
Editorial

THE PRESENT issue of the journal was being prepared for publication in unusual conditions – the whole world was engulfed in a pandemic due to the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus and quarantine introduced almost everywhere. Humanity has never known such an experience of total reaction to an invisible threat. It is absolutely clear that the imprint of the events of 2020 will remain in our collective memory for a long time, as well as it will become the subject of public discussions and scientific analysis. One of the important lessons, which is already obvious – we all realized, on the one hand, our own vulnerability, and on the other hand, we saw the need for responsibility, cooperation, mutual assistance, trust, and the ability to remain within the framework of common sense in an unprecedented global crisis. However, we also witnessed that the previous agenda is not canceled even against the background of such extraordinary circumstances. Although the distorting mirror of the mass media highlights new problems, sending old ones into a kind of ‘gray zone’, those challenges have not gone anywhere and still remain relevant.

Whatever adjustments we have to make to our daily life, to our plans and projects, life still goes on. Human survival lies in one’s high adaptability based on our intelligence. Taking advantage of that indisputable advantage over other biological species, we do not so much create a threat of total self-destruction as we cultivate culture and civilization instead. The study of human being and humanity through the prism of these concepts is the subject of such humanitarian disciplines as social anthropology, history and archeology, linguistics, religious studies, ethnography, and art history. This is approximately the range of interests of our journal, limited by the framework of one geographical locus.

For the incomplete 30 years that have passed since the collapse of the USSR, there has been a quite obvious reconfiguration of knowledge in the social sciences in post-Soviet Central Asia. On the one hand, the region was partially opened for foreign specialists; the previous restrictions for local scholars who gained the opportunity to integrate into the international scientific community disappeared. Their research methods have changed, and participation in various transnational projects has facilitated the

beneficial interaction of all who are involved in such activities.

It is worth recalling that the mission of IICAS is to attract the attention of a wide audience to the scientific and cultural problems of Central Asia, as well as to strengthen cooperation between local scholars and their foreign colleagues in the framework of an interdisciplinary study of the region, covering tangible and intangible cultural heritage, the environment, archeology, political history, history of art, history of religions, history of sciences, ethnography, historical geography, written and oral literature, social sciences, and other fields. The mission and the functions of IICAS are clearly reflected in the research and applied projects carried out by the Institute. As for the *Bulletin of IICAS*, it is intended not only to reflect their results, but also to become a publication that contributes to the expansion of the communicative space of interaction among experts from different countries.

We hope to help raise the level of research works by providing the opportunity to publish scientific articles and by free access for interested parties to all published materials. Our editorial board also considers the provision of the scientific community with opportunities for open scholarly discussions and exchange of views as one of the priority tasks.

Nowadays there are a number of online and paper-based journals dedicated to the study of Central Asia in the world. They are mainly published by universities and academic institutions in English and Russian, being the most convenient languages for a sufficiently large community of several generations of researchers professionally involved in the study of this region of the planet. Already existing for 15 years now, the *Bulletin of IICAS* has taken a rather modest place in the list of such scientific publications – despite obvious achievements, for various reasons, the journal was unable to gain popularity and recognition of the audience it is designed for. Awareness of this fact prompted the management of IICAS to rebrand the journal so that it would better meet modern requirements of scientific publications, as well as expand the journal’s thematic range.

¹ The ideas and opinions expressed by the authors of the journal may not coincide with the views of IICAS and do not impose any obligations on the Institute.

Presently, the journal will be equally focused on studying the past, as well as on comprehending the modernity. However, without knowledge of history, it is impossible to talk about the current challenges of the region's culture, therefore the traditional section of articles on historical sciences shall be preserved, but it will be supplemented with original texts on cultural studies and sociology of culture, linguistic and religious aspects of life of the Central Asian nations, the functioning of architecture, fine arts, and other types of artistic creativity.

The structure of the journal is divided into the following three main sections – *'Research of Culture'*, *'Issues of Historiography'*, and *'The Name in Science'*. Within each section, all materials are grouped not by the topic, but by the names of their authors in alphabetical order. This neutral principle does not apply only to thematic blocks, where the autonomy of each article is hardly appropriate – more important there is the logical connection of the presented texts. The editorial board also plans to release special issues dedicated to specific topics of relevance, dictated by certain ideas and trends of modern public thought.

Such specificity of the journal necessitates the involvement as authors of representatives of the international expert and analytical community, who know the region well within their competence. We will try to reflect a wide variety of opinions of different experts, so that our reader gets a comprehensive idea of the subject of one's interest and, above all, on the issues under discussion. The journal assumes not only the publication of the results of specific research in the above-mentioned disciplines, but also the debates, criticism, and bibliography of new sources. Such approach will allow users to track and evaluate the most important topics that constantly appear in the field of studying the history and contemporary culture of the Central Asian countries.

How successfully we will achieve the stated goals largely depends on the activity of our potential authors – not only reputable scientists, but also young scholars starting their journey in science and ready to participate in the development of the global knowledge system.

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