

# The Museum System of Modern Kazakhstan: Classification and Typology of Museums

Abay Satubaldin – Kunikey Sakhiyeva

Abay Satubaldin  
Deputy Director  
National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan  
Tauelsyzdyk Avenue, 54  
010000 Nur-Sultan  
Republic of Kazakhstan  
e-mail: abaykarimtaevich@mail.ru  
ORCID: 0000-0002-4511-9422

Kunikey Sakhiyeva  
Research Officer  
National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan  
Tauelsyzdyk Avenue, 54  
010000 Nur-Sultan  
Republic of Kazakhstan  
e-mail: kunikey.sakhiyeva@gmail.com  
ORCID: 0000-0002-8196-1772

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## *The Museum System of Modern Kazakhstan: Classification and Typology of Museums*

This article discusses the museum system of modern Kazakhstan and offers, for the first time ever, a classification and typology of the country's museums.

In recent years in independent Kazakhstan, on the basis of the Soviet system, a modern museum network has been formed which currently lists 250 museums. Among them are 17 national-level museums, 54 at the regional level, 73 at the provincial level, 103 branches of regional- and district-level museums and four private museums.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the museum system of modern Kazakhstan and develop a classification and typology of the country's museums. In the course of the study, conducted in 2017–2018, data was collected on the activities of museums at the national, regional and district levels over the past seven years. From the results of this investigation, the museums of Kazakhstan were systematized according to the subject or topic of the museum (e.g. history, art, scientific), its affiliation (national, regional district), and by size, measured by number of employees.

Keywords: museum sector, museums activities, museums of the Republic of Kazakhstan, excursions, visitors.

## Introduction

The purpose of this article is to analyse the museum system of modern Kazakhstan and develop a classification and typology of the country's museums.

The museums of Kazakhstan are the main socio-cultural institutions for the acquisition, study, storage and popularization of the country's historical, cultural and natural heritage. In this regard, it is relevant to research the current state of development of Kazakhstan's museum system and, based on this, to systematise the existing museums by means of classification criteria.

Certain issues in the formation and development of the museum sector in the Republic of Kazakhstan have previously been discussed by individual Kazakhstani and international scientists. However, in general, the current state of the museum sector in Kazakhstan has been under-explored. Among the works devoted to the issue of museums in Kazakhstan, the following are noteworthy: V. N. Aliyasova, “The Museums of North and East Kazakhstan as centers for the preservation and popularization of paleontological collections”;<sup>1</sup> A. G. Ibraeva, “Formation of museum affairs in Kazakhstan (1920-1940)”;<sup>2</sup> A. E. Kainazarova, “Museum affairs in Kazakhstan (1831–1925)”;<sup>3</sup> M. Z. Musakhanova, “Development of museums in Kazakhstan (1991–2001)”;<sup>4</sup> B. K. Sanakulova, “Museum construction and its activity in the Republic of Kazakhstan (1991–2004)”;<sup>5</sup> and T. Taiman, “Development of museum affairs in Kazakhstan: experience and problems (1946–1970)”.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, a number of works by Kazakhstani researchers are devoted to the history and activities of independent museums in Kazakhstan, or focus on narrower museological topics. These issues are discussed in separate articles, for example: A. V. Kushchenko, “Museum in the system of sociocultural communication”;<sup>7</sup> E. T. Murzagaliyeva, “The principle of accessibility of the environment in the architecture of museums”;<sup>8</sup> G. Temirton, A. Kanafina, “Museum in the context of socio-cultural modernization”;<sup>9</sup> Sh. S. Tursynbayeva, “Restoration of paintings” (through the picture from the funds of the Central State Museum of the Republic

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<sup>1</sup> ALIYASOVA, Valentina. *Muzei Severnogo i Vostochnogo Kazakhstana kak tsentry sokhraneniya i populyarizatsii paleontologicheskikh kollektiy*. Avtoreferat dissertatsii na soiskaniye uchenoy sterpeni kandidata kul'turologii [Museums of Northern and Eastern Kazakhstan as centers of conservation and promotion of paleontological collections. Abstract of dissertation for doctorate in cultural studies.] Kemerovo, 2009, 25 p. <http://cheloveknauka.com/muzei-severnogo-i-vostochnogo-kazakhstan-kak-tsentry-sohraneniya-i-populyarizatsii-paleontologicheskikh-kollektiy-1> (accessed 11 April 2020). [In Russian].

<sup>2</sup> IBRAYEVA, Akmaral. *Istoriya i opyt poyavleniya i razvitiya muzeynogo dela v Kazakhstane (1831–2006)*. avtoreferat dissertatsii. [History and experience of the emergence and development of Museum business in Kazakhstan (1831–2006) Abstract of the dissertation]. Ibraeva A.G, Astana, 2010, 43 p. [In Kazakh].

<sup>3</sup> KAINAZAROVA, Akbayan. *Muzeynoye delo v Kazakhstane (1831–1925)*. Avtoreferat k dissertatsii na soiskaniye uch. st. k.i.n. [Museum business in Kazakhstan (1831–1925). Abstract of dissertation for doctorate in history of science.] Almaty, 1995, 24 p. [In Russian].

<sup>4</sup> MUSAKHANOVA, Madina. *Razvitiye muzeyev Kazakhstana (1991–2001 gg.)*, avtoreferat dis. Мусаханова М.З. Развитие музеев Казахстана [Development of museums in Kazakhstan (1991–2001.) Abstract of dissertation]. Musakhanova M.Z., Almaty, 2007, 30 p. [In Russian].

<sup>5</sup> SANAKULOVA B. K. *Struktura i funktsii muzeyev v Respublike Kazakhstan (1991–2004)*: avtoreferat k dissertatsii na soiskaniye uch. st. k.i.n. [Structure and functions of museums in the Republic of Kazakhstan (1991–2004). Abstract of dissertation for doctorate in history of science.] Oral, 2006, 30 p. [In Kazakh].

<sup>6</sup> TAIMAN, Sagat. *Razvitiye muzeynogo dela v Kazakhstane: opyt i problemy (1946–1970)*. Avtoreferat k dissertatsii na soiskaniye uch. st. k.i.n. [Development of Museum business in Kazakhstan: experience and problems (1946–1970). Abstract of dissertation for doctorate in history of science] Karagandy, 2000, 30 p. [In Kazakh].

<sup>7</sup> KUSHCHENKO, Anna. Muzei v sisteme sociokulturnoi kommunikatsii [The museum in the system of sociocultural communication]. In: *Bulletin of KazNPU named after Abay. Series “Historical and Socio-Political Sciences”*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2015, p. 183–186.

<sup>8</sup> MURZAGALIEVA E. T. Princip dostupnosti sredy v arkhitekture muzeev [The principle of accessibility of the environment in the architecture of museums]. In: *Bulletin of the Kazakh Head Academy of Architecture and Civil Engineering*, vol. 58, no. 4, 2015, p. 60–65.

<sup>9</sup> TEMIRTON Galiya. KANAFINA A. Muzei v kontekste sociokulturnoi modernizatsii [Museum in the context of socio-cultural modernization]. In: *Bulletin of KazNPU named after Abay. Series “Historical and socio-political sciences”*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2015, p. 156–160.

of Kazakhstan)<sup>10</sup> and others.

Based on the above, we can conclude that the state of the literature on the activities of Kazakhstani museums is fragmentary and further research is required.

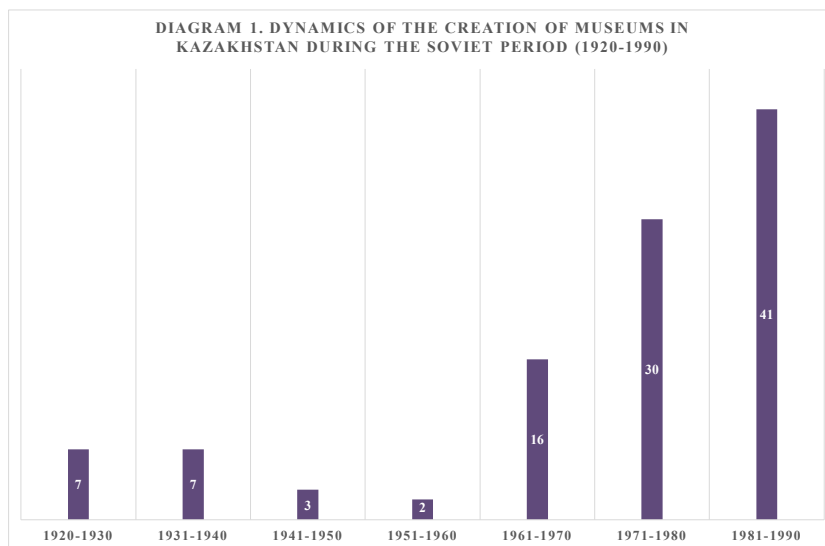
The purpose of this article is to study current development status of the country's museum system and attempt a systematisation of the museums in Kazakhstan according to the classification criteria defined herein.

In the history of the Kazakhstani museum system, three chronological periods can be distinguished, each having its own characteristics associated with political, economic, social and cultural factors:

- 1) Pre-revolutionary period: 1828 (or 1831) to 1915;
- 2) Soviet period: 1920 to 1990;
- 3) Modern period: 1991 to present.

The important characteristic of the first stage (1920-1960) is that this was the time when the final institutionalization of the museum took place. The museum system became a system itself. In the 1920s and 1930s, museums already existed already in every regional centre of the Republic. The last regional museum to open was Pavlodar, in 1942.

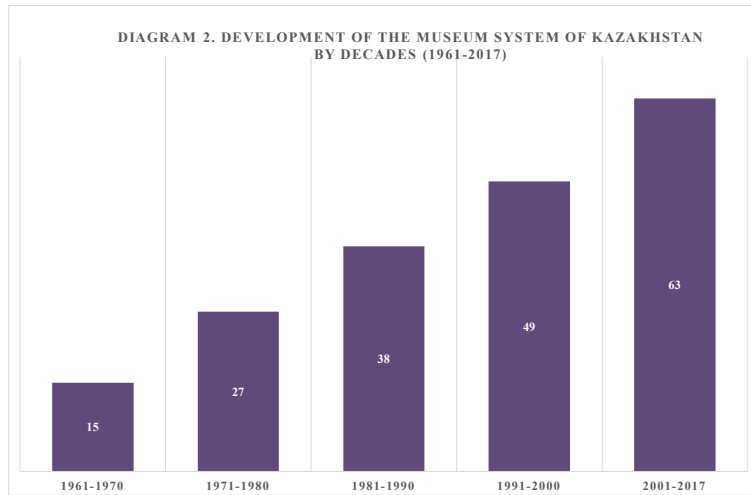
The second stage of the Soviet period (1961–1990) was characterized by the further development of the Republic's museum system. At this stage, there was a sharp quantitative jump: in just one decade, from 1961 to 1970, more museums (16) were created in Kazakhstan than in the previous three decades (11). This upward trend continued. From 1971 to 1980, 30 museums appeared, and in the last decade of the Soviet Union's existence, from 1981 to 1990, 41 were created.



**Fig. 1:** Dynamics of the creation of museums in Kazakhstan during the Soviet period (1920–1990).

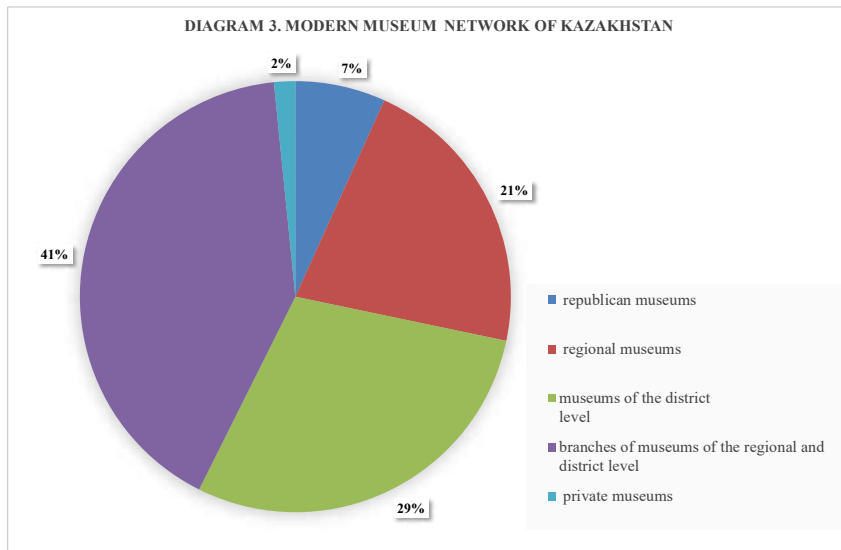
<sup>10</sup> TURSUNBAEVA, Sholpan. Restavraciya proizvedenii zhivopisi: voprosy sokhraneniya (na primere kartiny iz fondov CGM RK) [Restoration of paintings: conservation issues (for example, paintings from the funds of the Central Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan)]. In: *Bulletin of the Kazakh National Pedagogical University*, no. 4, 2015, p. 143–146.

A new round of museum development began in Kazakhstan after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1991, only 15 museums were opened in Kazakhstan. Within 10 years, from 1991 to 2000, at least 50 museums were founded in the country, and from 2001 to 2017 a minimum of 64. Thus, for 26 years from 1991 to 2017, at least 114 museums were founded (see Fig 2).



**Fig. 2:** *Development of the museum system of Kazakhstan by decades (1961 - 2017).*

Currently, there are 250 state museums operating in the Republic of Kazakhstan, including 17 museums at the national level, 54 museums at the regional level, 73 at the provincial level, 103 branches of the regional- and district-level museums, and four private museums<sup>11</sup> (Figure 3).



**Fig. 3:** *Modern museum network of Kazakhstan.*

<sup>11</sup> Ofitsial'nyy sayt Komiteta po statistike Ministerstva natsional'noy ekonomiki Respubliki Kazakhstan. [Official website of the Statistics committee of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan]. <https://stat.gov.kz/official/industry/21/statistic/7> (accessed 11 April 2020). [In Russian].

The largest museums are the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Central State Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the A. Kasteev State Museum of Arts of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the State Historical Cultural and Natural Reserve Museum “Tamgaly” and the State Historical-Cultural Reserve Museum “Azret-Sultan”.

As is well known, museums perform various functions, such as collecting, storing, studying, educating, displaying, publishing and popularizing cultural property.

As of 1 January 2020, there were 3,847,767 objects in the funds of the museums of Kazakhstan, of which 57,570 items require restoration. In 2019, the total number of visitors amounted to 6,829,000 people; in the same period, 13,990 lectures, 181,431 guided tours and 9,496 exhibitions were held.<sup>12</sup>

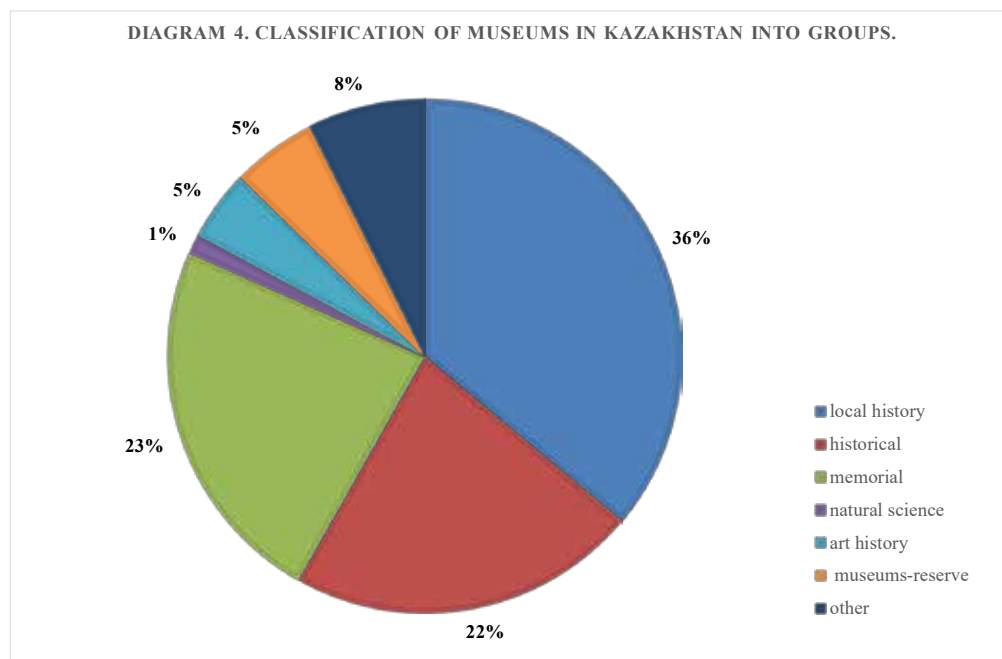
**Tab. 1:** *Number of events held in museums in Kazakhstan in 2019.*

<b>Region name</b>	<b>number of excursions</b>	<b>number of exhibitions</b>	<b>number of lectures</b>
Akmola region	6 961	558	549
Aktobe region	6 987	780	1 261
Almata region	8 049	804	948
Atyrau region	3 675	406	292
West-Kazakhstan region	8 087	322	250
Jambyl Region	6 404	614	608
Karaganda region	14 707	859	1 676
Kostanay region	10 713	1 010	723
Kyzylorda Region	12 304	696	876
Mangistau region	3 076	93	103
Turkestan region	4 666	783	1 519
Pavlodar region	3 581	257	927
North-Kazakhstan region	26 443	1 081	1 939
The East Kazakhstan region	21 022	772	1 843
Nur-Sultan	35 502	206	156
Almaty	9 014	224	299
Shymkent	x	x	x
<b>Total by country</b>	<b>181 431</b>	<b>9 496</b>	<b>13 990</b>

According to the classification of the Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the museums of Kazakhstan are divided into the following seven groups: historical, regional, memorial, natural science, art history, reserve museums and others.

The largest share in this classification is covered by regional museums, of which there are 88 (36.7%), then memorial – 57 (23.8%), historical – 54 (22.5%), art history – 11 (4.6%), reserve museums – 9 (3.8%), natural science museums – 3 (1.2%). Museums included in the “others” section comprise in the amount of 18 or 7.5% (see Figure 4).

<sup>12</sup> Official website of the Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan.



**Fig. 4:** *Classification of museums in Kazakhstan into groups.*

This classification raises a question, first of all, about the division of regional and historical museums. Certainly, there are museums whose expositions are not devoted to the history of a particular region, but to the history of the country as a whole, but there are far fewer than 54 of them indicated in the official statistics. In the light of specific features of most museums in Kazakhstan, such a division seems illogical.

In the course of preparing this study, we compiled a database on the museums currently operating in Kazakhstan. The database includes 221 operating museums, which is slightly less than the number of museums in the country (92.1% of the total); however, in our opinion, it allows us to draw quite representative conclusions about the classification and functions of museums.

According to our system, the museums of Kazakhstan can be roughly divided into nine groups:

1. Regional museums
2. Memorial
3. Art history
4. Industry-specific
5. Museums-reserves
6. Scientific
7. Historical
8. Universal
9. Others

Regional museums make up the largest group within our examined selection, with 100 institutions (45.2%). Regional museums can be divided according to their status into regional,

city, district and rural. There are 16 regional museums, 14 city museums, 60 district ones and 9 in rural locations.

The fact that some museums have more than one regional museum can be explained, as a rule, by the fact that the region has merged with another region. For example, the East Kazakhstan region was united with the Semipalatinsk region in 1997, and as a result, two regional museums now operate in the area, in the cities of Semipalatinsk and Ust-Kamenogorsk. The situation is similar in the Kostanay region, which includes the now-abolished Turgay region. Aside from the Kostanay Regional Museum, one can also find the Regional Museum of the History of the Steppe Territory (*krai*) in the city of Arkalyk, the former regional centre of the Turgay region.

Memorial museums make up the second largest group of museums, with 54 institutions (24.4%). The first memorial museum in Kazakhstan was the T. G. Shevchenko Museum, opened in 1932; the second is the House-Museum of Abay, opened in 1940. In terms of scale, almost all memorial museums are small organizations. Memorial museums partly overlap with both regional and art history museums. The profile of regional museums involves expositions dedicated to famous people from the region under examination. The intersection with art history museums is due to the fact that most of the memorial museums are dedicated to the memory of creative people, poets, writers, artists and musicians.

We divided the 54 memorial museums in our examined selection into three groups. Among them, 31 (57.4%) are museums dedicated to creative individuals, 8 (14.8%) are dedicated to scientists, and 15 (27.8%) are devoted to various other types of historical figure. This group includes politicians (D. A. Kunaev), war heroes (M. Mametova, A. Moldagulova) and others. Therefore, the problem of referencing a particular museum to a specific group arises in some cases.

There are 23 art history museums in our sample figure (10.4%). They can be divided into three groups in terms of scale: national, regional, and district/city. There is only one specialized art museum in the national-level group: the A. Kasteev State Museum of Arts of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Almaty. The nine regional-scale museums are: North Kazakhstan Regional Museum of Fine Arts (Petropavlovsk); Regional Museum of Literature and Art (Kokshetau); Aktobe Regional Museum of Arts (Aktobe); East Kazakhstan Regional Museum of Fine Arts named after the Nevzorov family (Semey); Karaganda Regional Museum of Fine Arts (Karaganda); Pavlodar Regional Art Museum (Pavlodar); Atyrau Regional Museum of Arts and Crafts (Atyrau); Museum of Fine Arts (Shymkent); the Bukhar Zhyrau Pavlodar Regional Museum of Literature and Art (Pavlodar).

Examples of regional/city art museums include the D. Nurpeisova Museum of Art History (West Kazakhstan region, Zhanakalinsky district, Zhanakala village) and the N. Bekezhanov Memorial Museum of Arts (Kyzylorda).

The analysed selection includes 10 industry-specific museums, which is 4.5% of the total. We classified as industry-specific those museums dedicated to a specific type of activity, profession, etc. Some of them are departmental, some are funded from the governmental budget. The oldest industry-specific museum in Kazakhstan, most likely, is the Museum of the History of Cotton Production of the South Kazakhstan region, founded in 1944. To name just a few, we can also mention the I. Zhakhaev Museum of the History of Rice planting, opened in the Kyzylorda region in 1982 and the Military History Museum of the Officers' House, opened in Almaty in 1965. The most recent, which is also a rather large-scale project, is the Military History Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan, founded in Nur-Sultan in 2015.

The next group is represented by reserve museums, of which there are 13 (4.5%). Among the reserve museums are included the State Historical and Cultural Reserve Museum “Azret-Sultan” (Turkestan), Mangistau State Historical and Cultural Reserve (Aktau), the Otrar State Archaeological Reserve Museum (Turkestan region) and the State Historical Cultural and Natural Reserve Museum “Tamgaly” (Almaty region).

There are 8 museums (3.6%) classified into category of science museums in our examined selection. We have included here both natural science museums and museums related to the humanities. Among the natural science museums are the Museum of Nature and Ecology (Uralsk), the Geological Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Almaty), the Paleontological Museum (Atyrau) and the Nature Museum (Almaty). Covering the humanities, we have the Museum of Archaeology (Almaty), the Museum of Rare Books (Almaty) and the Museum of Ethnography (Mangistau region). In part, some museums can be attributed to several groups at once. For example, the Almaty Museum of the History of Kazakh Science can be classified as a science museum, an industry-specific museum, or a historical one.

The historical museums of Kazakhstan are represented by 8 institutions (3.6%). Almost all of them are highly specialized. For example, the Museum of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan is dedicated to the life and political activities of N. A. Nazarbayev. Other examples include the “Cherkasskaya Defense” Memorial Museum (Almaty region), three museums dedicated to the memory of victims of political repression (South Kazakhstan region, Karaganda region, Akmola region) and Abylaikhan Museum-Residence (Petropavlovsk).

We classified two museums (0.9%) as universal. These are the Central State Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Almaty) and the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Nur-Sultan). The versatility of these museums is due to the fact that from the outset they were not focused on a specific region. The Central State Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan, founded in Almaty in 1929, was initially positioned as the main museum of the country. At the same time, it included the collections of the local Semirechensky Museum, as well as the former Kyzylorda Cossack Central Regional Museum, which in turn inherited most of the collection of the Orenburg Cossack Regional Museum.

The National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Nur-Sultan was also initially positioned as a supra-regional, national, capital museum. Accordingly, its collections do not belong to any particular region. The National Museum includes a Hall of Ancient and Medieval History, a Hall of History, a Hall of Ethnography, a Hall of Independent Kazakhstan, a Hall of Astana, a Hall of Gold and a Hall of Modern Art.<sup>13</sup>

We placed 6 museums (2.7%) in the “Others” category, which includes museums that cannot be classified under any of the previous categories. These include the Museum of the Mother “Anaga Kurmet” (Respect to Mother) in Almaty region, the museum “Rukhani zhangyru” (spiritual revival) in Uralsk, and the Aktobe regional museum “Rukhaniyat”, whose exposition is located in Aktobe central regional mosque (Aktobe).

Almost all museums in Kazakhstan are state owned. According to the Kazakhstan Statistics Committee, only four out of the 240 museums in the country are private. Two examples of private museums are Azat Akimbek’s Antique Art Salon and the “Umai” Art Museum.

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<sup>13</sup> Ofitsial’nyy sayt Natsional’nogo muzeya Respubliki Kazakhstan / razdel Istoriya muzeya. [Official website of the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan / section: History of the Museum]. [http://nationalmuseum.kz/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=23&Itemid=118&lang=ru](http://nationalmuseum.kz/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=23&Itemid=118&lang=ru) (accessed 11 April 2020). [In Russian].



Divided by number of employees, the museums of Kazakhstan can be divided into four groups:

- 1) 1–20 employees;
- 2) 21–50 employees;
- 3) 51–100 employees;
- 4) More than 100 employees.

The first group includes more than 70% of all museums (71.5% in our selection). These are almost all rural and district museums. Most of the memorial museums have 1–20 employees.

In our sample of museums, 13.7% have 21–50 employees. Most museums of this size are regional-level institutions. The exception is the Karmakshinsky Regional Museum (21 people), the Bayanaul Memorial Museum of Academician K. I. Satpayev (31 people) and the Museum of Memory of Victims of Political Repression in the village of Dolinka (43 people).

The third group, those with 51–100 employees contains 10% of the museums sampled. All of them, without exception, are regional-level institutions. These are the museums of Kyzylorda, Kokshetau, Aktyubinsk, Semey, Karaganda, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Atyrau, Taraz, Petropavlovsk.

The fourth group, with the most employees (>100) is the smallest in membership, containing only 4.8%. From the regional museums it includes the G. N. Potanin Pavlodar Regional Museum (107 people) and the South Kazakhstan Regional Museum (110 people). However, the majority of museums in this group are national. This includes, for example, the A. Kasteev State Museum of Arts of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which has 183 employees, and the Central State Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which employs 240 people. The largest museum in Kazakhstan is currently the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan, where, as of August 2020, 384 people have been working.<sup>14</sup>

In view of this, the museums of Kazakhstan can be systematized according to the following classification criteria:

a) by the profile into nine groups: regional history, memorial, art history, industry-specific, reserve museums, scientific, historical, universal and others.

b) by the status (based on affiliation) into five groups: national, regional, district, city, rural.

c) by the number of employees and the scale of work accordingly into four groups: 1–20 employees (the most common), 21–50, 51–100 and over 100 employees. The more employees in a group, the fewer museums there are.

It is also possible to highlight such museums as the Central State Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which have 240 and 384 employees, respectively.

Classifying museums in Kazakhstan according to the form of ownership at this historical stage does not make sense, since 98.3% of the country's museums are state-owned. The country's four private museums are something of an exception to the rule. This can partly be explained by the peculiarities of the legislation in force in the country. The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Culture" allows the existence of museums of private collections (Article 25, paragraph 2), but there is no more or less detailed regulation of the activities of a private museum. Note that, in this case, one generates the other. An increase in the number of private museums could potentially provoke clarification and addition to existing laws in this regard.

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<sup>14</sup> Official website of the Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Summing up, it should be noted that over the 190 years of its development, the museum sector of Kazakhstan has come a long way and has formed a modern branched museum network that meets all the necessary world museum requirements.

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