

WOMEN'S NOSE JEWELLERY FROM CENTRAL ASIA IN THE COLLECTIONS OF MAE RAS (ON THE ISSUE OF THE ORIGIN AND FUNCTIONAL ROLE)

At the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, the Central Asian miniature "Travelling Tortoise" is held, and in the top right hand side an old woman is depicted wearing a nose ring (*plate 1*) [1]. Today this is the only known miniature depicting nose jewellery, and this and two nose rings received by the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of RAS in 2004 were the stimulus to conduct this brief study.

At present, the collections of the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography hold several examples of nose jewellery, received at different times by the Museum from various regions of Central Asia. As was noted above, in 2004 an expedition of MAE RAS led by E. A. Rezvan brought back from the *qishlaq* of Jāynaw in the Qashqa-Daryā Oblast' of Uzbekistān two silver *arawak* or *arabek*, rings from the coll. Nos. 7271–8 and 7271–9 (*figs. 1, 2*). These nose rings are inserted through the nasal septum. The name of the ring itself reveals its origin. According to local residents, it is the *arabek* that distinguishes them from other peoples and ethnicities of Central Asia. The ring is formed like a bow and is decorated with beads. The largest green or blue bead is called *laṭwā tash* ("the guarding stone"), which explains the traditional use of the ring. It is a talisman. The *arawak* ring may serve to attach the veil over the face or serve as a symbolic veil which was never common in the Bedouin milieu, but in Central Asia women wore veils over their faces.

In Jāynaw there are various legends about the origin of the nose ring. In 1944, I. N. Vinnikov, studying the dialect of the Qashqa-Daryā Arabs, recorded the following story:

The custom of wearing a nose ring came from fore-mother Hagar. Foremother Sāra once got angry. She said to Hagar: "I'll cut off your nose!" Jabrā'il appeared, and said to Sāra: "Why did you say that?" Sāra replied: "I've already made a vow — I'll cut off her nose!" He left them and brought back a nose ring from heaven, and put it in Hagar's nose. Then he said to Sāra: "I cut her nose: your vow has not been broken!" [2]

Since that time, Arab women have worn nose jewellery. A. N. Kondaurov, in 1932 in the settlement of Sarāy-Qāmar (Tājīkistān, today's Panj), where Arabs also lived, was told by the local women that they wore nose rings because

a woman is considered to be a greater sinner than a man in her life. When she dies, she will be asked in heaven about her earthly deeds. Her mouth, ears and eyes will only say bad things about her. But if there is a hole in her nose, this hole will only say good things. So all women have their noses pierced, and most of them (young women) already wear a ring in the hole as jewellery [3].

Bukhārā rings are traditionally different in that the beads and spirals not only decorate the lower segments of rings, but also the arch, as can be seen from the nose rings of coll. No. 7271–9, the middle arch of which is decorated with a pearl and two coral beads. All this makes it possible to attribute this ring as Bukhārān one (attribution by E. A. Rezvan). A similar nose ring from coll. No. 3540–57 (*fig. 3*) was acquired by the Museum for 102 roubles in July 1927 from O. M. Korzhinskaia. This ring has a diameter of 2.5 cm and is made of gold and decorated with two large beads of red and green and several river pearls. It was made by a craftsman from Ura-Tubā, and was bought by the previous owner in Khujand. The description contains a note that this nose ring is "common among Uzbeks". However, it should be noted that in 1944, I. N. Vinnikov recorded people wearing gold nose rings in Jāynaw, and also with decorations in the right wing of the nose.

Even earlier, in 1908, the Museum received two nose rings from associate professor A. N. Samoïlovich — a specialist in Turkic studies, future academic and director of the Institutes of Oriental Studies (coll. Nos. 1275–1 and 1275–2), accompanied by a description of the collector. The ring of coll. No. 1275–1 (D=3 cm) (*fig. 4*) is made of gold and by its form resembles the nose rings of the Arab women of Jāynaw: it is made of a gold rod bent in the form of an oval and decorated by a spiral, and has a central arch decorated by a gold grain