

Maintaining Ethnic Ambiguity Via ‘Museum-Silence’ in the Making of
Tajikistan (1934-1958)

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Abstract

The following study is an exploration of the institutional response to Soviet nationalities policy in Central Asia through a detailed investigation of the texts compiled in the Republican History and Region-Studies (*kraevedenie*) Museum of Tajik SSR in the 1930s-1950s. This thesis is an attempt to address the question of how this earliest and central Soviet museum complex in Tajikistan was shouldered with the mission to visualize the ethnographic discourses and knowledge about Tajiks formed from early 19th century through the mid 20th century and represent it via an ethnographic collection in the context of continued contestation of Tajik nationhood, statehood, culture, and the past, both within and without the Tajik ASSR.

This research reconstructed a unique mode of maintaining ethnic ambiguity in HRM texts of varying degree of publicity, that allowed it to comply with the pressures to represent ‘Tajik nation’ demanded by the Soviet celebration of ‘national cultures’ while at the same time acknowledge and recognize problematic relations to the idea of common nationhood and shared national identity that characterized Tajikistan’s population during the early Soviet rule. ‘Museum-silence’ should be understood as eliding and omitting ethnic markers in museum’s textual routines and privileging visual forms of representation of material heritage in which the idea of nation is present in its decontested form.

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Introduction

This thesis is about the place of ethnographic collections in the process of nation-making in Soviet Central Asia. Ethnographic collections within the region's first museum institutions¹ were perhaps one of the most important elements in Soviet sponsored institutionalized nationhood as they represent a sediment of ethnographic knowledge on Central Asian populations. This knowledge dates back to early 19th century when the first Russian Imperial ethnographers and explorers began to publish their research, and, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 1, succeeded in developing a comprehensive and complex 'scientific picture' of Tajiks. Tajikistan's first ethnographic collection in republic's first central museum is a curious way of underrepresenting Tajikistan's 'titular' ethnos that 'bears marks' of Tajikistan's fortuitous statehood, contested high culture, and incompatibilities of its regional particularities with the idea of common nationhood. The main puzzle that the present study faced was how come that such a rich diversity of in-depth ethnographic scholarship where Tajiks figure as a solid category possessing unambiguous physical and psychological regularities and coherence ended up 'nameless' or absent when this ethnographic knowledge was represented through what is usually termed as national material heritage (culture) in museums. It is particularly striking that it was happening between 1930s and 1950s when ethnic particularism was celebrated in Soviet Union ever more extravagantly. To explain this puzzle, this thesis proposes to reexamine the situation through the concept of 'museum silence' or an attempt to reconcile the insistent Soviet nationalities policy and promotion of 'national cultures' with a particular 'reality on the ground' of Tajikistan's ethnic ambiguity.

¹ The primary object of the present study is Republican United History and Region-Studies Museum of Tajik SSR established in Stalinabad (Dushanbe) in 1934. The profile of the museum was history and region-studies (*kraevedeniye*) that equaled region with a Soviet Union Republic and had a mission to represent a country's history, geography, economy, and population.

The overarching questions set for the present study are How did the ethnographic knowledge about diverse communities inhabiting Eastern Bukhara (present-day Tajikistan) change from Russian Imperial to Soviet contexts? How was ethnographic knowledge about Tajiks represented via museum collections and texts in Tajik SSR? What were the specificities of ‘museum-silence’ as a discourse and what representation of the nation did it produce? The construct ‘museum-silence’ within this research should be understood as a particular museum practice devised to address the problem of representing the idea of nation in a context of ethnically indifferent and diverse population where each claim on the core nation might incur serious contestation. In other words, ‘museum silence’ is a practice of decontesting² multiple possible understandings of the nation by avoiding ethnic markers and representing the ‘nation’ as vaguely as possible.

The existing sources demonstrate that ethnographers, from Imperial period to the Soviet time used a set of terms to classify diverse populations recognizing the specificities of their ethnic origin, religion, language, everyday culture, and physical type. The Soviet ethnographic collections and museums, as an institutional embodiment of the discourse on the nation, unmade this terminological specificity and regularity operating as museum-silence or a combination of texts and objects collectively producing a homogenizing effect that rendered the nationhood discourse ‘present in its absence.’ The term ‘museum-silence’ is coined by this study to express museum’s unique role to underrepresent the idea of a nation by navigating through terminological possibilities and ultimately reducing the repertoire of meanings of nationhood.

² Kevin and Iver Neumann Dunn, *Undertaking Discourse Analysis for Social Research*, ed. Ann Arbor (Michigan University Press., 2016).

The most important works on Soviet nation-building in Central Asia seem to be dominated by the perspective that it was the Soviet center that authored the nationalities policy for the former Russian Empire.³ It is largely true that such political processes as census-taking, border-making, status of the Republics, cultural rights, and mass education, instituted by the Soviet rule in Central Asia and in many ways supported by the local intellectuals and power holders, played a major role in the making of individual national republics. However, the question of how exactly the discourse of nationhood was transmitted to the population of the Union Republics is still a relatively new field. The case of Tajikistan, whose population prior to its first statehood in 1924 was essentially unfamiliar with the notion of nation, is particularly puzzling. Polyglot, diverse in their ethnic background, confessional association, everyday culture, regional specificities, kinship structures and clan politics, the population of a new Soviet Republic was challenged with a new kind of consciousness, national. The process of introduction and application of ethnographic terminology by the Russian/Soviet experts from pre-revolutionary years through the mid 1920s, was thoroughly addressed by the recent scholarship on the region (primarily by Francine Hirsch and Paul Bergne) yet very little is known about how institutions of mass culture and education contributed to the efforts of constructing a ‘unique’ titular nation in later periods.

The vast literature on Soviet nationality policy in Central Asia has succeeded in addressing the origin of national identity in the region. Social historians argue that much of this process was a combination of the introduction of ethnographic vocabulary (nation, nationality, ethnicity etc.), the technology of census-taking⁴ and political and economic

³ Martin, Terry, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, 2001; Hirsch, Francine, *Empire of Nations Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005). Slezkine, Yuri “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism.,” *Slavic Review* Vol. 53, no. No. 2 (1994).

⁴ Hirsch, Francine, *Empire of Nations Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*.

rationalization on the side of both Soviet authorities and local leaders⁵ that triggered, firstly regionalization and then subsequently delimitation of Soviet Socialist Republics. These perspectives also established that much of making Central Asian nationalities was, in fact, unmaking pre-national populations such as Sarts and Chagatai that comprised much of the region's urban populace.⁶

Russian-Soviet ethnographers proved crucial in enlisting Central Asian nationalities, identifying their particularities and hence precipitating their future political and economic claims. However, as Francine Hirsch rightly noted, with the end of the border delimitation in 1924 the process of nation-building in new Soviet republics had just begun⁷ begging for revisiting the topic of nation-building in Central Asia not only as a part of Soviet nationality question but also a terminology question because such terms as “*narody* (peoples), *narodnosti* (peoples sometimes understood to be small or underdeveloped), *natsional'nosti* (nationalities), *natsii* (nations), and *plemena* (tribes)” were undifferentiated⁸ yet decisive for a political status of the group in question. In the meantime, Vera Tolz posited that nascent ‘national identities’ in Russian Empire were “co-constructed” by “Imperial scholars and their minority associates” creating a certain mental space where the borders between West and East were penetrable thereby allowing appropriation of knowledge and concomitant vocabulary.⁹ Nation-building in imperial context is not a Soviet invention and was also tried in Russia as a strategy of

⁵ Hirsch, Francine., Paul Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan National Identity and the Origins of the Republic* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

⁶ See for example, N.A. Troinitskiy, “Pervaya Vseobshaya Perepis Naseleniya Rossiskoi Imperii 1897 g. Samaskanskaya Oblast.,” 1905.

⁷ Hirsch, Francine.

⁸ Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” p. 427.

⁹ Vera Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2011), p. 5.

“imperial integration.”¹⁰ A significant difference between the two was that nation-building in Soviet Union was not a means but an end.

Yuri Slezkine, using a metaphor of a Soviet-owned ‘communal apartment’ where diverse nationalities coexisted as tenants of separate rooms, argues that much of nation-building initiative came from Moscow promoting ethnic particularism and culturally elevating hitherto oppressed nations.¹¹ A close reading of Stalin’s first theoretical attempt as a Communist Party member to author and in many ways, execute the Soviet nationalities policy to be, reveals the starting point of the Bolsheviks’ definition of nation as something given and objective, yet constantly evolving along with the conditions of material life and contingent upon those conditions. The status of nations in the case of the former Russian empire was not a priority as such and was decided upon along with such questions as land ownership, industry development, water management, and so forth.¹² That was why, perhaps, nation-building in the Soviet Union was so dependent on large-scale Soviet projects, including, collectivization, industrialization, war effort etc. Slezkine also noticed that Bolsheviks had abandoned their older axiom that national culture was altogether a fiction and the only culture one could think of was class culture and had launched a never-ending celebration of each republic’s ‘high national culture’ with “founding fathers” of ethnic Golden Ages leading the way. It was the 1930s when Moscow began to don the crown of the ‘Forth Rome’ and revitalize the myths of Rus’ grandeur¹³ while other Union Republics canonized Rudaki and Firdousi, Akhundov, Nizami, Shevchenko¹⁴ etc. regardless of what side of ‘class struggle’ they were on. It was also

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism.”

¹² Josef Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, 1913.

¹³ Clark, Katerina. *Moscow The Forth Rome. Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941*. London: Harward University Press, 2011.

¹⁴ Slezkine, p. 446.

the time when national art histories began to publicize national clothes and national cuisines. Such national form was evidently unable to transmit socialist content, whatever it implied, and came to replace the content. This truly postmodern situation of form-as-content is a sufficient reason to call Soviet nationalities policy a nationalist undertaking against which Stalin himself warned his comrades back in 1913.

Yet again, what was missing from this body of literature was the view from the Soviet periphery, i.e. Central Asia.¹⁵ This perspective revealed that although the Soviet nationalities policy employed powerful narratives and vast resources the local populations were not at all passive in this process. Adrienne Lynn Edgar's work on the Soviet making of Turkmenistan shows that Turkmens were just as powerful in shaping "[their own] institutions and discourses of nationhood in the 1920s and 1930s" such as an idea of common Turkmen ancestry and differentiation from other nomadic and pastoral populations¹⁶ that were not necessarily synchronous with the ones "devised by the Bolsheviks." Likewise, 'Soviet' nation-making would be impossible if it was not for the local elites who, despite their predominantly nonproletarian background, were shouldered with the mission to mediate and translate the meaning of Soviet modernity into the local terms. Without this participation, Edgar argues, it would be hard to explain the resilience of pre-national power structures such as tribal and clan loyalties and personified rule that undergirds the present-day politics in Central Asia.

Narrowing the focus to the Tajik case as a part of making Uzbekistan, Adeeb Khalid conceptualized Tajikistan as a 'residual category'¹⁷ from a larger process of "nationalizing the revolution" by (mostly) Uzbek-speaking reformist intellectuals Jadids who were compelled

¹⁵ Adeeb Khalid, "The Soviet Union as an Imperial Formation A View from Central Asia," n.d.

¹⁶ Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 5-7.

¹⁷ Adeeb Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), p. 16 and 291.

by the Bolsheviks' anticolonial rhetoric, a promise of self-determination and modernization. Tajiks, Khalid fairly noted, did not exist as a nation, or rather in a form of a nationalist movement, prior to 1924 and Tajik speaking leaders, who were either absent during the mobilization campaigns or were committed to Turkism as a more promising political orientation "therefore did not seek rights for a Tajik nation."¹⁸ The territory allocated for the new Soviet entity was a notoriously backward and poor "eastern Bukhara redux"¹⁹ unable to secure any political representation in the regional power organs not to mention the more central Soviets. The watershed moment for Tajik national identity, Khalid continues, was declaration of Tajik ASSR and building Tajik culture that mobilized Tajik speaking cultural actors and men of letters who took up the challenge to construct and transmit the national culture to the population that found itself in a new Soviet republic. Although Khalid's benevolent treatment of Jadids as successful Uzbek nationalists is polemical due to innately cosmopolite and proto-internationalist essence of Turkism and Islam alike, the main analytical takeout from his work is exactly the challenge to represent Tajik nation in a situation where the 'cradles' of its high culture were successfully claimed by the Uzbek nation-making project while the cultural material available within Tajikistan's territory was diverse and thus inapplicable for the entire population.

Revisiting and applying Foucauldian conceptions of power and the so-called linguistic turn in historiography opened new analytical possibilities. Steven Kotkin's *Magnetic Mountain*, for example conceptualized the Soviet Union as a civilization best understood through analysis of its textual artifacts that unlock the controversial and highly debated 'Soviet subjectivity' as a product of materiality of discourse and rationalities rather than simply

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 292.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 303.

coercion.²⁰ Applied to the case of Tajikistan in Botakoz Kassymbekova's *Despite Cultures* language appears as a "repertoire of power" used by Bolsheviks in precarious and unpredictable context of Eastern Bukhara to introduce and strengthen acceptable forms of governance that would work "despite cultures."²¹ In a situation where language was taken as a 'battlefield' where each statement is scrutinized for the signs of potential deviation from normalized political values, silence (quite paradoxically) was often a necessary if not the main 'mode of speaking.'

This study will follow the same path and address an existing gap in the body of knowledge about the popular and institutional response to nationalities policy in Soviet periphery, Central Asia. More specifically, the study will focus on the period between the 1930s and mid 1950s to explore the transfer of ethnographic knowledge about population groups inhabiting Eastern Bukhara and its successor, a newly made Tajik republic into the homogenizing museum representation in the context of ethnic ambiguity and contested culture that Tajikistan acquired along with its fortuitous statehood.

Steven Kotkin, one of the first historians to have applied Foucauldian discourse theories to the case of Soviet Union has successfully demonstrated that the fact that Soviet Union was the first state where communists seized and maintain power it should not be treated as an *ad hoc* case for historians. Instead, it is more productive to see it as a summary of all global trends and discourses²² that stretch back to the Enlightenment and include rationality, political mobilization and civil society, scientific utopianism, biopolitics, social welfare state,

²⁰ Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (University of California Press, 1997).

²¹ Botakoz Kassymbekova, *Despite Cultures: Early Soviet Rule in Tajikistan* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), p. 16.

²² Botakoz Kassymbekova, "The Red Man's Burden: Soviet European Officials in Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s," in *Helpless Imperialists Imperial Failure, Fear and Radicalization* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).

modernization, subjectivation as a means of control, etc. Western scholars, particularly from the school of totalitarianism and revisionism seemed to be too myopic to recognize that there are more commonalities between Soviet Union and, say, Western Europe. To put in Kotkin's own terms, USSR was "historically conditioned merger of long held geopolitical objectives with potent social concerns."²³

To summarize his *Magnetic Mountain*, "Stalinism was not just a political system, let alone the rule of an individual. It was a set of values, a social identity, a way of life."²⁴ The chapter 'Speaking Bolshevik' successfully demonstrated that Stalinism was enrooted in new workers subjectivity that internalized and reproduced rationalities and identities sanctioned by the regime. This subjectivity could be reconstructed through every day (political) language.

Following Kotkin's convincing example, the present study will refocus the view on Soviet cultural policies from what was prevented to what was made possible "intentionally or unintentionally."²⁵ This view is particularly meaningful for the Soviet case, where individuals and institutions had to take advantage of possibilities created by the Soviet system in order to address mounting challenges (this system produced) their own ways.

Dealing with intellectual and cultural history also involves analysis of disruptions, shifts, and discontinuities of discourses that constitute "living and pulsating history"²⁶ where new possibilities for humankind are born. The driving force of this history is displacement and transformation of concepts: "affected by a work of theoretical transformation 'which establishes a science by detaching it from the ideology of its past and by revealing this past as

²³ Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*, p. 23.

²⁴ *ibid*, p. 23.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 22.

²⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, 1972, p. 9.

ideological.”²⁷ Thus, historical discourse analysis necessitates an inquiry around the question “how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another?”

Such analysis is possible when Foucault's account on the discourse formation is reconstructed. According to him, statements, as building blocks of discourse, form one, when they refer to the same object that may or may not be present in a material reality. By the same token, one can reconstruct the emergence of ‘nation’ in Central Asia first as an object of ethnographic discourse that was subsequently appropriated as a political term. Other conditions of discourse formation include permanent and coherent concepts that draw their unique meaning from discourse and persistent themes such as origin, evolution, or historical mission.²⁸ These conditions are particularly relevant for an analysis of an ethnographic discourse on the ‘Tajik nation’ as there is a clearly defined object (populations of various qualifications) explained through the prism of a persistent theme (such as genesis and a movement towards sovereignty) by ‘self-explaining’ concepts (nation, ethnicity, ethnos, culture, consciousness etc.).

One of the strategies of discourse formation is emulating grand theories that are grounded in the most dominant world view in a given period. Foucault finds such examples in general linguistics (protolanguage from which all ancient and thereafter all modern languages developed) and evolution in natural history (seeking an original life form that gave birth to all living beings). The dominant discourse, therefore, seemed to have formed as a temporal coalescence of grand theories in human and natural sciences and the idea of genesis authored by dominant Abrahamic religions. Hence, Foucault's discourse formation strategy could be applied to the analysis of ethnographic discourse in the case of Tajikistan and allow

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 33-35.

posing such questions as what was a particular formation strategy and how did it change across the scientific discipline and from institution to institution?

This way of defining statements within Foucault's discourse theory has significant implications for historiography. Foucault imagined discourse is a "fragment of history, a unity and discontinuity in history itself"²⁹ expressing all its limits, divisions and transformations, irruptions and complicities, bespeaking of the 'face of a period' the laws and rules of its formation and disintegration in a given time and space. Statements, should be taken in their duality and simultaneity, as products and building blocks of discourse. They can serve historians as access points to the reproducible 'logic' of time and its actors.

To conclude, for Foucault society conceived as a system is inevitably filled with contradictions and conflicts, a coexistence of opposing statements and application of often mutually exclusive concepts is an organizing principle and a 'secret law' of a structured society. Discourse emerges at the basis of this contradiction "and it is in order both to translate it and to overcome it that the discourse begins to speak."³⁰ It is this contradiction that discourse aims to escape and in doing so, constantly reproduces it thereby constantly changing and transforming itself in an attempt to escape "from its own continuity."³¹ Was not the transfer of ethnographic knowledge into a museum discourse exactly this kind of operation? To respond to this challenge this study needed to approach this discourse as 'present in its absence.' Just like in grammar of the English language, the absence of the ending 's' in a verb represents the present tense, first and second person singular and plural, the absence of a statement in a museum discourse is meaningful when compared to other possible statements.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 117.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 151.

³¹ Idem.

The project will attempt a comparative content analysis of the most prolific Russian-Soviet ethnographers published from the 1840s through the 1950s and seek to establish their understanding of the terms ethnicity, nationality, nation etc. and how they used these terms in describing various population groups inhabiting the territory of Tajikistan in pre-Soviet, early Soviet, and later Soviet periods. The findings will be compared to textual and visual representations of these groups in the first ethnographic collections and museums of Tajik SSR (approximately between 1930s-1950s). The focus of the study will be an interdisciplinary transformation of knowledge between diversity-focused ethnography on one hand, and homogenizing museology on the other. It should be mentioned that the author of the thesis has a professional background in museum work in the institution under study and had access to its materials and key staff members.

Francine Hirsch rightly posited that the most representative analysis of the Soviet nationalities policy and the role of ethnographic knowledge in the development of national identification should focus on the Soviet periphery where the limitations and opportunities for the new regime were most dramatic making the logic and strategies of the state more accessible. The present study will provide a hitherto unwritten history of theorizing and institutionalizing the nation during the early Soviet decades in Tajikistan and illuminate significant shifts within the discourse on the nation.

The study in its potentiality is an unconventional view on the Soviet Union as a cultural regime of instrumentalizing cultural institutions “as an objective of political education,”³² discourse economy or a system within which certain statements and ways of producing them are enabled and others are disabled,”³³ and an open-ended mission where the Soviet state had

³² Craik, Jennifer, *Re-Visioning Arts and Cultural Policy. Current Impasses and Future Directions*. (ANU E Press, 2007), p. 1.

³³ Foucault, Michel, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, 1972.

a limited control of representations of national identities and the use of language. In the broader sense this thesis can also contribute to discourse theory by refocusing it from 'what is said'- to silence, absence, or 'what is avoided and ends up not said' as a definitive feature of discourse.

Chapter 1. Tajiks in Russian and Soviet ethnography

I would like to say a few words about Tajiks. Tajiks are a special people. They are not like Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyzs; they are Tajiks, the most ancient people in Central Asia. Tajik means 'the one wearing a crown' that was how Iranians called them, and Tajiks earned this name. (I.V. Stalin, 1941).

The present chapter will analyze the emergence and development of Tajiks as an ethnographic research object. The main purpose of the chapter is to clarify how Tajiks were defined and in what terms available to Russian Imperial and Soviet ethnographers they were described and classified in academic discourse. Additionally, the chapter will attempt to track how the meaning of these terms mutated over time between Imperial and Soviet contexts. The purpose of the chapter is to 'excavate' Russian Imperial discourses on ethnicity and nationhood in which Soviet understanding of Tajik nation was enrooted thereby reconstructing the continuities between two polities that took form of colonization of knowledge. The chapter will draw from a wealth of primary ethnographic sources published between the mid 19th century to the mid 20th century.

Geographic, ethnographic, economic, and linguistic exploration of Central Asia began in early 19th century³⁴ long before Russian military expansion into the region in 1864 that added to the Imperial domain a new territory called Russian Turkestan in 1968.³⁵ However, before Russian military presence and political influence in the region was secured the first studies were dominated by the secondary sources from Persian, Arab, Chinese, and British explorers and historians.

The first explorers, whose works will be discussed in detail identified themselves as

³⁴ O.A. Sukhareva, *Bukhara XIX Nachalo XX Veka* (Tashkent: Akademiya nauk Uzbekskoi SSR Institut Istorii i arkheologii, 1966), pp. 3-12.

³⁵ Officially called Turkestan General Governorship.

travelers (*puteshestvenniki*) and, when presented themselves to local authorities, explained their presence in the region to be geographic surveys necessary for future infrastructural cooperation between the Khanates and Russian Empire, such as rail road construction and the like.³⁶ Since the establishment of Russian Turkestan that comprised Tashkent, Samarkand, Panjakent, Kokand, Zeravshan and Fergana valleys and other areas, Bukhara and Khiva Khanates were declared to be Russian protectorates de jure independent and free to run their internal affairs with imposed limitations on matters of external affairs. Therefore, all travelers-explorers were to request official permission for their missions from the offices of the current rulers of the protectorates. Such permissions were usually granted because the missions were normally sponsored by the Russian Geographic Society and endorsed by the Tsar. The members of the research missions in the protectorates were announced as guests of the Emir of Bukhara or Khan of Khiva, accompanied by an armed convoy and were to be received and supported by the local rulers (*beks*).³⁷

In 1870 Russian and Bukharan troops in a joint mission expanded further down to the banks of Amu Darya River (aka Oxus) and conquered Eastern Bukhara that added to the Khanate the territories of Darvaz, Karategin, with Russian Turkestan adding the territory of Badakhshan. This event allowed Russian expeditions research the mountainous and remote areas such as Zeravshan, Karatag, upper streams of Surkhab River, Kalaihumb, Rushan and Shugnan, and eventually reach the Vakhan Corridor, an area connecting Afghanistan, India, and China. In 1873 Russian Empire and Great Britain agreed to recognize Amu Darya as a natural border between the two colonial domains³⁸ giving Russian explorers an exclusive right to investigate the region under Russian protection and deliver thorough studies on the region's

³⁶ See for example Poslavskiy (polkovnik), *Bukhara Opisaniye Goroda i Khanstva*, 1891, pp. 3-5.

³⁷ Seymour Becker, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

³⁸ Ibid.

geography and topography, deposits, minerals and hydro resources, composition of soils and arable areas, types of agricultural practices and produce, roads and fortifications, populations and their economic activities and political structures, laws and customs of both rural and urban life, and many other aspects of the region.

1.1. Russian Imperial ethnography (1843-1910)

The earliest ethnographic texts accessed by this study do not represent systematic, formal or professional field. Although there were professional ethnographers studying Central Asian populations there was also a large number of ‘professional-amateurs’ usually diplomats, military officials, merchants, missionaries, political agents, journalists etc. who wrote texts that had an ethnographic element. Although often very detailed and thorough, their studies perpetuated terminological ambiguity in defining populations under study (peoples, tribes, nations, ethnicities etc.) that, as one may easily see, survived till early Soviet period.³⁹ Each author was free to choose not only identity markers at will, but also work within any of the available broader scientific paradigms (geography, religious studies, cultural studies, anthropology, biology, history, linguistics, economics, orientalism⁴⁰). Francine Hirsch noted that the term ‘peoples’ (*narody*) was “formative for the [ethnography as a] discipline.”⁴¹ However, the term seems to be used at will without any implications. For example, it is unclear why, peoples of the Russian Far East and Siberia, that were racially and linguistically compatible, were termed as peoples (*narody*) distinct from one another, while different tribes populating Dagestan that had common physical traits but were linguistically diverse were all termed Dagestanis.

³⁹ Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism.”

⁴⁰ Orientalism before Edward Said’s seminal work should be understood as studies of the Orient (*vostokovedenie*).

⁴¹ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. p. 149.

Furthermore, the use of the concept *narody* for some of the authors was problematic because when used within the so called ‘nation-state paradigm’ or in more political sense, it was synonymous with nations, while used in plural in the context of ‘human sciences’ it was more likely to be understood as tribes or ethnies (*narodnosti*). That was why it was possible to describe ‘Tajiks’ both as a stable and unproblematic ethnic or national community albeit without a state⁴² and as a differentiated category or variants, each with its own set of qualities and features.⁴³ Internal differences and incompatibilities of this stateless community and lack of any particular relationship among their different localized groups seemed negligible to Russian ethnographers who insisted that ethnicity was an essential ontological phenomenon regardless of a population’s self-understanding.⁴⁴

The 19th century ethnographic works represent an extremely diverse and heterogeneous body of texts that nevertheless had common roots in German Romanticism and particularly philosophy of Johann Gottlieb Fichte that viewed nation as a “sleeping beauty” that would inevitably awaken as a nation-state and Johann Gottfried Herder who first voiced the idea that nations are cognizable through their unique and distinct cultures.⁴⁵ 19th century ethnography was also deeply affected by evolutionist and anthropological trends in philosophy and sciences, particularly by the positivist thought of Auguste Comte and Henry Thomas Buckle.⁴⁶ Therefore, Russian ethnographers as a part of the broader European academic context described Central Asian populations along such rubrics as physical and psychological features, language, professional occupations, geography, and everyday life (culture). The main assumption seems to have been that peoples are distinct from one another

⁴²See, for example, A.P. Shyshov, *Tajiki Etnograficheskoe i Antropologicheskoe Issledovanie* (Tashkent, 1910).

⁴³ See for example A.A. Semyonov, *Etnograficheskiye Ocherki Zarafshanskikh Gor Karategina i Darvaza*, 1903.

⁴⁴ Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism.”

⁴⁵ Tokarev S. A., *Istoki Etnograficheskoi Nauki* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), p. 136.

⁴⁶ Tokarev., p. 137.

by the concentration of these features and through particular ways in which they organize these activities. The most representative texts from the Russian Imperial scholarship where Tajiks figure are by Khanykov N. V. (1822-1878) *The Khanate of Bakhara 1843 (Opisaniye Bukharskogo Khanstva)*, Middendorf A. F. (1815-1894)⁴⁷ *The Study of the Fergana Valley 1882 (Ocherki Ferganskoi doliny)*, and Shyshov A. P. (1860-1936) *Tajiks Ethnographic and Anthropological Study 1910 (Tajiki etnograficheskoye i antropologicheskoye issledovaniye)*.

A prominent feature of ethnography in the pre-genetic era was its focus on identifying common racial features of peoples under study. Having very little knowledge about the laws of inheritance of biological traits among people, the first ethnographers nevertheless reflected the general European trends such as physiognomy and skull-studies in their attempt to find permanent, unchanging physical traits that are specific to a particular people. Their main research approach could be called ethnometrics,⁴⁸ a system of physiognomy and craniometry or skull measurements, analysis of eye and hair color, body constitution and other physical characteristics that were indicative of a particular ethnic type.

A. F. Middendorf provides evidence that ethnometrics was widely used to study Central Asian population in mid 19th century. He, for instance, acknowledges that, in his analysis of Bukharan population he had applied his experience in domestic animal breeding and selectionism, and used the same approach to analyze racially mixed populations to trace the inheritance of ‘pure types’ of each ethnicity. The most ‘typical’ king of Tajiks was labeled by the term Gal’cha or a Central Asian word referring to mountainous Tajiks, which, according to all three authors enlisted above, have undeniable evidence of ‘Aryan descent.’ Combination of hair color, constitution, color and shape of eyes, complexion, nose shape,

⁴⁷ German Alexander Theodor von Middendorff

⁴⁸ Author’s term

skull shape, and other physical features were recognized as “a reflection of the Aryan breed”⁴⁹ with diversity of these features usually explained as ‘variations of the same.’⁵⁰

The primary methodology used by all scholars was comparative anthropology, that, applying largely quantitative indices juxtaposed population samples from selected locations (see, for example, a comparative chart for Tajiks and Kara-Kyrgyzs in Figure 1).⁵¹ More prosaically, Tajik type was given esthetic preference and described more benevolently than Turkic types. Khanykov, for instance, admired Tajik women’s “pleasant faces, white complexion” and black eyes⁵² while Alexei Shyshov repeatedly complemented Tajik women on “very pleasant features and gorgeous body contours.”⁵³

The mentioned Alexei Shyshov who authored one of the most comprehensive studies on Tajiks summarized all previous attempts at categorizing ‘typical Tajiks’ physical features, including both Middendorf and Khanykov and combined the outcomes with his own anthropological analysis:

The characteristic features of Tajiks are a long head with a high forehead, expressive eyes sided with black eyelashes, thin nose, straight in the majority and aquiline in some; the complexion is pinky, hair is light-brown and thick, thick beard. [As for the head] it is a typical Iranian skull, a bone sphere of significant capacity. It is 2,5 times longer than it is wide. It is not as high as in Semite, however, is higher than Turan skull.⁵⁴

All ethnographers without exception wrote before genetic research became a mainstream in biology. However, their insistence on the inheritance of ethnic traits and existence of ‘pure types’ representative of different peoples was quite remarkable. To substitute the lack of knowledge about the transfer of genetic information from individual to individual the word

⁴⁹A.F. Middendorf, *Ocherki Ferganskoy Doliny* (Sanct Peterburg: Imperatorskaya academia nauk, 1882)., p. 397

⁵⁰ *ibid*, pp. 396-397

⁵¹ *ibid*, 390.

⁵² N.V. Khanykov, *Opisaniye Bukharskogo Khanstva* (Sanct Peterburg: Imperatorskaya akademiya nauk, 1843).

⁵³ Shyshov, *Tajiki Etnograficheskoe i Antropologicheskoe Issledovanie.*, p. 95.

⁵⁴ Shyshov., pp. 92-93.

‘blood’ was commonly used as a metaphor⁵⁵ to express a bodily substance in charge of saving and transmitting the imagined genetic data.⁵⁶ The process of mixing of different ethnicities was almost exclusively described as mixing of different ‘bloods.’

‘Aryan blood,’ of Indo-Europeans was somewhat privileged compared to Mongoloid (Turkic) populations evidently displaying what Matthias Battis called ‘Tajikophilia’⁵⁷ as Tajiks were proclaimed to be kin to Russians and Germans.⁵⁸

Tajiks (from valleys in general and from Samarkand in particular) is a mixture of Persian, Arab, Uzbek, Jewish, and even Kyrgyz bloods and the more noble and wealthier a Tajik is the more Persian and Jewish blood runs in his veins⁵⁹

People of Ghissar, Darvaz, and Karategin, to the North of Oxus river and Badakhshan are closely related to this group [Gal’cha], although they presently speak Persian or Turkic and, in some places, have a considerable amount of Uzbek blood⁶⁰

A similar regularity of Tajik type is observable in descriptions of their psychological features and spiritual aspects. Again, one common trend was that their ‘inner world’ was largely defined against the Turkic type, with ‘Aryans,’ especially mountainous Tajiks, usually described positively (honest, industrious, simple-minded and frank, shy and timid) while Turkic population represented all the disdainful features of the most hated Russian ‘Other’ (rude, uncivilized, barbarous). A.D. Grebenkin, for instance, goes as far as privileging the national character over the racial type of which he remained very skeptical:

Tajik tribe, if we can even talk of one, is faceless (bezlichnoye)⁶¹ or rather contains

⁵⁵ On the textual role of metaphors see for example Jeffery Mio, “Metaphor and Politics,” *Metaphor and Symbol* 12, no. 2 (2002).

⁵⁶ Middendorf, *Ocherki Ferganskoy Doliny.*, p. 385

⁵⁷ Matthias Battis, “The Aryan Myth and Tajikistan: From a Myth of Empire to One National Identity,” *Ab Imperio*, no. April (2016)., p. 157

⁵⁸ Middendorf, *Ocherki*, p. 390)

⁵⁹ *ibid*, 398

⁶⁰ Shyshov, *Tajiki Etnograficheskoe i Antropologicheskoe Issledovanie.*, p. 89.

⁶¹ Here, the author most likely means that Tajiks do not have one common outer features.

the types of all tribes populating an okrug. Thus, it is impossible to say that a Tajik type is such and such... Tajiks of an okrug is a mixture of all peoples (narodnosti) populating a given area. The mixture we call Tajiks reflects such types as Uzbek, Tatar, Jewish, Gypsy, even Slavic, Arab, Persian, Indian, it has only one common feature, spiritual aspect. Whatever tribe a Tajik belongs to by the face, he is first and foremost a trader, gullible, and in certain situations, a coward.⁶²

Needless to say, the idea to write up a ‘national’ psychology was futile and resulted in a very contradictory picture of Tajiks. One thing that most of the authors would agree on is that Tajiks are amiable and positive in nature. But this nature was corrupted through long-term cohabitation with Turks and living under despotic Turkic rulers. Authors maintain a derogative tone in describing psychological profile of urban Tajiks with mixed populations that earned them a name, that was believed to be a Turkic cursing word Sart⁶³ due to their “cunning, lazy, miserly, selfish” character.⁶⁴

Alexei Shyshov even added a special section in his book on crimes and vices most common among Tajiks. Having been written into an ethnographic study, crimes and vices became an integral part of a profile of a given people and could be used as an expertise for the colonial administration. Such information was particularly meaningful for the project of assimilating (*russificatsya*) of some of the Central Asian peoples.⁶⁵ Based on the analysis of local Qazi courts Shyshov provides the following quantitative evidence of crimes most common among Tajiks:

Qazi and commissions reviewed the following cases: theft and receiving stolen goods, abduction of women and boys and attempts thereon, profligacy of men and women, beating, inflicting injuries, fights and public disturbance, insulting local officials, insulting Muslim religion, violent intrusion into someone’s property, insulting private individuals, drunkenness, debauchery, falsehood and forgery, libel

⁶² A.D. Grebenkin, “Tajiki,” in *Russkii Turkestan Stat’i Po Etnografii, Hozyastvu i Estestvennoi Istorii*, 1872., p. 5.

⁶³ In most of the works Sarts were equaled with Tajiks and the origin of the word Sart is often believed to be of Turkic (*sary it* or yellow dog) lexicon and used as a derogative name of urban Tajiks.

⁶⁴ D.I. Edvardnitskyi, *Putevoditel Po Sredney Azii Ot Baku Do Taskenta* (Tashkent, 1893), p. 129.

⁶⁵ Sergey Abashin, “Sarty - ‘Narod s Budushim’: Etnografia i Imperia v Ruskom Turkestane,” *Orientalism vs. Orientalistika*, 2016.

and slander, extortion of private property, gambling, lynching, embezzlement, zoophily, falsifying and concealing documents, and perjury⁶⁶

According to both Shyshov and Grebenkin Tajiks also suffered various addictions (smoking opium and cannabis, and alcoholism), gambling, sexual immoderations, including bacha patronage⁶⁷ and frequenting brothels.

The situation changes radically when rural Tajiks and especially Gal'cha are in the focus of a study. Those were described as simple-minded, guest-friendly, modest and reserved, hard-working and industrious although somewhat sloppy about their houses, averted to violence, ardent hunters and explorers, and exceptional craftsmen. However, in many works ethnographers discuss Tajiks in such a way that allows a critical reader to reveal the limits of their theories and create space for 'non-national ethnography' or a particular discourse on the peoples that avoids lumping up disparate peoples into large *narody* and focuses on local particularities. Many early publications divided Central Asian populations into smaller tribes (*plemena*)⁶⁸ or ethnies (*narodnosty*) rather than peoples and suggested that attempts at writing about different peoples are unproductive. More specifically authors noted that the population is very heterogeneous with nothing else in common but religion Islam.

This territory is populated by different types of Tajiks speaking different dialects that are only similar in spiritual qualities. The indigenous people of the okrug are absolutely right saying: 'Every town has its own Tajiks.' This understanding that every town has its own kind of Tajiks is so deeply rooted in them that they always identify themselves by cities. If you ask an Uzbek who he is, he would answer: I am Uzbek, katai, katagan, etc. But a Tajik to this question would respond: I am from Bukhara, Tashkent, Khujand, Samarkand etc. and would never, or at least very rarely say: I am Tajik⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Shyshov, *Tajiki Etnograficheskoe i Antropologicheskoe Issledovanie.*, p. 233.

⁶⁷ Bacha in prerevolutionary Central Asia was a young boy, talented in singing and dancing, attended by wealthy men for entertainment and sexual socialization.

⁶⁸ Khanykov, *Opisaniye Bukharskogo Khanstva.*, 55-56.

⁶⁹ Grebenkin, "Tajiki." p. 5.

[Gal'cha] also include peoples of Sarykol, Vakhan, and Mugnan, people of Munjan of the upper reaches of Ludkho valley, and Vuditsai people (people of Sanglikh and Ishkashim)⁷⁰

It can be posited that non-national ethnography was possible when authors allowed themselves a perceptive move beyond one large country Turkestan and talk about its local constituents. An example of such geography is the use of the word country (*strana*) in descriptions of Darvaz, Karategin, Rushan, Shugnan, Karatag, Zeravshan, and Ghissar in works by Shyshov, Semenov, Grebenkin, and others. The famous Turkestan Album published in 1871-72, perhaps the earliest visual documentation of Central Asian peoples and material culture, contains images of individuals termed not only Tajiks (*Tajiki* and *Tajichki*) and Sarts, but also Yabnobis (*Yagnaubtsy*), Karateginians (*Karategintsy*), Iranians (*Irani*)⁷¹ as if each group was a distinct category or different peoples (*narody*).

It should be noted that the studies discussed above were produced for Russian Imperial experts for general Russian readership with very little effect on the indigenous population. Most of the works were published in Saint Petersburg, some in Tashkent. It is also possible that most of them were never seen in the region about which they so eloquently narrated. Yet, would it be acceptable to speculate that these texts might have affected Central Asian-born ethnographers and orientalist that could bridge Russian and Soviet ethnographies? The following section will address this possibility.

⁷⁰ Shyshov, *Tajiki Etnograficheskoe i Antropologicheskoe Issledovanie.*, p. 89.

⁷¹ A.L. Kun, "Tuzemnoye Naseleniye v Russkikh Vladeniyah Credney Azii," in *Turkestanskiy Albom. Chast' Etnograficheskaya.*, n.d.

1.2. Early Soviet ethnography

The transition from Imperial to Soviet contexts was dramatic and eventful. After the revolutions of 1917 and the abdication of the Tsar Nikolas II Central Asia saw radical changes. Russian Turkestan received the revolution over the telegraph and swore allegiance to the Provisional Government. The new Turkestan government included members of all major parties of Russia at the time, SRs, Cadets, Mensheviks, and Bolsheviks, and some local political organizers from Jadids. Former Russian protectorate Bukhara and Khiva became de facto independent with all limitations imposed on them by the Tsarist regime nullified by the Provisional Government's promise of self-determination. Due to interrupted railroad communication between mainland Russia and Central Asia caused by the developments in Civil War in southern Russian provinces between 1917 and 1920 the region witnessed the period of Great Isolation with neither Provisional Government, nor Bolsheviks able to exert any control over the region. It was this period when the region was increasingly infiltrated by diverse discourses on the nationhood and statehood, ethnic nationalism, regionalism, and revolutionary internationalism, among them. Adeeb Khalid claims that radicalized Jadids were "nationalizing the revolution" by defining themselves in opposition to both Imperial and Soviet treatment of the region in which local actors were given little to no consideration.⁷² Whether Jadids' response to this situation could be interpreted as 'national' should perhaps remain an open question. Yet, it is certain that the early known attempts at autonomy and state-making efforts in Central Asia between 1917 and 1924 were non-ethnic. Kokand Autonomy, for example, seceded from Russian Turkestan in December 1917, formed its government that included both local (Muslim) and Russian members and administered a

⁷² Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR*, chapter 3.

mixed population sample representing all major ethnicities of the region.⁷³ Later polities, People's Muslim Republic of Bukhara and Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic were not ethnoterritorial entities either but rather inclusive political regions inherited from the defeated local states. Local intellectual elites (especially Jadids) envisioned their future, not in terms meaningful for nation-states but rather sought to connect the region to global political and ideological movements of religious modernism.

Furthermore, in Central Asia, neither elites nor general public was able to imagine themselves in terms of nations.⁷⁴ Although some Russian ethnographers and census takers distinguished major nationalities of the region (Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Kara Kyrgyz, Turkmen, and Tatar) they failed to agree on the status of such major groups as Sarts (the 2nd most populous group in some areas)⁷⁵ and as a result Sarts ended up as a contested category between Uzbeks and Tajiks.

Interestingly enough, the turmoil of Central Asian political transformation had little effect on ethnographic studies produced in the region. During the Soviet time, the link between race, ethnicity, and language remained indicative of a distinct people (*narod*). Although Francine Hirsch quite rightly noted that in early 1930s Soviet ethnography moved away from racial indicators and characteristics as definitive for nations as a response to the growing use of such approaches in Nazi Germany within the so-called "biological determinism"⁷⁶ this move was not so unequivocal if at all complete in ethnographic studies on Tajiks. It is true that the change of definitions and the meanings of terms such as 'nation' coincided with the

⁷³ P. Alekseenko, *Kokandskaya Avtonomiya* (Tashkent: Uzgiz, 1931).

⁷⁴ Hirsch, Francine. *Empire of Nations Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005. See also Bergne, Paul. *The Birth of Tajikistan National Identity and the Origins of the Republic*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007.

⁷⁵ Abashyn, Sergey. "Sarty - 'Narod S Budushim': Etnografia I Imperia v Ruskom Turkestane." *Orientalism*, n.d.

⁷⁶ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*., Chapter 6, p. 231.

cleansing of the hitherto dominant Nikolai Marr's racio-lingual understanding of nation according to which "language and race were identical [sic.] and that structural linguistics provided the key to tracing the origins of all ethnic groups."⁷⁷ It is also true that Stalin's definition of the nation famously excluded race as one of the elements replacing it with a very ambiguous term 'national character.'⁷⁸ Nevertheless, Matthias Batts provides ample evidence that there was a continuity between Russian Imperial, pan-European, and Soviet ethnography in terms of racialized approach to ethnicity and, more broadly nation, and that this link can be narrowed down to one individual Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Semenov (1873–1958).⁷⁹

In one of his earliest substantial studies, Semenov acknowledged that collective ethnic term Tajiks could not be used by ethnographers as a nominative for this group because there had never been an agreement about the meaning of the word and its origin (Persian, Turkic, Arab, Armenian etc.).⁸⁰ That was probably why Semenov clung to the pre-existing mode of providing a detailed description of physical traits and features of Tajiks with emphasis on the mountainous populations as more 'typical' types of Tajiks devoid of Turkic and Semitic 'admixtures.'⁸¹ Furthermore, Semenov was particularly fascinated by the appearance of some of the individuals of average height, stout constitution, with white-skin, blue, green, and gray eyes, fair and red hair, baring stunning "resemblance to inhabitants of Great Russian gubernyas and German lowlands."⁸² He continues with descriptions of their voices, other physical characteristics as endurance, and their material culture such as clothes and housing curiously avoiding the question of language and the fact that 'different Tajiks' spoke

⁷⁷Ibid, 314. This approach was very common for Middendorf who wrote "This mountainous people [Tajiks] are undoubtedly of Iranian origin [as they] speak an ancient Iranian language and do not understand Turkic which proves their purity."

⁷⁸ Josef Stalin, *Marxism, and the National and Colonial Question*, 1913.

⁷⁹ Batts, "The Aryan Myth and Tajikistan: From a Myth of Empire to One National Identity," p. 13.

⁸⁰ Semyonov, *Etnograficheskiye Ocherki Zarafshanskikh Gor Karategina I Darvaza*, 1903, p. 22-23.

⁸¹ Semyonov., p. 24.

⁸² Ibid, 26.

dissimilar dialects of Western and Eastern Iranian branches while in urban centers were naturally bilingual and polyglot.⁸³

Semenov's work was not unnoticed in both Tajik Republic and Moscow. In 1947 Professor Tolstov published a review on Semenov's book *Material Monuments of Iranian Culture in Central Asia* (*Materialnye pamyatniki iranskoi kul'tury v Tsentral'noi Azii*) attacking Semenov as an advocate of racial theory. This publication came to the attention of the then Chair of the TsK KP Tajik SSR Bobojon Gafurov, also the most celebrated Soviet Tajik historian and the Head of the Academy of Sciences, who wrote a personal classified letter to Andrei Zhdanov accusing professor Tolstov in spreading ill-informed opinions that downgrade the role of "Iranians" in shaping the region's ethnic composition and culture adding that Tolstov's "harmful theory [sic.] plays into the hand of Panturkists."⁸⁴

The archival evidence shows that Gafurov's appeal was given careful consideration in Moscow and reported to Suslov M.A. but was not sustained. Moreover, Gafurov's argument that during Samanid State Central Asia was predominantly "Iranian and spoke Tajik" and that Uzbekistan's population is originally Tajiks who started using Turkic language, was deemed wrong. Gafurov's vision of Tajik people as "ahistorical eternal category" (*vneistoricheskaya vechnaya kategoriya*) was ruled inconsistent with more recent and 'truer' perspectives.⁸⁵ How this tension between Stalinabad and Moscow affected ethnography-writing in the former is currently unclear. However, the titles that kept being published in Tajikistan throughout the Soviet time, most prominently Gafurov's two-volume history of Tajikistan titled *The Tajiks* (*Tajiki*), suggest that Tajik academics stood their ground.

⁸³ Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan National Identity and the Origins of the Republic*.

⁸⁴ B.G. Gafurov, "Pismo Sekretarya TsK KP(b) B.G. Gafurova A.A. Zhdanovu (Classified)" (Stalinabad: RGASP, 1947).

⁸⁵ E. Gorodetskyi, "RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 125. D. 552. L. 55–59.," n.d.

Another important bridge between the Imperial and Soviet ethnographies was Mikhail Stepanovich Andreev (1873-1948). Andreev is celebrated in Tajikistan as the founder of ethnographic research and one of the most ardent collectors of ethnographic materials representative of Tajiks' material culture. He authored several books on mythology, archeological monuments, and literary heritage of Tajiks.⁸⁶ His most renowned work *Tajiks of the Khuf Valley* based on several expeditions to Tajik Badakhshan between the 1930s and 1940s paid homage to the fascination with the mountainous communities of Tajikistan. It is interesting that Andreev used the word *Tajiks* (*Tajiki*) to refer to the population that should otherwise be called Pamiris or Badakhshanis, or even more specifically Rushanis or Shughnanis. Nevertheless, this work also marks a compromising shift of emphasis from physical and psychological specificities of different peoples towards their cultural and economic life such as particularities of agricultural production, natural resources, local traditions and beliefs, costumes and housing, games and seasonal festivals.

This shift of focus can be explained by structural transformations of institutions from Russian Empire to the USSR. In the former, ethnographers viewed populations as subjects, loyal or disloyal, with the office of General Governor sponsoring and endorsing research expeditions. The latter trend, represented by Academician Vernadskii in 1926-1928 viewed populations as an economic resource (*proizvoditelnyie sily*),⁸⁷ that develop following the Marxian sociohistorical logic. This approach was particularly meaningful for rationalizing the launch of the first 5-year plan (*Pyateletka*)⁸⁸ and was sponsored by the newly established republican Academies of Sciences. Increasing attention was paid to the organization of Tajik fields, agricultural skills, and intricate networks of irrigation that impressed all ethnographers

⁸⁶ N.A. Ikromov, "Voprosy Istorii i Kul'tury Tajikov v Rannih Rabotah M.S. Andreeva," *UDK* 9, n.d.

⁸⁷ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, p. 234.

⁸⁸ Hirsch., chapter 6.

and travelers as superior compared to Uzbeks and even to the Slavs. Information on agriculture and crafts, detailing on the soils and fertilizers, preferences in crops, systems of land ownership, agricultural seasons and calendars, were major sections in ethnographic research in the 20th century thereby crystallizing the image of Tajiks as exceptional agricultural workers. Trading as another major Tajik occupation, and indeed a significant element of their regional identity in the 19th century, saw a steady decline from pre-Soviet to Soviet works. For example, M.S. Andreev does not include this activity in his *Tajiks of the Khuf Valley*.

1.3. Later Soviet ethnography (1950s)

In 1950s ethnography in the Soviet Union underwent yet another significant transformation by following ethnogenesis as its ‘grand theory’ that studied evolution of peoples along natural conditions of their habitat and economic progress.⁸⁹ Hence, interest in racial specifications of different nations was branched off to the field of ethnology that used ‘paleontological evidence’ as an extension of the racial theory of ‘ethnogenesis.’ An illustrative example of how this theory came to reconcile the racial discourses on the nation with the new trends in ethnographic studies is L.V. Oshanin’s *Ethnogenesis of Tajiks based on the Evidence from Comparative Anthropology of Turkic and Iranian Peoples of Central Asia*.⁹⁰ According to him, nation is a historic compound of tribes and races that inhabited a common territory and, according to Stalin, cannot be defined in racial or tribal terms. Therefore, the task of an ethnogenesis study is to track “historically progressing (*svershavshyhsya*) changes in racial, tribal, and lingual elements in populations (*sostava naseleniya*) on a given territory within

⁸⁹ The culmination of this trend of ethnography in Soviet period was Nikolai Marr’s evolutionism and ‘ethno-Marxism.’ See also Sergey Abashin, “Post-Soviet Nationalism, Ethnos Theory, and Constructivist Critique,” *Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia* 44, no. 4 (2006): 58–63.

⁹⁰ L.V. Oshanin, “Etnogenez Tajikov Po Dannym Sravnitel’noi Antropologii Turkskih i Iranskih Narodov Srednei Azii,” *Trudy Akademii Nauk Tajikskoi SSR* XXVII (1954): 13–24.

which a nation was forming.”⁹¹ Although racial aspects of ethnicity were seemingly separated from ethnographic research, it was the interchangeability of the formative terms for both disciplines, such as *ethnos*, *narod*, *narodnost*, and *nation*, combined with institutional ambiguity within the Institute of ethnography,⁹² that explains the resilience of racial and biological discourses in Soviet ethnography. In other words, the proximation of paleontological and anthropological ‘evidence and arguments’ of ethnogenesis of Tajik *ethnos* with cultural and historical studies of Tajik nation creates an overlapping knowledge where Tajiks can be perceived as a complex of physical, biological, and cultural elements.

To further summarize Oshanin’s work, ethnogenesis was primarily concerned to establish which of the population is indigenous (autochthonous) and which is resettled from outside the region based on paleontological evidence or human fossils from different historical epochs. Oshanin distinguishes six races populating Central Asia: two mongoloid races: South-Siberian and Central Asian, and four Europeid races: Central Asian-Transoxiana race or Pamir-Fergana race, Transcaspian race or Eastern variant of the Mediterranean race, Khorasan race, and Near-Asian race. Each race, Oshanin continues, “has a complex of morphological and constitutional features and a certain habitat or a center from which they spread in which this racial type is found, of course not in its purest but where it is found most often.”⁹³ Thus, ethnology can be treated as a paradoxical cohabitation of non-racial nation and titular *ethnos* in Soviet discourses on the nation. Titular *ethnos* figures as one of the elements in a given nation. This discursive mode can be found in a few works by Soviet ethnographers in 1950s who investigated specificities of the material culture of various communities inhabiting the

⁹¹ Oshanin., p. 13.

⁹² Along with ethnology, ethnography, and anthropology, the institute also had subdivisions on archeology, history, cultural studies etc.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 14.

territory of Tajik SSR. For example, Uzbeks of Karluk settlement in Southern Tajikistan and Uzbekistan⁹⁴ and Kyrgyz of Jirghital⁹⁵ were described in one volume with Tajiks of Darvaz⁹⁶ not as fragments of titular nations but as particular communities in their own right. These communities were defined through the areas of their population and material and immaterial culture dominating a given area (*istoriko-kulturnyi raion*). However, when Tajiks were the focus of a study they would be referred to as Tajiks, mountainous Tajiks, or mountaineers.⁹⁷

Thus, one can see that throughout its more than a century-long history in Central Asia, there have been clear continuities of assumptions, theories, and approaches from Russian to Soviet ethnographic schools even after redefining nations from racial terms to cultural and linguistic ones. The commonality and regularity of Tajiks as an ethnic community as well as its somewhat privileged position among other peoples (*narody*) was also maintained not only on the level of individual research projects but also found institutional support in a form of research facilities and academic journals. This continuity is partly traceable to the fact that ethnic Russians remained key figures in the process of constructing ethnographic knowledge about the ‘Tajik nation.’

Two most prominent scholars, Semenov and Andreev who also intermittently served as party workers and government officials represent the bridge between Russian Imperial and Soviet contexts. In early 1900s Semenov had an important position in the office of Turkestan General-Governorship and during the WWI worked as a Vice-Governor of Turkestan in charge of the diplomatic service. In 1920s he taught at the Eastern University in

⁹⁴ Karmysheva B. H., “Zhylyshe Uzbekov Plemeni Karluk Yuzhnyh Raionov Tajikistana i Uzbekistana,” *Izvestiya Otdeleniya Obshchestvennyh Nauk AN Tajikskoi SSR*, no. 10–11 (1956): 13–23.

⁹⁵ Karmysheva B. H., “Poezdka k Kirgizam Jirgitalya v 1954 G.,” *Izvestiya Otdeleniya Obshchestvennyh Nauk AN Tajikskoi SSR*, no. 10–11 (1956).

⁹⁶ Ershov N.N., “Remesla Tajikov Darvaza (Po Materialam Garmskoi Etnograficheskoi Ekspeditsii 1954 G.),” *Izvestiya Otdeleniya Obshchestvennyh Nauk AN Tajikskoi SSR*, no. 10–11 (1956): 3–23.

⁹⁷ See for example, A.E. Shyroкова, *Traditsionnaya i Sovremennaya Odezhda Zhenshin Gornogo Tajikistana* (Dushanbe: Donish, 1976).

Tashkent and ran other important academic projects for the Soviet government. In 1950s until his death he headed Tajik Academy of Sciences.⁹⁸ Prior to the Revolution Andreev worked for Russian diplomatic missions to Turkestan and India from 1905 to 1914, and from 1918 was a key figure for building professional education institutions and research facilities for Uzbekistan and Tajikistan alike. Since 1944 until his death in 1947 he led the Institute for History, Language, and Literature of Tajik Academy of Sciences and played a prominent role in forming the first ethnographic collections in Tajikistan.⁹⁹

It appears so that ethnography and ethnology succeeded in constructing vast and diverse body of knowledge about the population in Tajikistan which, under the Soviet nationalities policy, needed to be represented to the republic's population. Ethnographic collections in museums was one of the most essential venues for such presentation. The following chapter will attempt a reconstruction of this representation as well as discuss the place museums occupied in Soviet nation-making.

⁹⁸ R. Masov, "Vklad Akademika A.A. Semenova v Izucheniye Istorii i Kultury Tajikskogo Naroda," in *Mezhdunarodnaia Nauchno-Teoreticheskaya Konferentsiya, Posvyashyonnoi 140-Letiyu Akademika A.A. Semenova*, ed. R. Masov (Dushanbe: Akademiya Nauk Respubliki Tajikistan, 2013). See also "Semenov Aleksandr Aleksandrovich." *Pis'ma o Tashkente*, 2016.

⁹⁹ Russian Geographic Society, "Andreev Mikhail Stepanovich Biografiya, Obrazovaniye, Kar'era," 2017.

Chapter 2. Museums in Russian Empire and Central Asia (1900-1920s)

The purpose of this short chapter is to set the stage for investigating the operations of the first ethnographic sections in Soviet museums in Central Asia and to trace continuities and changes in this field from Russian Imperial and Soviet contexts. The chapter will be guided by the question of the origin of museum institutions and collecting practices and Russian Empire, the key figures who headed and led these institutions and processes, specific sociopolitical backgrounds against which the museum practices emerged and developed, and how these museums worked in Soviet Tajikistan from its earliest days forward.

The emergence and transformation of museums and private collections in Central Asia between Russian Imperial and Soviet contexts has been paid little attention in historiography thus far. Russian historians start the timeline with the end of the 18th century when Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg saw increasing state subsidies, registration of all items in the book of inventory, and appointment of Prince Yusupov as its head in 1796.¹⁰⁰ The first collections were composed of European renaissance paintings, Hellenic sculptures, and later, since 1825 works by Russian masters. Russian tsars' collections in Winter Palace and Arsenal (*oruzheinaya palata*) were also open to public in mid 19th century.

Significantly, along with large and increasingly public museums run by members of the royal family there were also private collections with limited public access such as Stroganov gallery, Naryshkin's collection of rarities, Prince Saltykov's arsenal. The first ethnographic collections were owned by members of Slavophile circles such as M. P. Pogodin who collected ancient Slavic manuscripts and books, icons, coins, and objects of everyday life of different Slavic tribes.¹⁰¹ In 1845 Russian Geographic Society opened its ethnographic

¹⁰⁰ V.P. Gritskevich, *Istoriya Muzeinogo Dela v Mire: Kontsa XVIII v. Nachala XX V.* (Sanct-Petersburg, 2007), p. 49.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 53-54.

department that began field research and expeditions investigating the “customs of peoples of Russia and other countries” (*nnavy narodov Rossii i drugih stran*).¹⁰² Specific ethnographic and archeological interest in Eastern cultures was institutionalized as an Asian Museum in Kunstkamera already in 1818. In 1850s the collection of the Asian Museum was transferred to the Ethnographic Museum (later Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography).¹⁰³

In Central Asia museums and collections were a continuation of pan-European trends. Benedict Anderson in his chapter on museums in colonial contexts noted that starting in 19th century empires incorporated ancient and sacred sites and ‘revived prestige’ of their colonial possessions. This process was appropriated not only by Europeans born in colonies but also natives.¹⁰⁴ Gulmahmad Nurov in his dissertation thesis refers to archival evidence that already in mid 19th century museums and collecting was a fashionable occupation for both Russian colonial officials and local noblemen in Turkestan’s urban centers.¹⁰⁵ The first collections were usually not open to public, lacked any systemic approach to collecting and exhibiting, were accessed by travelers and explorers interested in the region. Nor were there specialized laws and regulations on museum work and therefore, no systemic approach to museum presentation up until 1917.

After the Revolution the Soviet state began formalizing and systematizing museums as a part of its cultural and enlightenment efforts. Already in November 1917 Lenin ordered the establishment of the Collegium for Museums and Protection of Monuments within People’s Commissariat of Enlightenment (*Narkompros*) with ethnographers, G. S. Yatmanov (the Head of the Collegium), P. P. Pokryshkin, K. N. Romanov (Deputies), N. A. Marr, S. F.

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 59.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 62.

¹⁰⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2006), p. 181.

¹⁰⁵ Gulmahmad Nurov, “Formirovaniye i Razvitiye Muzeinogo Dela v Tajikistane (30e Gody XX- Nachalo XXI v.) Dissertatsiya.” (Institut Istorii, Arheologii i etnografii Akademiya Nauk Respubliki Tajikistan., 2011).

Oldenburg, N. P. Sychev (full members), in key positions. In May 1918 the Collegium opened its Moscow branch headed by I. E. Grabar' as a Department for Museums and Monuments within Narkompros in charge of museum work and protection and restoration of all the monuments on the territory of the country.¹⁰⁶ The first five years of Soviet rule saw the opening of 250 new museums including the specialized museum for Oriental arts and cultures *Ars Asiatica* devoted, among other regions, to Central Asian history and culture.¹⁰⁷

One major transformation of the museum field was making them open to public as an educational resource. The establishment of the history, region-studies and ethnographic museum complexes in the USSR took place as an interdisciplinary effort that combined the political and academic interest of the People's Commissariats of Enlightenment, Culture, and the Academy of Sciences. The content of a specific museum depended on the proximity of its operations to the priorities of one or the other political body. For example, the Ethnographic Department of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in Leningrad in its first public presentation aimed at displaying the diversity of peoples, their past traditional practices and *byt*, and instances of new and future economic life. Because of the department's institutional memory dating back to 1902 and domination of pre-revolution experts such as Oldenburg, Bartold, Marr, Rudenko, and others, it notably struggled to change the emphasis from archaic, anthropological, and tribal aspects of different *narodnosti* to their economic progress and socialist construction.¹⁰⁸

Operating at the intersection of two organizations, the Ministry of Culture of Tajik SSR and Tajikistan Branch of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, the Republican History and Region-Studies Museum (HRM) also had to adjust its practices to the priorities of these

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ "Istoriya Muzeya Vostoka," n.d.

¹⁰⁸ Hirsch Francine, *Empire of Nations Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, pp. 190-201.

two spheres, one exerting political leverage and funding, the other providing scientific expertise and authority.

2.1. Bukhara and Samarkand museums

As was mentioned earlier in this thesis, museums as institutions were not new to Central Asia prior to October Revolution. The most remarkable collector of the region was the last Bukharan Emir, Said Alim Khan, whose private collection contained thousands of old books and manuscripts, works of art from Turkestan, India, Iran and other parts of the world, gifts and jewels, arms, ancient coins, and textiles.¹⁰⁹ After the defeat by the Red Army in 1920, Emir loaded the most precious of his treasures on (allegedly) 1,500 horses and headed to Afghanistan to die in 1944. What was left from the possessions of the Mangit dynasty accumulated for centuries laid the foundation for the first museum in Bukhara in 1922¹¹⁰ and was continuously expanded through appropriation of other private collections, archeological excavations, acquisitions and procurements from the population and individual artisans.

Samarkand museum for History, Arts and Culture was in operation as early as 1874 originally as a part of the General-Governor's Office. It was officially opened to public in 1896 in an old mansion previously owned by a wealthy merchant Abram Kalantarov.¹¹¹ The first collection was formed by the member of Russian geographic Society and explorer of Central Asia Captain L. S. Barshevsky, Moscow merchant Reshetnikov, and military governor Count M. Ya. Rostovtsev.¹¹² The three first patrons collected primarily natural history items and archeological artifacts. After the October Revolution the museum was transformed into the Museum of Samarkand Oblast and had ever since been one of the central museum

¹⁰⁹ "Zoloto Bukhary," *Informatsyonno-analiticheskii Tsentr*, 2008, ia-centr.ru.

¹¹⁰ Bukharskiy Muzei-zapovednik, "Obshaya Harakteristika Kollektseyi Museya-Zapovednika," n.d., <http://bukhara-museum.uz/общая-характеристика-коллекций-музе/>.

¹¹¹ "Samarkandskii kraevedcheskii muzei," Samarqand Tour, n.d., <http://www.samarkandtour.com>.

¹¹² Ibid.

institutions of Uzbekistan¹¹³ displaying such highlights as Stone Age and Bronze Age artifacts found in Samarkand Oblast, early Medieval arts and crafts, various presentations of Islamic culture, history of Central Asian Empires, and Soviet history.

2.3. Tajik ASSR

It is worth reminding that Soviet Tajikistan went through four statehoods. The first one was in 1924 when it was granted the status of Autonomous Oblast within the Uzbek SSR, the second in 1925 as Tajik Autonomous Republic within the Uzbek SSR without Khujand, Ura-Tiube, and Gorno-Badakhshan, in 1929 the mentioned areas were merged with Tajikistan and the Republic acquired its current territory, and later same year the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic was proclaimed. For the most part of the 1920s the territory of Tajik republic to be was the most backward and politically instable region. The republic's capital Dushanbe was not connected to the railroad grid up until 1929 and some of the remote areas were accessible only for a few days a year through mountain passes. Basmachi combatants fought against Soviet rule with varying intensity until approximately early 1930s. In this precarious situation Soviet power was striving to establish and maintain its basic institutions, and museums were among the first in line.

The first history and region-study museum in Tajikistan was registered in 1926 in Khujand which was one of the most urban and industrial centers in Fergana Valley, at that time a part of the Uzbek SSR. The museum was initially organized and run by a collector and enlightenment activist Mirzokhoja ibn Sobirkhoja (Mirsobirov) aka Khoji-Antiqua (antiquary).¹¹⁴ The basis of the first exposition was his private collection and antiquities

¹¹³ Nurov, "Formirovaniye i Razvitiye Muzeinogo Dela v Tajikistane (30e Gody XX- Nachalo XXI v.) Dissertatsiya."

¹¹⁴ Central State Archive of Tajikistan (ЦГА. Республика Таджикистан Ф. 461. - Оп.1 Д.1. - Л.19.) cited in Nurov, p. 16.

bequeathed by or extorted from the local gentry. Khoji-Antiqa was one of the first locals who advocated for museums as an element of urban cultural and educational life and in 1931 it was granted the building of the former Cathedral Mosque of Sheikh Muslihiddin to house the first museum of Khujand Okrug.¹¹⁵

In the 1920s the content of Khujand museum was formed not only by its staff but also by sponsoring organizations. Khujand Narkompros (*Narodnyi komitet prosvyasheniya*) sent calls for financial assistance for Khujand Okrug Museum to scientific organizations and industries. The sponsor organizations responded by allocating financial aid and offered the museum to exhibit their objects such as the collection of herbaria, visualizations of industrial development of the region, soil samples etc. Ethnographic collections did not figure in any of the sources.

In the meantime, in Tajik ASSR proper, as early as 1925, there were discussions on the necessity of a central republican museum in Tajikistan to be based in Dushanbe.¹¹⁶ In 1925 a group of ethnographers in Tashkent founded the Society for Studying the History and Culture of the Tajik People (*Obshchestvo izucheniya istorii i kultury tajikskogo naroda*) with the goal to collect and analyze artifacts, ethnographic objects, and archeological monuments of the Tajik people.¹¹⁷ The minutes #13 from the meeting of the Sovnarkom of Tajik SSR from August 21, 1930 ruled to establish the new museum in the republic's capital. However, due to impeded institutional development and funding, and military precarity in Tajik SSR the decision was not realized up until 1934.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ The decision to begin constructing Dushanbe as a capital of Tajikistan was taken by SNK of Tajikistan only in 1927 and took until 1929 to deliver the first results. See: Sputnik. "Istoriya Goroda Dushanbe," n.d. <https://ru.sputnik-tj.com/country/20170414/1022070011/tadzhikistan-dushanbe-den-stolitsy-istoriya.html>.

¹¹⁷ Gulmahmad Nurov, "Formirovaniye I Razvitiye Muzeinogo Dela v Tajikistane (30e Gody XX- Nachalo XXI v.) Dissertatsiya." (Institut Istorii, Arheologii i etnografii Akademiya Nauk Respubliki Tajikistan., 2011), p. 15.

Chapter 3. National museum without a nation (1930s-1950s)

-Excuse me, do you have coffee without cream?

*-I am sorry Sir, unfortunately, today we only serve coffee without milk.
(an old Central European anecdote)*

The purpose of the chapter is to provide a detailed account on the operations of 'silent museum' and its role in resolving the ambiguity of Tajik nationhood and fortuity of Tajikistan's statehood through evasive description of ethnographic collectibles as if they were ethnically indifferent. The primary approach of the chapter will be reconstructing the museum practices of documenting and describing museum objects in internal documents and public museum texts as well as reproducing museum experiences by analyzing textual representations of museum objects viewed by the visitors. The institution under study is National Museum of Tajikistan (NMT), formerly K. Bekhzod National museum of Tajikistan, formerly The Republican Unified History, Region-Studies, and Fine Arts Museum (*Respublikanskii ob'edinennyi muzei istoriko-kraevedcheskii i izobrazitelnyh iskusstv*) or shortly History and Region-Studies Museum (HRM). The NMT is currently in possession of not only the first objects acquired by the first Republican museum of Tajik SSR but also possesses a sample of texts produced by this very first museum in the process of museumizing Tajik national identity, as well as institutional memory transferred from older generations of museum workers to the present-day museum collective that provided the present study with a wealth of material evidence and oral testimonies of how museum had worked from its inception and throughout the Soviet time. This choice of the case-study was necessitated by the fact that the timeframe of HRM operation partially coincides with the prime of Soviet nationalities policy promoting 'national cultures' of the Union Republics. The actual first specialized ethnographic museum, currently called Museum of Ethnography at the A. Donish

Institute for History, Archeology, and Ethnography is a more recent institution as it opened in 1981.¹¹⁸

The chapter will draw from two kinds of sources pertinent to the museum practice in the Soviet Union. The first group includes important registration documents: the first book of acquisitions (containing records from 1930s and rewritten in 1973), the first book of inventory, 1000 scientific analysis statements (*nauchnyi pasport*) and around 600 auxiliary description statements (*vspomogatelnye kartochni exponatov*). These texts were complemented by interviews with the key members of museum staff, such as chief custodian, head of the Museum's Collection Department (*fondovyi otdel*), museum director, as well as two historians within the museum collective who wrote and defended two dissertations on the early and recent history of museums in Tajikistan respectively. The internal documents were essential for understanding and clarifying objects by museum professionals as well as a resource for further publications and educational materials.

The second group of texts was external (public) museum texts that allowed this study to partly reproduce museum experience of the 1930s-1950s, or the way museum objects were explained to the visitors through labels, wall-texts, and excursions, the thesis will engage with the full texts of two exhibition catalogues and one excursion guide from the 1950s.

The authorship of the texts was both internal, when texts were compiled by a museum staff competent in the subject-matter (archeologist, ethnographer, historian, art historian, religion expert etc.), and external, when texts were written by experts in the field from other institutions, typically the Academy of Sciences. Prior to engaging with the museum documents, a useful background on museum's development is necessary.

¹¹⁸ Silk Road Adventures, "Muzei etnografii Dushanbe," Poezdka iz Penjikenta v Dushanbe, n.d., <http://silkadv.com/ru/node/4077>.

3.1. Museum's background

On October 19, 1929, Tajikistan became a Union republic and adopted new laws and regulations on protection of historical and archeological monuments found on its territory and mandatory transfer of the artifacts to state-run museums. The idea to open a republic-level museum in Stalinabad that would accommodate the growing number of ethnographic acquisitions and bequeathed artworks was in the air since the early 1930s and promoted by the leading scholars and cultural workers. The main promoter of the project was professor A.M. Mironov, the Head of the Department of Central Asian Museums (Tashkent) who, after a newspaper article and a statement at a regional conference of scientific societies and organizations, already in 1926 managed to restructure a club for agricultural workers (*Dom dehkanina*) into Stalinabad's first museum. From the very beginning of its operations, Mironov advocated for the high academic standards for the museum that, among other things, was expected to serve as a research facility. The ethnographic department was among the first collections in the museum.¹¹⁹ However, the highlights of the exposition were presentations on the history of the Socialist Revolution in Central Asia, combating Basmachi, and Republic's productive forces.¹²⁰

According to one of the earliest attempts at museum's own history, *The Guidebook of History and Region-Studies Museum*, it was founded in 1934 by the decree of the TsK KP(b) of Tajikistan on the basis of Exhibition of Achievements of People's Economy as well as expeditions and field research by the Tajik section of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.¹²¹ Hence, it is the year 1934 that can be taken as the threshold of the first republican

¹¹⁹Nurov, "Formirovaniye i Razvitiye Muzeinogo Dela v Tajikistane (30e Gody XX- Nachalo XXI v.) Dissertatsiya," p. 29.

¹²⁰ Ibid, pp. 30-32.

¹²¹ Pluzhnikova V. Musoev O., Kadyrov R., Kurbanov S., Kudratov A., *Istoriko-Krayevedcheskiy Muzei. Putevoditel.*, ed. et. al. Gulyamov H. (Dushanbe, 1983), p. 5.

history and region-studies (*kraevedeniye*) museum. Its first exposition consisted of only 530 objects. Thirteen years later there was opened the Museum of Fine Arts in Stalinabad (the name of Dushanbe from 1929 through 1961) exhibiting chiefly works by Russian and Western artists. In 1959 the Ministry of Culture of Tajik SSR decreed the unification of the two museums into The Republican United History, Region-Studies, and Fine Arts Museum (HRM). From its first days until 2011 the museum operated under the Ministry of Culture of Tajik SSR (after independence of 1991 the Republic of Tajikistan). The museum stored and exhibited archeological and ethnographic collections, as well as documents on Soviet history in Tajikistan and the “building of new life on the ancient Tajik land.”¹²²

The first director of the museum was appointed a today unknown individual Kameli. However, according to the director of the National Museum of Tajikistan Abduvali Sharipov, it might be a typo on the archival record and the director could be a prominent painter Kamelin Avksentii Nikanorovich (1910-1978) who took an active part in the establishment of the museum.¹²³ The first museum was located in one of the biggest buildings in Stalinabad of that time with 20 rooms allocated for expositions and a few more for the archive, library, repository, and offices.

3.2. Textual life in the museum

As was mentioned earlier, museum objects ‘live’ in the form of texts that clarify their meaning and ultimately construct knowledge around them. The source of this knowledge can be found in a specific scientific discipline, *long duree* discursive formations, and political priorities.¹²⁴ The museum under study can be perceived as a palimpsest of different discourses, or ways of

¹²² Idem.

¹²³ E.P. Bukreeva, *Izobrazitelnoye Iskusstvo Tajikistana* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1981).

¹²⁴ See for example: Faruh Kuziev and Helge Blakkisrud, “Museums, Memory and Meaning Production: Constructing the ‘Tajik Nation’” (Washington, DC: 48th Annual ASEES Convention, 2016).

writing about the objects that can be conceptualized as the following: archeological, regional-historical, historical-political, and ethnographical. The discourses coincide with museum's sections and their presentation: archeological, region-studies (*kraevedeniye*), historical sections (Medieval, Modern History), Ethnography. Presentation of objects within the first three discourses is ethnically indifferent as it privileges the knowledge about objects as artefacts of ancient empires and 'civilizations,' geographical, economic, historic, and natural particularities of the region (*kraevedeniye*), and political developments (revolution, communism, Civil, and Great Patriotic Wars, Socialist construction etc.).¹²⁵ For example, it would be very hard to connect Hellenic (Greeko-Bactrian), Kushan, Buddhist, or Arab artifacts to the modern Tajik nation because they represent large Empires comprising huge territories and diverse populations. Therefore, the most meaningful presentation for the Tajik nation-building process would most logically be exhibited as the ethnographic collection that visualizes ethnographic research and it is this part of the museum that is expected to be saturated with discourses on the nation and ethnicity.

Every ethnographic object 'travels' through the following kinds of texts within the museum: firstly, it is to be registered in the book of acquisitions (*kniga postupleniy* or *KP*), secondly, it is to be reported in the inventory book (*inventarnaya kniga*), thirdly, it is to be scientifically described by an expert from the museum or from a higher authority, for example a relevant institute in the Academy of Sciences on the so-called scientific identification card (*nauchnyi passport*), fourthly, when accepted into a main or thematic exposition, an object is accompanied by a label text and can also be mentioned on a wall text describing an exhibition or a curatorial statement, and finally, an object can be mentioned in a museum catalogue.

¹²⁵ See Musoev O., Kadyrov R., Kurbanov S., Kudratov A., *Istoriko-Krayevedcheskiy Muzei. Putevoditel*, and Nurov, "Formirovaniye i Razvitiye Muzeinogo Dela v Tajikistane (30e Gody XX- Nachalo XXI v.) Dissertatsiya."

As for the book of acquisitions, from the 1930s to the present it has followed the standard template containing the following sections: number of the record, date and time, the source of the object and acquisition procedure¹²⁶ and accompanying statement, the name and short description of the object (author or producer, date, place of origin, credits and legends, number of elements), material and technique of production, size and weight (for gems and precious metals), condition, cost (price paid), the department or collection acquiring the object, comments: current location of the object, and its status (transferred, loaned, written off, etc.).

The content of the very first book of acquisitions was rewritten in 1973 by the museum staff R. Jamolov at the order of the museum's chief custodian I. N. Smetanyuk, with emphasis on the original texts compiled back in the 1930s.¹²⁷ The hard copy of the original was lost, however, a few pages from the original book were discovered in the NMT repository. Meticulous descriptions of objects and even their ink visualizations due to absence of photographic equipment tells us that from the first days in operation the HRM staff was diligent and thorough in their effort to provide as much information about each individual object as possible (See Figure 3. Fragment of the first book of acquisitions). Yet it is somewhat unexpected that any identity markers and references to the national, ethnic, or tribal source of objects were absent (see for example Figure 4. Sample of the rewrite of the first book of acquisitions describing traditional female decorations).¹²⁸ The records of the book of acquisitions suggest that ethnic origin of an incoming item was not a necessary part of the information. Given that some of the objects were acquired in remote areas and that knowledge

¹²⁶ Can be bequeathed, transferred, loaned, procured.

¹²⁷ "Interview with the Chief Custodian of the National Museum of Tajikistan Rohat Jamolova" (Dushanbe, 2018).

¹²⁸ Respublikanskiy ob'edinennyi istoriko-kraevedcheskiy muzei, "Kniga Postupleniy (KP-1)," n.d.

of their ethnic origin could be lost, it is rather uncharacteristic for the museum staff to have elided this information, intentionally or unintentionally.

A similar trend of avoiding any ethnic markers in the identity of the objects was observed in the book of inventory (RMI-3) that has its first entry in 1964 but uses the same descriptions of the objects as in KP-1. That allows assuming that both texts are analogous if not compiled by the same persons. What is particularly interesting about this book is that ethnic markers in the identity of the objects were avoided even in exhibits representing traditional ethnic arts and crafts such as for example *tabaq*,¹²⁹ *toki*,¹³⁰ *kurpacha*,¹³¹ *sher*,¹³² etc. and when the identity of the producer was known, for example, Usto Said Rasulov.¹³³ One may suggest that ethnic markers are not necessary because the Tajik nature of an object may be simply assumed since the museum represents the material culture of Tajikistan. However, it is also true that the population of the Tajik SSR remained extremely diverse and, after adding some of the territories of Uzbekistan and Badakhshan, most of the objects could as well be of Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Kashgar, or Uigur origin. Likewise, the way of referring to the population of Badakhshan populated by self-consciously Pamiri peoples, and the place of their material culture might still have been an undecided matter. It is, thus, surprising why would an ethnographic collection not specify the origin of its objects.

Furthermore, the book contains procurement records indicating the prices paid for the objects. It is remarkable that there was a serious contrast in the values paid for ethnographic objects compared to modern paintings and drawings. One of the most expensive ethnographic object registered in the 1960s were coral beads procured for 7 roubles.¹³⁴ The average price

¹²⁹ A percussion musical instrument.

¹³⁰ A Tajik name for a skull-hat.

¹³¹ A thin rectangular mat.

¹³² A wooden or ceramic toy lion.

¹³³ Respublikanskii ob'edinennyi istoriko-kraevedcheskiy Muzei, "Inventarnaya Kniga (RMI-3)," n.d.

¹³⁴ *ibid.*

paid for other ethnographic items was between 1 and 3 roubles. Even two old vases from the collection of the museum transferred to the Soviet embassy in Romania between 1965 and 1967 cost no more than 2 roubles.¹³⁵ It is hard to explain why ethnographic objects cost so little. Moreover, it is unclear how exactly the prices were defined and negotiated by the museum staff in 1930s-1950s, or likewise whether the prices paid were market-based. Perhaps, the only acceptable explanation would be that there was an abundance of old ethnographic material that producers were more than willing to hand off at any price to the collectors or even offer it to the museum directly. It is also quite certain that no one sought to speculate on prices or stockpile ethnographic items to raise their value.

By contrast, a reproduction of the painting from a book on the prehistoric humans, a portrait of a Pithecanthropus and an image of a sleeping bison by Schastnaya N.I. were paid for 75 and 80 roubles respectively. Furthermore, according to the museum director the most expensive museum items throughout the Soviet time were paintings costing the museum as high as 1,500 roubles.¹³⁶ In the meantime, many ethnographic objects were written off or transferred to other museums, among them a set of decorative objects consisting of silverware, coral beads, and needlework that was written off despite high value of 30 roubles and good condition.¹³⁷ The contrast between prices paid for ethnographic objects and their value to the museum collection compared to modern paintings could be explained by collectors' awareness of the general devaluation of old specimen of traditional arts and crafts.

3.3. Scientific identification

After registration in the books, museum items went through scientific identification by competent museum staff or external experts in the field. This study reviewed around 1600

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁶ "Interview with the Director of the National Museum of Tajikistan Abduvali Sharipov" (Dushanbe, 2018).

¹³⁷ Muzei, "Inventarnaya Kniga (RMI-3)."

cards (*nauchnyi passport*) of the first entries from the 1930s to 1960s containing the following sections: number of the passport, item, name, material, size, quantity, condition, previous records. The older version of the passport blanks (the year indicated on the reverse side was 194__) bore the supertitle The Committee on Cultural and Education Work of the Minister Council of Tajik SSR (*Komitet po delam kulturno-prosvititelskoi raboty pri sovmine Tajikskoi SSR*). Whenever possible, the passports also included photographic images of the objects, however, the utmost majority of the cards had verbal descriptions only. The last names that figure in all of the cards are: Smetanyuk, Pluzhnikova, Valieva, Musoev showing that one half of the authors were Slavs (Russians) and the other was Tajik (Central Asian).

The descriptions provided in the scientific IDs were not rich in ethnic (nationality) markers. When referring to the origin of an item the text would state a Bukharan jug or Samarkand textile. The word Tajik was not used in any of the cards. Some of the cards used ethnic markers, such as Pamiri socks juraby,¹³⁸ suede khurdum, identified by the museum worker Karsheva as Kyrgyz,¹³⁹ two pairs of Afghan women's shoes.¹⁴⁰ The markers Pamiri and Afghan can be understood both as ethnic and geographic because they signify a particular style of design and a place of origin, Tajikistan's South-Eastern borderlands, while the marker Kyrgyz is most probably ethnic as the object is an obvious outsider in a range of more or less compatible items.

The word "national" was mentioned only three times out of 1600 cards: women's national dress (*plat'ye zhenskoye natsyonalnoye*),¹⁴¹ national pants (*shtany natsyonal'nye*),¹⁴² men's national pants made of white cotton cloth (*shtany natsyonal'nye iz belogo karbosa*,

¹³⁸ RMI 508, registered aprox. 1950.

¹³⁹ RMI 507, registered aprox. 1950.

¹⁴⁰ RMI 661 and RMI 662.

¹⁴¹ RMI 517

¹⁴² RMI 524

muzhskiye).¹⁴³ It is hard to identify the period when exactly the cards were compiled as none of the three were dated. However, the word 'national' in Central Asia during the Soviet time did not imply a specific nation but simply meant 'not European.' Thus, even when used, ethnic markers such as the word 'national' are still ethnically indifferent. It may be sensible to argue that museum staff might be ignorant about the ethnic origin of the described items. However, several passports were filled by two professional ethnographers N.N. Ershov and Shyrokova Z.A. who authored several works on ceramics and textiles which they unequivocally described as Tajik.¹⁴⁴ Yet, in their texts in museum scientific identifications they never used the word Tajik or national. This discrepancy in descriptions can be explained only by the irrelevance of this kind of information for the museum context and the absence of ethnic markers in the text can be interpreted as following the conventional museum language of the time.

It is also possible to suggest that because the mission of the museum is to educate the population about the cultural heritage and material culture of Tajikistan, the reader should just assume that all the items have Tajik origin. However, a number of objects such as Japanese smoke pot (*kurilnitsa yaponskaya*) that somehow made its way into the museum collection suggest that not all collection items have Tajik origin. Likewise, a number of pistols and guns,¹⁴⁵ swords and hauberks¹⁴⁶ could as well be put down as Russian. Some of the collection items were described in 20 passports from the 1940s as traditional Tajik tableware such as pialas,¹⁴⁷ kosas,¹⁴⁸ and plates, decorated with Arabic inscriptions. Yet, the brand marks on each item gave Russian last names of foremen or factory owners that produced them, such as

¹³⁸ RMI 518

¹⁴⁴ See Z.A. Shyrokova, "Darvazskaya Etnograficheskaya Kolleksiya Sbornik 1954 G.," *Etnograficheskiye Kolleksiye Instituta Istorii, Archeologii I Etnografii AN Tajikskoi SSR*, no. I (1956), and Ershov, "Remesla Tajikov Darvaza (Po Materialam Garmskoi Etnograficheskoi Ekspeitsyi 1954 G.)."

¹⁴⁵ RMI 426, RMI 128

¹⁴⁶ RMI 154-158

¹⁴⁷ traditional Central Asian tea cup without a handle

¹⁴⁸ a small bowl usually used in Central Asia to serve soup and milk-based beverages

Kornilov Brothers, Mark Kuznetsov, Mandelshtam etc. Some of the items, although included in the ethnographic section could hardly be classified as representative of ‘true national culture,’ such as a traditional Central Asian skull hat *tiubiteika* with Soviet symbols (See figure 6).

This way of describing objects can be explained by the very nature of the museum that was not ‘national’ like The National Museum of Tajikistan, but region-studies (*kraevedcheskii*). Here the word region (*krai*) is synonymous with the word country without any relation to its population (can also be understood as lands) and the word motherland as in ‘my native land’ (*moi rodnoi krai*). In an ethnographic (scientific) sense the word *krai* is used as a territory under study, populated by a particular ethnic group with a very distinct set of cultural practices (*istoriko-kulturnyi raion*)¹⁴⁹ that is usually defined in ethnic terms. It seems that in creating an identity for its collectibles that normally consists of two elements, territory and population, the HRM privileged the former and omitted the latter as less relevant or unimportant.

In striking contrast, 15 scientific IDs on ethnographic items that were transferred from the Samarkand museum (in Uzbekistan) to the museum in Stalinabad (Tajikistan) within an exchange program (*fond obmena*) had ‘ethnicity’ (*narodnost*) section in the identification form.¹⁵⁰ One possible explanation of the presence of this section in the documents of Samarkand ethnographic museum was pressure on this institution to separate Tajik and Uzbek material culture (rightly or wrongly) and use specified, qualified, and scientifically recognized objects for a more ‘national’ museum representation. This study has no further evidence as to what the source of this pressure was (internal or external) and what were the stakes for the

¹⁴⁹ See Chapter 1, section 1.3.) of this chapter.

¹⁵⁰ RMI 108-115.

museum professionals and controlling organizations in taking decisions on what terms to use in museum documents. But the use of the terms ethnicity (*narodnost*) in describing material culture from a region that has a history of being contested between the two republics leaves us with one explanation, namely, that Uzbekistan's museums were more instrumental in reviving and promoting ethnic culture thereby decontesting its past.

The objects were acquired by the Samarkand museum in Samarkand Oblast between 1930 and 1938 and the passports that were filled by the chief custodian of the Samarkand Museum Kaplunova M.F. were dated from January to April, 1951. The origin of all but two items was indicated as Uzbek (*narodnost' uzbeki*) with remaining two indicated as "local Jews" (*mestnye evrei*) and "Iranians or Jews" (*irantsy ili evrei*). As for the Tajik HRM, the blanks issued in 1940s and 1960s did not have a section for ethnicity, thereby never specifying the nationality of the producers. According to the NMT chief custodian the blanks were ordered by the museums and were to follow the template provided by the Ministry of Culture of the USSR. Each republican institution was allowed to modify the template by including the full title of the institution and adding necessary sections to be filled.¹⁵¹ However, the nationality or any other section that would specify the 'ethnicity of the objects' never appeared.

Scientific identification was one of the crucial components of constructing an object's identity within the museum that could be also used for further purposes such as composing the labels and catalogs. It should be noted that most of the IDs had very short or no descriptions traceable to the negligence of a museum staff involved. But even those that were thoroughly filled did not indicate any ethnic terms. According to the NMT custodian (from the Soviet time) a museum staff in charge of collecting ethnographic items were supposed to fill the

¹⁵¹ "Interview with the Chief Custodian of the National Museum of Tajikistan Rohat Jamolova."

section Place of Origin (*raiion prosihozhdeniya*) but would hardly ever be able to establish with certainty an item's geographic or ethnic origin. They, therefore had to suffice with a testimony from a person handing an object over, who would mostly commonly say "from here" (*ot syuda*).¹⁵² Therefore, the section Place of Origin is confusing because on the one hand it could be understood in ethnic terms and on the other hand was simply synonymous with the site where acquisition took place. Besides, often this section bore traces of active guessing giving a range of locations, like "Karatag? Lower Zeravshan? Penjikent?"¹⁵³ or "Bukhara" (question marks in the original).¹⁵⁴

3.4. Museum books, catalogs, and guidebooks

Finally, the most public level of knowledge construction in and around the HRM was larger texts through which the museum explained and clarified its objects and programs. Among those, the study analyzed three exhibition catalogs, two public reports (messages) by the museum, and a museum guidebook, all published in the 1950s as well as some academic papers published by museum staff and concomitant experts in the field.

The content of the first two attempts at publicizing the museum materials for the general readership is surprisingly indifferent to the national culture or the titular ethnos. One of the first museum publications was the 1952 Message from the HRM (*Soobsheniye respublikanskogo istoriko-kraevedcheskogo muzeya Tajikskoi SSR*). The focus of the issue was archeological and ethnically indifferent. The author, Linds E.M. presents his material as a heritage of the world of ancient empires that is universally human and not national. Archeological artifacts from Tajikistan were discussed as the country's legal possession rather

¹⁵² "Interview with the Chief Custodian of the National Museum of Tajikistan Rohat Jamolova."

¹⁵³ RMI 1554

¹⁵⁴ RMI 1581

than its cultural heritage (archeological material of Tajikistan).¹⁵⁵ The second publication (Message from the Museum 1955) was thematically announced as historical and ethnographic. However, 91 pages of the issue ran about the establishment of the Soviet power in Tajik SSR, fighting basmachi movement, opening schools, and a follow-up on the current 5-year plan. The only two ethnographic articles explored Murgab Kyrgyz and Lakais.¹⁵⁶ The absence of Tajiks in this issue shows that for Kazachkovski Tajiks are just one of groups without any privilege of attention or emphasis.

One of the earliest attempts to catalogue state-owned ethnographic collections currently available in the library of the National Museum of Tajikistan from the period of operations of its Soviet predecessor is a catalogue of the ethnographic collection of the Institute of History, Archeology, and Ethnography of the Tajik Academy of Sciences gathered during the famous Darvaz expedition of 1954.¹⁵⁷ On several dozens of pages of the catalog enlisting several hundreds of ethnographic items, their ethnic background was not specified once. For example, the variations of Toqi or a traditional skull-hat are discussed as local, not ethnic differences, for example “toqi from Kalaihumb, Chust toqi, toqi fargonagi.”¹⁵⁸ The overwhelming information is the technique of production and material:¹⁵⁹

201. “Toqi” – old-fashioned men’s skull-hat. The skull-hat is conic, made of white cotton fabric without ornament; the bottom part of the cap band is edged with a stripe of green fabric [sic]. The hat was made by the expedition’s order¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ E. M. Linds, “Greko-Baktriyskiy Sfinks,” *Soobsheniya Respublikanskogo Istoriko-Krayevedcheskogo Muzeya Tajikskoi SSR* I (1952), p. 3.

¹⁵⁶ Kazachkovskiy V. A., “Tajikskaya SSR v Pervom Godu Posle-Voennoi Pyatiletki 1946-1950,” *Soobsheniya Respublikanskogo Istoriko-Krayevedcheskogo Muzeya Istorii* i, no. II (1955).

¹⁵⁷ “Darvazskaya Etnograficheskaya Kolleksiya Sbornik 1954 G.,” *Etnograficheskiye Kolleksiye Instituta Istorii, Archeologii i Etnografii AN Tajikskoi SSR*, no. 1 (1954).

¹⁵⁸ “Darvazskaya Etnograficheskaya Kolleksiya Sbornik 1954 G.,” *Etnograficheskiye Kolleksiye Instituta Istorii, Archeologii i Etnografii AN Tajikskoi SSR*, no. 1 (1954), p. 39.

¹⁵⁹ Shayrokhova 38-39.

¹⁶⁰ Idem.

Jurabs were treated with similar ethnic indifference and discussed simply as ‘socks,’ as opposed to ‘Pamiri socks.’¹⁶¹ Further on, the author Shyroкова A. E. lists several villages, Egid, Punishor, Pshiharv, and Umarak, not as Tajik but Darvaz (*Darvazskiye seleniya*) and mentions the region’s center Kalai Khumb, as a former capital of Darvaz rulers (*bylya stolitsa Darvazskih shahov*).¹⁶² A general tone of the text creates an impression that Darvazi is a separate ethnicity.

The first known catalog of the museum exposition dated 1958 devoted around half of its 75 pages to the natural history, a collection of soil samples, ores, deposits, animals, and plants with detailed descriptions of their significance for the country’s economy. The rest of the exposition is organized chronologically along the Marxian socio-economic stages, starting in primeval, then proceeding to slavery, feudal periods, capitalist stage and culminating in the period of Socialist construction (*sotsyalisticheskoe stroitelstvo*). Special expositions on the establishment of the Soviet rule on the territory of Tajikistan, and Civil War, with the focus on the defeat of Basmachi and the Great Patriotic War are also discussed at length. The ethnographic collection is not mentioned.¹⁶³

The preface of the catalog of the exhibition of fine arts from Tajik SSR at the Decade of Tajik Literature and Arts in Moscow¹⁶⁴ dated 1957 for 7 pages celebrates the successful socialist construction of the Republic and overcoming its backwardness. Along with Tajik last names Khoshmuhametov, Khaidarov, Abdurahmanov, Ganiev, on the list of Tajikistan’s artists (*hudozhniki Tajikistana*) there was a range of Russian last names Panomarev, Alekseev, Hmylev, Bobrykin, Zaharov, Ershov, Tatarinova, Serebryanskii. The main body of the catalog enlists painting, sculpture, graphic works, theatre and film productions, theater and films sets

¹⁶¹ Ibid. p. 40.

¹⁶² Shyrokov p. 3

¹⁶³ R. Ostrovskii, *Putevoditel’ Po Zalam* (Stalinabad: Istoriko-kraevedcheskii muzei Tajikskoi SSR, 1958).

¹⁶⁴ First time held in Moscow in 1941.

from Jack London's novels, Goethe's Faust, and some local (Tajik) themes. The list of last names is notably dominated by Slavic last names.

Ethnographic items could be found in applied arts (*narodno-prikladnoye iskusstvo*) represented by wood-carved portrait of Voroshylov by Tajik master Alimov born in 1878 as well as chairs, caskets, wood-carved portrait of Lenin, and a star-shaped table. All the last names of the authors are Central Asian (assumably Tajik). Given the situation of the text where both Tajik and Slavic last names are used under the title Tajikistani artists (*Tajikskiye hudojnki*) and the fact that what could be presented as traditional arts and crafts is closer to interior design contemporary to that of the 1950s, a question may arise what was the meaning of Tajik, Soviet, or Tajikistani in that case? Similarly, why to mention that the roots of "Tajik national fine arts" have a long prehistory (*drevnyaya predystoriya*), give references to Bactrian metalwork and Sogdian murals, and acknowledge them as a continuation of the heritage of their ancestors (*mastera hranyashye traditsyi svoih slavyh predkov*)¹⁶⁵ when artworks presented in the catalog were created by contemporary artists, using contemporary media, and more importantly were of predominantly Slavic ethnic background?¹⁶⁶

The catalogs briefly discussed above, one published for the readership in Tajikistan and the other for pan-Soviet audience, revealed a striking contrast in representations of Tajikistan's culture. The HRM Guidebook published in Tajik SSR prioritizes political history of Tajikistan and its economic resources notably avoiding ethnographic collection or any references to national culture. The exhibition catalog released for the decade of Tajik culture in Moscow makes a bold attempt to represent clearly modern art produced by an international group of artists as Tajik fine arts produced by Tajik artists. In the case of the first catalog the

¹⁶⁵ E.M. Chudovich E.N. Dolgonosova, *Katalog Vystavka Izobrazitel'nogo Iskusstva Tajikistana* (Moscow: Ministry of Culture of USSR, Ministry of Culture of Tajik SSR, K. Behzad State Museum of Fine Arts, 1957), p. 55.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 11.

text avoided ethnographic objects that assumingly had been on display, while the second announced the objects as ‘produced in the national tradition’ which were hardly representative of Tajik traditional arts and crafts.

Within the scope of this study it was impossible to fully reconstruct an experience of viewing the two exhibitions in 1957 and 1958. What was said at the opening, how were the displays presented by the tour guides, how were the expositions organized and which items were highlighted remained unknown. However, establishing what was on display and what was written about the exhibits revealed a significant difference in representations of Tajikistan and Tajiks on the republican and pan-Soviet levels.

Conclusion

This thesis sought to address the question of how the ethnographic studies on the Tajiks changed from Russian Imperial to Soviet context and what factors came into play in this evolution. It also attempted to investigate how ethnographic knowledge about Tajiks was represented via museum collections and texts in Tajik SSR and what were the specificities of ‘museum-silence’ and the resultant museum representations of Tajik nation. This thesis began with a close reading of some of the most significant ethnographic texts exploring Central Asian populations from the mid 19th to the mid 20th centuries. The texts reflect major trends in European scientific discourses on the nationhood and ethnicity including racial, psychological, historical, and cultural dimensions. In all of the works Tajiks are described with regularity and solidity of a distinct objectively existing nation, albeit with some reservations and inconsistencies. This mode of presentation of the Tajiks survived the turmoil of the region’s political instability and a complicated transformation of Turkestan into 5 Union republics mainly due to a continuity of Russian Imperial and European ethnographic knowledge throughout the century in question. The former Imperial experts took up the leading positions in Tajikistan’s academic and even political institutions. Evidently, there was knowledge, materials, influence and necessity (or even urge) to develop a comprehensive museum presentation of the ‘Tajik ethnos’ as one of the means of promotion and celebration of the ‘national culture’ of the new Union Republic and its ‘titular nationality.’ There were two ways to publicize ethnographic knowledge, books and journal articles, for usually limited readership of mostly intellectual elites, and ethnographic sections and collections in museums, open to diverse and numerous museum-goers. But what happened to all that complex and wealthy ethnographic knowledge on its way to the first ethnographic museum section in Tajik SSR in the 1930s? Where are such detailed studies of Tajiks’ racial and physical traits, their

psychological features and the vivid descriptions of their ‘inner world’ that captured minds of some of the most prominent Imperial and Soviet ethnographers? Why ethnometric profile of Tajiks was used in other areas (see an example of law enforcement manual in Figure 2) and not in the ethnographic section of the HRM? Why would HRM not mention Aryan heritage? Why would it not attempt a representation of Samarkand and Bukhara as cradles of Tajiks’ high culture?’

The answers to these questions should be looked for in the very nature of Tajikistan’s statehood, regional dynamics, and pan-Soviet developments. As was proposed by the framework of this thesis that discourse is simultaneously a precondition for and a product of real conditions in the material world and political developments, as well as preexisting contestations and debates over a particular subject. The resulting understandings of the world and ways of speaking about it are filled with traces of those conditions and debates.

That might be the only way to explain why HRM opted for ‘silence’ as a paradoxical, yet understandable way of ‘talking’ about Tajikness. How else could one approach a situation in which people called Tajiks were originally proclaimed such by ethnographic experts using ideas and discourses completely foreign population itself? How else to represent a ‘national culture’ to people still perceiving themselves divided into Southern and Northern Tajiks, Gal’cha, ethnically mixed groups, ethnic minorities like Lakais, and at least 7 smaller peoples populating Badakhshan and one populating Yagnob valley, all having very little or nothing to do with Tajiks as one whole? Finally, how to claim Tajik ‘high culture’ from Samarkand and Bukhara that were already incorporated into Uzbekistan’s national discourse that ethnicized this initially urban and cosmopolite culture and represented it ‘loudly’ in Uzbekistan’s ethnographic collections? The authors of HRM texts had to develop a style that on the one hand, would escape the trouble of unfashionable reifying Tajiks in their regularity, solidity,

with a grip over the contested past of the region (as in Russian ethnography), and on the other hand, would not deconstruct Tajiks into a non-representable multitude, that would not fit into the logic of promoting nationalities in a form of nation-states.

Perhaps, ‘museum-silence’ was consciously perceived or unconsciously applied as a more sensible (or safe) strategy than, for example, more unequivocal texts of museums in Uzbekistan. The correspondence between Bobojon Gafurov, a leading academic not only in Tajikistan but also of pan-Soviet significance, with Andrei Zhdanov the then Chair of the Supreme Council of the USSR, showed that ethnogenesis theories and interpretation of history dominating Tajik academia were lagging behind or even conflicting with theories endorsed by Moscow-based scholars. Moscow’s response to Gafurov signaled that the choice of statements in production of texts on ethnographic objects and public presentation thereof had to recon with multiple alternative perspectives. This story also prompts further questions on the role of the local academics, such as Semenov and Andreev, who educated the first generation of Tajik native academics including Gafurov, in creating such controversies or otherwise, mediating disputes between Stalinabad and Moscow, and Stalinabad and Tashkent. Were they genuine enthusiasts of the Tajik cause or opportunists benefitting from Republic’s relative autonomy in academic matters allowing them to hold on to their theories and approaches unwelcomed elsewhere? In any case, the question of what Soviet nationality policy was exactly, needs to be revisited, at least because Slezkine’s claim that it was “devised and implemented by nationalists” does not hold in the case of Tajikistan as it revealed that the meaning of ‘national’ and ‘Soviet’ were continuously stipulated, at times merged, at times divorced.

Finally, the thesis, perhaps unintentionally reaffirmed the apprehension first voiced by Steven Kotkin and later confirmed by Botakoz Kassymbekova, that ‘archival evidence’ may

be misleading, especially when read from the view of the Soviet center(s) which implies certain limitations for history as a discipline. What is a usable archive for a productive study of the Soviet past? This thesis has proved that refocusing from official archives through which a state ‘documents itself’ to archive in the Foucauldian sense or a combination of an institution and its longer past, as a deeper and broader reservoir of knowledge or ‘the past of the present,’ although controversial, confusing, and unorganized, may be more transparent when interpreted with caution.

As may be understood from this conclusion the thesis addressed the overarching research question and applied a helpful framework for interpreting the Soviet Union as an Imperial formation that incorporated different discourses on nationhood and ethnicity continuous from pan-European, Russian Imperial, and Soviet contexts as well as channeled these discourses through preexisting institutions, ethnographic museums. It also discovered unexpected discontinuities of these discourses, despite intellectual and institutional continuity, traceable to the necessity to modify ways of talking about nation dictated by the need to reckon with multiple centers of this formation. The thesis also enriched our understanding of Soviet nationalities policy by reconstructing certain instances of public and institutional response to it. In the meantime, this research opened promising avenues for further studies that could compare positions of actors and institutions on central (pan-Soviet), regional (Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), and local (for example Samarkand and Pamires), in disputes and attempts to reclaim the past, redefine a nation, or prioritize a knowledge.

Appendices

	I. Таджикитъ.	II. Кара-киргизъ.
У обоихъ черепъ, спереди назадъ короткій (на столько брахицефаличскій, что діаметръ по ширинѣ почти равенъ діаметру по длинѣ), волосы смуглые, радужная оболочка темная, очень тонкія жила ¹⁾ , желтые и ноги и руки.		
Черепъ. 2).....	высокій и узкій	большо въ обхватѣ по ширинѣ, но ниже (платицефаличскій и хамецефаличскій)
Темя.....	высокое ³⁾ , круглосводчатое	низкое, спускающееся на обѣ стороны
Очертавіе лица ⁴⁾	овальное	кругловато-четырёхугольное
Лобъ.....	благородный, высокий и широкій	низкій, покатый назадъ
Надбровные дуги.....	выступающія, густо и дугообразно покрытыя волосами	плоскія, покрытыя волосами слабо и горизонтально
Расстояние внутреннихъ глазныхъ угловъ.....	уже ⁵⁾ , чѣмъ прорѣзъ между нѣками	шире этого прорѣза
Межбровное.....	возвышенное	плоское
Переносица.....	впадинное	плоское
Глаза.....	европейскіе	съ монгольскимъ разрѣзомъ (но линия слезка косая, съ приподнятыми наружными углами), отчасти подвижные ⁶⁾
Носъ.....	толстый, высоко-выступающій, горбатый ⁷⁾ (еврейскій)	у корня плоскій и широкій, не рѣдко короткій и приплюснутый
Яремныя дуги (челюсти).....	сдвинуты на европейскій ладъ (критическій)	широкія и толстокопчатые, выпячивающіяся въ стороны (фанеромингическія)
Жевательные органы....	{ при разсматриваніи сбоку, отвислы (ортогнатъ, пряжозубые) при разсматриваніи спереди, оваловатого очертанія	вытянутые впередъ (прогнатъ, косо-зубые)
Губы.....	европейскія	на столько широки въ челюстныхъ углахъ, что этимъ обуславливается квадратная форма лица
Волосы.....	каштаново-черные, вьющіеся ⁸⁾	каштановыя, гладкія
Борода.....	очень густая (волосистой покровъ на щекахъ, вокругъ рта и на подбородкѣ)	бесбородые (или лишь слабыя бороды); особенно лишены волосъ щеки (нѣтъ бакенбардовъ) и углы рта
Затылокъ.....	средне-толстый	толстый и короткий
Наружный видъ.....	рослый ⁹⁾	короткій, приземистый ¹⁰⁾
Ноги и руки.....	умѣренной величины	маленькія
Тѣло.....	европейскій	монгольскій

Figure 1. Middendorf's comparative chart for Tajiks and Kara-Kyrgyz, p. 394.

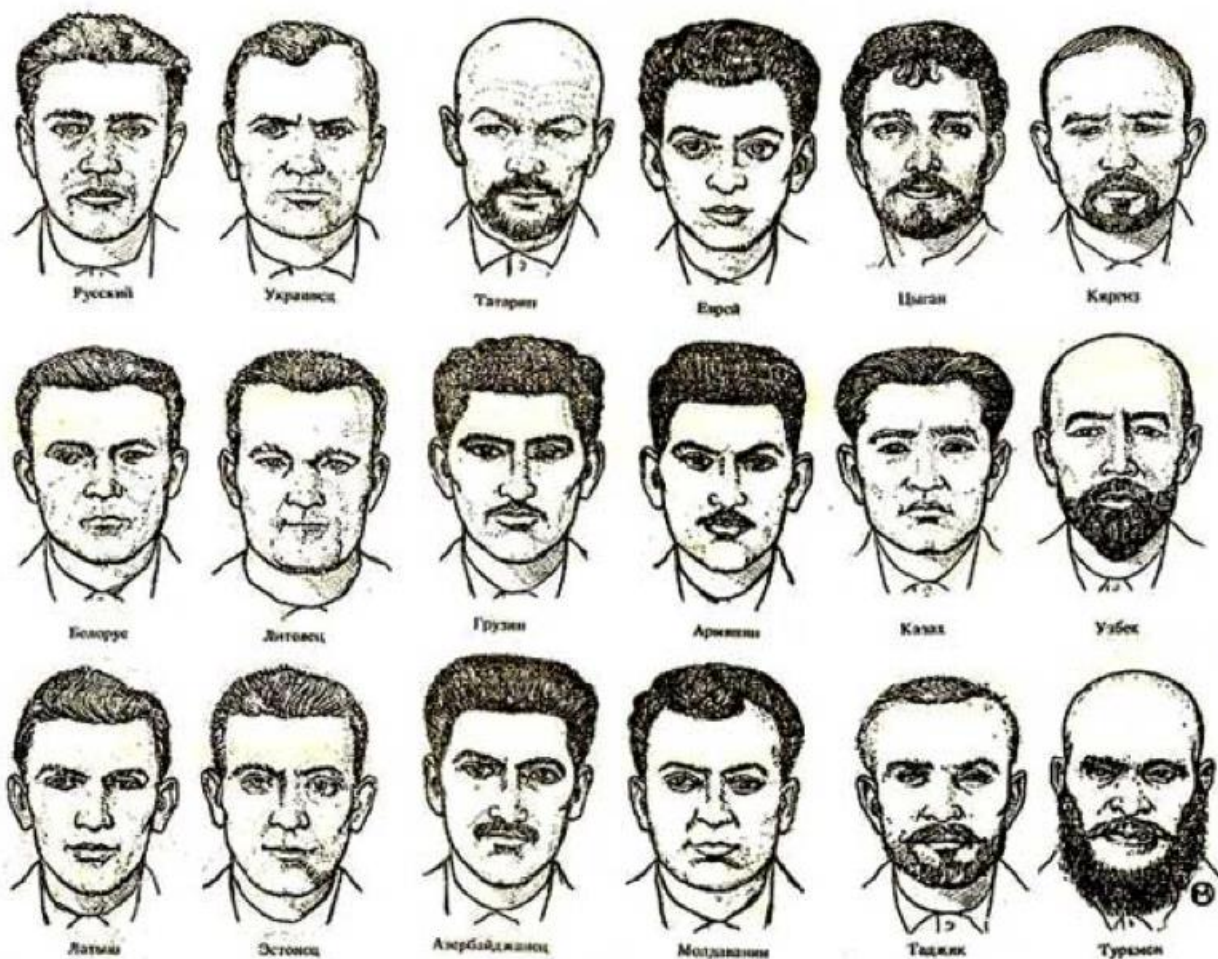


Figure 2. Racial chart of peoples of the USSR.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Source: nationality detection manual or Soviet law enforcement (militseskaya pamyatka po opredeleniyu natsyonalnosti narodov SSSR) <https://visualhistory.livejournal.com/203410.html>

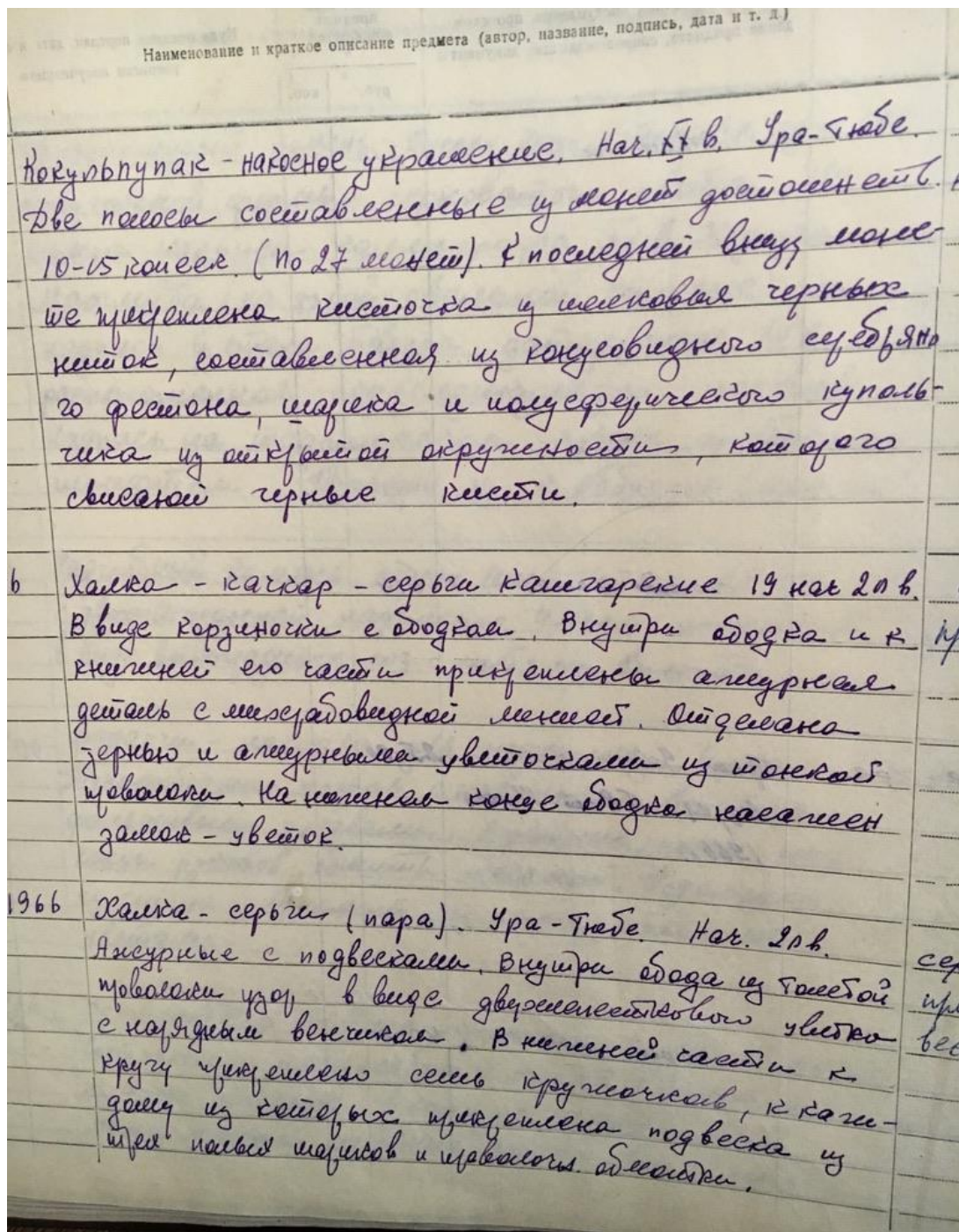


Figure 4. Sample page of the rewrite of the first book of acquisitions, object description section (source NMT repository)

КОМИТЕТ ПО ДЕЛАМ КУЛЬТУРНО-ПРОСВЕТИТЕЛЯ
ПРИ СОВЕТЕ МИНИСТРОВ ТАДЖИКСКОЙ ССР

Место хранения _____

НАУЧНЫЙ ПАСПОРТ

№ паспорта	Старый № предмета	Наименование предмета или коллекции
РМЧ 35 23		Зайчик для подарка гос.

Материал *мет.*

размер *в 46,5* количество *1*
и 12,5

Сохранность *нет трещины, как серебряный, майка*

Предыдущая история предмета (или коллекции) *Приобретен у промышленной в Риндугуле, Мирзевской в авг. 1959г. был ей подарен в 1902г*

Дата, надписи, подписи _____

ФОТО

созд декорирован. Металлическая, ковкая, гравируется, токировка. Сердцу пуговицы украшает целую войлочную по вертикали кружки стреловидных медальонов, допотопных растительных мотивов. Основание горничко и пуговицы оформлены целой чужие гладких стреловидных арок.

Растительные мотивы даны на фоне мелкой косой штриховки, геометрические.

Ручная работа

Инт. ра. Б. Сергеев.

Тканая по меру

Тошкент 1960

Подробное описание предмета или коллекции

Зайчик для гос. Музея. Вывод округлой формы сужающейся с прищипкой. Майка низкая, округлая прищипка по основанию. Горничко и пуговицы круглые. В нижней части ободком вальмовой. Ручка 4-гранная округлая фигурно просунута в форме стилизованного дракона. В нижней части имеет форму зайчика с головкой. Звезд на конце и заканчивается классическим узорчатым зубчатым листочком. Медальон медальон.

Figure 5. Scientific ID sample (front page and the back side).

12 р.мч
413

ФОНД РЕСПУБЛИКАНСКОГО ОБЪЕДИНЕННОГО МУЗЕЯ ИСТОРИКО-КРАЕ-
ВЕДЧЕСКОГО И ИЗОБРАЗИТЕЛЬНЫХ ИСКУССТВ Коллекция ЛЭ

Район и время происхождения _____

Городище - г. Виркиен

Мастер(ца) _____

Время, место и способ приобретения _____

Собиратель _____

Составитель карточки _____

Название предмета и его описание: Токи-Тобетей-
ке - квадратная, ^{из ткани из Тибета} складывающаяся
с 80 шлицек по сторонам Тора-туз-
разделена на 4-ре сектора, поверхность
каждого сектора вышита белыми нитками, образ-
ующими ^{линии} сетку, сверху сектор

Междуузловская типография зак. № 45, тир. 18000



РАЗМЕР см. | 12,5 x 15

Цена экспоната: 2-30 коп

Сохранность: старинная

материал: х/б, хлопок,
цветные нитки

Figure 6. Tyubeteika with Soviet symbols

Р 1469/5

КП №

ЭТНОГРАФИЧЕСКИЙ ФОНД САМАРКАНД

Коллекция вышивки обменного фонда

103

Район и время происхождения Самарканд

Народность узбеки

Время, место и способ приобретения 1980 год

Поступило из Окрфо

Собиратель Куртмуллаева и др.

Составитель карточек Капдунова М.Ф.

Хранитель фондов

Название предмета и его описание Бугджома-вышивка, служит для заворачивания постельных принадлежностей при переездах, а также и в быту

Исполнена на сатине бордо цвета, состоит

773-3000

Размер 281х280 см.

Негатив №

40 руб.



Figure 7. Scientific IDs from the Ethnographic collection of the Samarkand museum

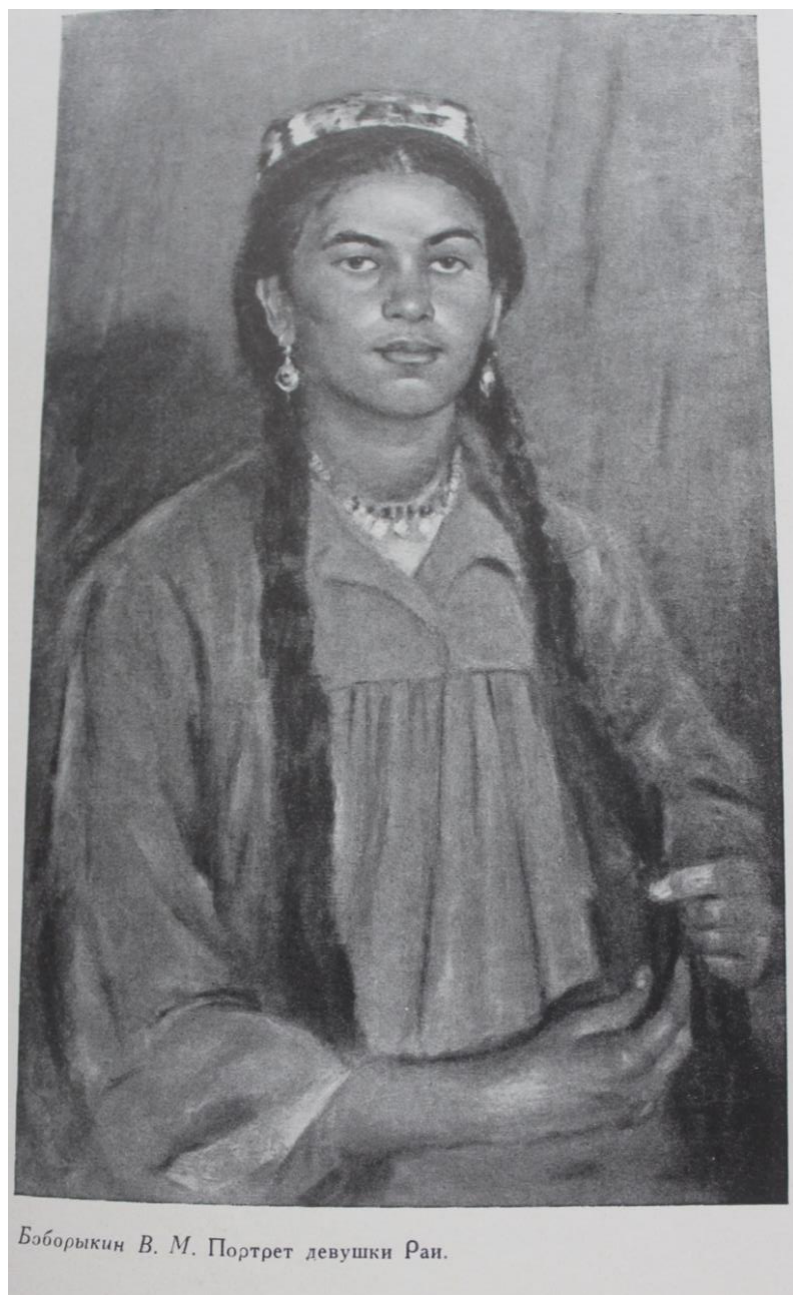


Figure 8. Sample page from the Catalogue of Tajik fine arts. A painting by Bobrykin 'A Girl Named Raya'

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