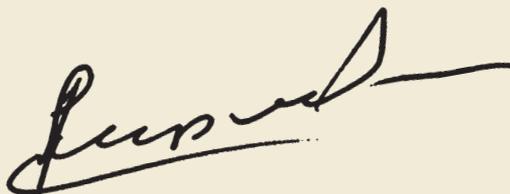


Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (the *Kunstkamera*) is celebrating its 295th anniversary this year. One of the richest ethnographical museums in the world, it is a scholarly center of an international fame. The museum's unique collections, acquired through the efforts of thousands of persons, participants of the great academic expeditions, circumnavigations of the Russian fleet, and numerous donators, are rightfully admired both in this country and abroad. Indeed, they were assembled by entire Russia, and today the nation is proud of its first museum.

Deservedly, the museum bears the name of Peter the Great. The *Kunstkamera* was his favorite creation, an important element of the ambitious academic project which had to change Russia, as it actually did. Throughout its history the museum has occupied a special place in the structure of the Academy of Sciences. The outline of its building is the Academy's logo. Many outstanding scholars have worked at the *Kunstkamera*, and several Russia's leading research schools originated here. The museum is one of the leading research centers of the Academy of Sciences. Its highly professional staff does its best to preserve and enrich the scholarly traditions of the Russian cultural, social and biological schools.

In 2004 the first edition of this book was published. During the 5 years that followed a lot has been done in the MAE RAS for the promotion of fundamental scientific studies and for publication of their results. New permanent expositions were created, and on many temporary exhibitions in the *Kunstkamera*, as well as in other Russian and foreign museums, masterpieces from the MAE funds were displayed. I wish the staff of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography every success, and I am confident that the forthcoming celebration of the Museum's 300th anniversary will be a glorious event.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zhores Alferov', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

*Academician Zhores Alferov*