. It was noted that the cancellation is made within the framework of Russian official development assistance to Kyrgyzstan.

Society and Culture

- The Presidents of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia and other Eurasian states offered their condolences to their Kyrgyz counterpart, Almazbek Atambayev, over the death of more than 20 people in a mudslide in the Osh region. According to the Emergencies Ministry of Kyrgyzstan, the landslide hit several houses in a village in the Uzgen district of the Southern Osh region.
- The Embassy of Switzerland in Kyrgyzstan announced that the Embassy along with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) are launching a new project "Strong and Inclusive Parliamentary Democracy" aimed at strengthening parliamentary democracy in Kyrgyzstan. The total budget of the project for 10 years is 9.8 million Swiss francs (\$9.75 million), and will be funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.
- The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of Kazakhstan reported that 1.09 billion tenge (\$3.47 million) was allocated in the country for social support of the Great Patriotic War veterans. It was also noted that this social support is covered by local budgets and sponsors, which allocated 971.3 million tenge (\$3.07 million) and 125.7 million tenge (\$0.4 million), respectively.