

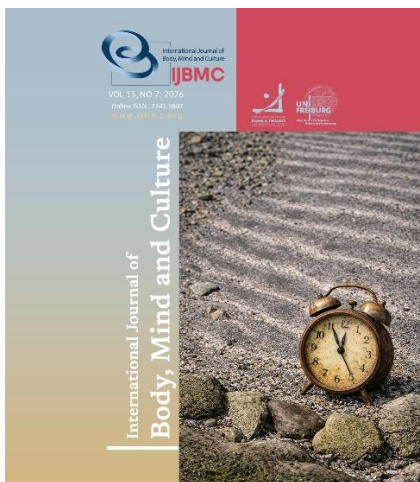
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Cultural Memory, Imperial Imagination, and the Psychological Representation of Central Asian Heritage in Russian Oriental Studies: The Timurid and Shaybanid Eras

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to examine Russian Orientalist representations of Central Asian heritage through the lenses of cultural memory, imperial imagination, and psychological representation, with a focus on the Timurid and Shaybanid eras.

Methods and Materials: A qualitative historiographical and cultural-psychological analysis was conducted. The study drew on archival documents, manuscript-related studies, scholarly reports, catalogs, and works by Russian Orientalists, including V. V. Bartold, V. L. Vyatkin, A. A. Semenov, N. I. Veselovsky, A. P. Khoroshkhin, and related scholars. The analysis combined historical interpretation with concepts from cultural psychology, memory studies, postcolonial studies, and body–mind–culture scholarship. Particular attention was given to manuscripts, monuments, waqf documents, genealogical records, and historical chronicles as material carriers of collective memory and symbolic identity.

Findings: Russian Orientalists contributed to the collection, classification, translation, and preservation of Central Asian manuscripts and historical materials. However, their scholarship was also shaped by imperial categories of knowledge, including scholarly curiosity, administrative interest, colonial imagination, and cultural hierarchy. The Timurid era was represented as a period of scientific, architectural, and cultural achievement, especially through Samarkand, Ulugh Beg, and Timurid monuments. The Shaybanid era was less prominently developed but remained important for interpreting political transition, religious authority, dynastic legitimacy, and manuscript continuity. These representations shaped academic historiography and broader images of Central Asian identity.

Conclusion: Russian Oriental studies functioned as both a scholarly and cultural-psychological enterprise in which manuscripts, monuments, memory, identity, and imperial perception interacted.

Keywords: Cultural Memory, Imperial Imagination, Russian Oriental Studies, Central Asia, Timurid Era, Shaybanid Era.

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Introduction

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Russian Oriental studies became one of the major intellectual frameworks through which Central Asian history, manuscript heritage, and cultural identity were interpreted. The study of the East in Russia was not limited to the collection and translation of manuscripts; it also involved the formation of mental images, cultural categories, and scholarly perceptions of Central Asia. From a body-mind-culture perspective, these intellectual practices can be understood as processes through which historical knowledge, cultural memory, and psychological representation were connected. In this sense, Russian Oriental studies was not only a historiographical enterprise but also a field of cultural cognition, where Central Asia was imagined, classified, remembered, and represented within the intellectual world of the Russian Empire (Assmann, 2011; Said, 1978; Wertsch, 2002).

The relationship between history, culture, and mind is especially important when studying Oriental manuscripts and archival materials. Manuscripts do not function merely as written records of the past; they also serve as material carriers of collective memory, identity, and symbolic continuity. Their scripts, language, physical form, circulation, ownership, and preservation reflect the embodied life of culture across generations. When Russian scholars collected, translated, cataloged, and interpreted Arabic, Persian, and Turkic manuscripts related to Central Asia, they were also participating in the reconstruction of Central Asian memory through imperial scholarly institutions. Thus, manuscript studies may be read not only as philological work but also as a cultural-psychological practice of remembering, classifying, and giving meaning to the past (Assmann, 2011; Csordas, 1994; Halbwachs, 1992).

In the nineteenth century, interest in the East grew significantly in Russian scientific, artistic, and administrative circles. Research interests concerning India, China, Tibet, Iran, and Turkestan expanded, and Oriental studies became an important part of Russian academic life. In 1818, the Asian Museum was opened in St. Petersburg as a special department of the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences. This institution became a major center for the collection of Oriental manuscripts and cultural artifacts. The museum's expanding

collections attracted historians, philologists, cultural scholars, and administrators, helping to transform Eastern manuscripts into objects of scholarly interpretation and symbolic knowledge. These institutions contributed to the formation of an imperial archive through which the East was not only studied but also mentally ordered and culturally imagined (Foucault, 1972; Knight, 2000; Tolz, 2011).

The annexation of Central Asia to the Russian Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century intensified the scholarly study of Turkestan. From the 1860s onward, Russian Orientalists paid increasing attention to the history, culture, languages, manuscripts, and monuments of Central Asia. This process yielded valuable academic contributions, particularly by introducing Arabic, Persian, and Turkic manuscripts into scholarly circulation. However, it also developed within the political and psychological conditions of empire. A dual movement shaped knowledge about Central Asia: on the one hand, scholarly curiosity and admiration for the region's cultural heritage; on the other hand, imperial classification, administrative need, and the colonial desire to know, define, and manage the region. This duality is central to understanding the psychological structure of imperial knowledge (Khalid, 1999; Morrison, 2005; Said, 1978).

The Timurid and Shaybanid eras occupy a special place in this process because they represented periods of political power, cultural production, religious authority, architectural achievement, and manuscript activity in Central Asia. For Russian Orientalists, these periods offered rich material through which the region's historical identity could be reconstructed. Samarkand, Bukhara, Herat, and other centers were interpreted not only as historical cities but also as symbolic spaces of memory and civilization. The Timurid era, particularly through figures such as Amir Timur and Ulugh Beg, was often associated with scientific, architectural, and cultural flourishing. The Shaybanid period, in turn, was connected with questions of political transition, religious authority, dynastic legitimacy, and manuscript continuity. These interpretations shaped how Central Asia was remembered within Russian and wider Orientalist scholarship (Bartol'd, 1927; Manz, 1999; Subtelny, 2007).

The psychological relevance of this topic lies in the fact that historical writing does not simply record events;

it shapes collective images, cultural emotions, and identity narratives. The way Russian Orientalists interpreted Central Asian manuscripts influenced how the region's past was represented to scholarly and imperial audiences. Their writings helped construct images of Central Asia as ancient, learned, religious, artistic, declining, recoverable, or in need of scholarly explanation. Such representations are not psychologically neutral. They show how knowledge production is connected to perception, memory, imagination, and identity. In this sense, Russian Oriental studies can be analyzed as a form of cultural-psychological representation, where the past became a medium through which both Central Asian identity and Russian imperial self-understanding were negotiated (Assmann, 2011; Bruner, 1990; Wertsch, 2002).

At the same time, Russian Oriental studies should not be reduced to a simple colonial instrument—scholars such as N. Ya. Bichurin, V. V.; Bartold, V. L.; Vyatkin, A. A.; Semenov, N. I.; Veselovsky, A. P.; Khoroshkhin, and others made substantial contributions to the study of Central Asian manuscripts, historical geography, archaeology, religious history, and cultural heritage. Their work helped preserve and circulate important materials on the Timurid and Shaybanid periods. Yet their interpretations were also shaped by the intellectual assumptions of their time, including ideas of civilizational hierarchy, progress, decline, and scholarly authority. A balanced approach, therefore, requires both recognition of their contributions and critical examination of the mental and cultural frameworks through which they represented Central Asia (Khalid, 1999; Morrison, 2005; Tolz, 2011).

The body–mind–culture dimension of this study becomes visible when manuscripts, monuments, and archives are approached as embodied forms of historical experience. Manuscripts are not abstract texts separated from human life; they are written by hands, preserved in libraries, carried across regions, touched by scholars, marked by seals, interpreted through memory, and recontextualized in institutions. Architectural monuments, waqf documents, genealogies, and historical chronicles similarly embody social relations, religious authority, political legitimacy, and cultural memory. Russian Orientalists' engagement with these materials therefore involved not only textual interpretation but also an encounter with the material

body of Central Asian culture. This makes the study relevant to body–mind–culture scholarship, where culture is understood as lived, embodied, remembered, and symbolically mediated (Assmann, 2011; Connerton, 1989; Csordas, 1994).

A further psychological aspect concerns the formation of imperial imagination. Russian scholars and administrators often approached Central Asia through categories that reflected both academic interest and imperial positioning. The region was seen as a space of ancient civilization, Islamic learning, manuscript richness, political fragmentation, and cultural difference. These images helped shape administrative and scholarly attitudes toward Turkestan. In this regard, Oriental studies functioned as a cognitive map: it organized the region into historical periods, peoples, languages, manuscripts, dynasties, and cultural types. Such mapping was not only geographical or archival; it was also mental and symbolic, forming a structured way of seeing Central Asia within the imperial imagination (Foucault, 1972; Knight, 2000; Said, 1978).

Despite the importance of Russian Orientalist scholarship, the psychological and cultural dimensions of its knowledge production remain insufficiently explored. Previous studies have often focused on the institutional development of Oriental studies, the biographies of scholars, or the philological value of manuscripts. Less attention has been paid to how Russian Orientalists constructed psychological images of Central Asian heritage, how manuscripts functioned as carriers of collective memory, and how imperial scholarly discourse shaped perceptions of the Timurid and Shaybanid past. This gap is important because the history of scholarship is also a history of perception, classification, cultural imagination, and identity formation (Assmann, 2011; Tolz, 2011; Wertsch, 2002).

Therefore, this article examines Russian Oriental studies as a cultural-psychological and historiographical field in which Central Asian manuscript heritage was collected, interpreted, and symbolically reorganized. The study focuses on the Timurid and Shaybanid eras because these periods were central to Russian scholarly representations of Central Asian political, religious, and cultural history. The main argument of the article is that Russian Orientalists did more than preserve and analyze historical sources: they also contributed to the psychological representation of Central Asia by shaping

images of its memory, identity, civilization, and cultural authority. This approach allows the article to connect manuscript studies and Central Asian historiography with the interdisciplinary concerns of body, mind, and culture (Assmann, 2011; Csordas, 1994; Said, 1978).

The following research question guides the study: How did Russian Orientalists in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries represent the Timurid and Shaybanid eras through manuscripts, archival documents, and cultural heritage? What cultural-psychological images of Central Asia were produced through these scholarly interpretations? How did imperial imagination, collective memory, and symbolic identity shape the study of Central Asian manuscripts and monuments? By addressing these questions, the article aims to show that the study of Russian Orientalism can contribute not only to Central Asian history and manuscript studies but also to broader discussions of cultural memory, psychological representation, embodied heritage, and the body-mind-culture relationship.

Methods and Materials

Study Design

This study employs a qualitative, interdisciplinary research design combining historiographical analysis, cultural-psychological interpretation, and manuscript-based inquiry. The purpose of this methodological approach is to examine not only what Russian Orientalists wrote about Central Asian history, but also how they constructed scholarly, cultural, and psychological representations of the Timurid and Shaybanid eras. In this sense, the study treats Orientalist texts, manuscripts, archival documents, catalogs, and reports as sources for analyzing collective memory, imperial imagination, symbolic identity, and cultural cognition.

The article's source base comprises archival documents, published works by Russian Orientalists, manuscript catalogs, scholarly reports, historical-geographical studies, and secondary literature on Central Asian history and Russian Oriental studies. Archival materials related to the topic were primarily consulted from the Central State Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Tashkent. These materials include administrative decrees, statistical data, reports, and

documents describing cooperation between imperial administrative institutions and scholars in the study of the history and culture of the Turkestan region. The research also considers materials related to Count K. K. Palen's audit work, as these reports reflect the intersection of imperial administration, knowledge production, and the scholarly classification of Central Asian society and culture.

The published source base includes works by Russian Orientalists and scholars such as N. Ya. Bichurin, V. P., Vasiliev, V. V., Grigoriev, V. V., Bartold, V. L., Vyatkin, A. A., Semenov, N. I., Veselovsky, A. P., Khoroshkhin, V. P., Nalivkin, and others. These authors were selected because their works played an important role in the study, translation, description, or classification of Central Asian manuscripts, monuments, historical geography, religious institutions, and cultural heritage. Particular attention was given to texts dealing with Samarkand, Bukhara, Turkestan, Khoja Ahrar, Ulugh Beg, waqf documents, Persian and Turkic chronicles, and manuscripts such as *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, *Rashahat*, *Masmuat*, *Silsilat al-Arifin*, and related sources.

Four criteria guided the selection of scholars and materials. First, the source had to relate directly to the study of Central Asian history, culture, manuscripts, monuments, or institutions. Second, it had to belong to, or discuss, the period of Russian imperial Oriental studies in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Third, it had to contain references to the Timurid or Shaybanid historical context, either directly or through manuscripts, monuments, genealogies, waqf documents, religious figures, or urban histories connected with these periods. Fourth, the source had to provide evidence of interpretive practices, such as classification, comparison, evaluation, translation, preservation, or representation of Central Asian cultural heritage.

The analysis was conducted in several stages. In the first stage, the sources were organized chronologically to identify the main phases in the development of Russian Oriental studies and its increasing focus on Central Asia. The periodization method was used to distinguish the early institutional formation of Russian Oriental studies, the expansion of Central Asian research after the annexation of Turkestan, and the more specialized manuscript and archaeological studies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This allowed

the study to trace how scholarly attention shifted from a broader interest in the East to a more systematic investigation of Turkestan, Samarkand, Bukhara, and manuscript traditions associated with the Timurid and Shaybanid eras.

In the second stage, the classification method was used to group the materials according to their main scholarly focus. The sources were classified into several thematic categories: manuscript collection and cataloging; translation and philological commentary; historical geography and urban history; archaeological and architectural interpretation; religious and waqf studies; ethnographic observation; and imperial administrative documentation. This classification made it possible to examine how different forms of knowledge contributed to the construction of Central Asia as an object of scholarly and cultural interpretation.

In the third stage, structural analysis was applied to examine the relationship between scholarly texts, imperial institutions, and cultural representation. This method was used to identify how Orientalist knowledge was organized through institutions such as the Asian Museum, the Turkestan Public Library, scholarly societies, administrative commissions, museums, and local research circles. The structural approach also helped clarify how manuscripts and monuments moved from local cultural contexts into imperial archives, catalogs, libraries, and academic discourse. In this respect, the study analyzes knowledge production as a structured interaction between texts, institutions, scholars, and imperial power.

In the fourth stage, cultural-psychological interpretation was applied to identify the psychological dimensions embedded in Russian Orientalist discourse. This stage focused on concepts such as cultural memory, collective identity, imperial imagination, symbolic representation, and embodied heritage. The analysis examined how Central Asia was represented as a space of ancient civilization, Islamic learning, manuscript richness, scientific achievement, religious authority, cultural decline, or historical recovery. These representations were interpreted as psychological and cultural categories through which Russian scholars made sense of the region and positioned themselves as observers, translators, classifiers, and interpreters of Central Asian heritage.

A body–mind–culture perspective was also used to interpret manuscripts and monuments as embodied forms of historical memory. In this approach, manuscripts are not treated only as written documents but as material objects that preserve cultural experience through handwriting, script, seals, marginalia, traces of ownership, translation practices, and archival movement. Similarly, monuments, waqf documents, genealogical records, and historical chronicles are understood as cultural forms that connect social memory, religious authority, political legitimacy, and collective identity. This perspective allowed the study to examine how Russian Orientalists' engagement with Central Asian materials involved both intellectual interpretation and symbolic contact with the material body of culture.

The actualization method was used to connect the historical material with contemporary interdisciplinary debates. Rather than treating Russian Oriental studies only as a completed historical phenomenon, the study reconsiders its relevance for present-day discussions of cultural memory, identity, heritage preservation, colonial knowledge, and the psychology of historical representation. This method helps show how nineteenth- and early twentieth-century interpretations continue to influence modern understandings of Central Asian history, manuscript heritage, and scholarly identity.

The analysis of the Timurid and Shaybanid eras was conducted comparatively. The Timurid component was examined through Russian Orientalist interpretations of Samarkand, Ulugh Beg, Khoja Ahrar, Timurid architecture, scientific memory, waqf documents, and Persian manuscript traditions. The Shaybanid component was analyzed using materials on the post-Timurid political transition, religious authority, manuscript continuity, Bukhara, and the transformation of Central Asian historical narratives in the sixteenth century. This comparative structure was used to avoid treating the two periods unevenly and to clarify how each period functioned in Russian scholarly and cultural imagination.

To strengthen the study's critical dimension, the article also considers the colonial and imperial context in which Russian Oriental studies developed. The analysis therefore distinguishes between scholarly contribution and imperial framing. It recognizes the importance of

Russian Orientalists in preserving, translating, and introducing Central Asian sources into academic circulation, while also examining how administrative interests, civilizational hierarchies, and the politics of knowledge shaped their interpretations. This balanced approach avoids both uncritical celebration and complete rejection of Russian Orientalist scholarship.

The study's conclusions were derived through interpretive synthesis. Evidence from archival materials, published Orientalist works, manuscript studies, and secondary scholarship was compared across themes and periods. The study does not aim to provide a quantitative measurement of psychological processes; rather, it offers a qualitative cultural-psychological reading of historical scholarship. Its main methodological contribution is to show how historical and manuscript-based research can be connected with the concerns of body, mind, and culture by examining the psychological representation of heritage, memory, identity, and imperial imagination.

Findings and Results

Oriental Manuscripts as Material Carriers of Cultural Memory

The analysis shows that Oriental manuscripts occupied a central position in Russian scholarly interpretations of Central Asian history. Russian Orientalists did not use manuscripts only as textual evidence for reconstructing historical events; they also treated them as privileged objects through which the cultural memory of Central Asia could be accessed, classified, and transmitted. Arabic, Persian, and Turkic manuscripts from the Timurid and Shaybanid eras were collected, translated, cataloged, and interpreted within imperial scholarly institutions, including libraries, museums, archival collections, and research societies.

The Asian Museum in St. Petersburg and the Turkestan Public Library were particularly important in this process. These institutions transformed manuscripts from locally preserved cultural and religious objects into scholarly materials organized according to language, genre, period, subject, and historical value. The work of scholars and cataloguers such as A. A. Semenov and E. Kal contributed to the classification of Persian, Arabic, and Turkic manuscripts, thereby making Central Asian history more accessible to Russian and European scholarship.

From the perspective of the present study, this process reveals that manuscripts functioned as embodied forms of cultural memory. Their physical features, including script, language, seals, marginal notes, traces of ownership, and archival movement, carried evidence of social and intellectual life across generations. When these manuscripts entered imperial institutions, their meanings were partly reorganized. They remained sources of Central Asian memory, but they also became objects of imperial scholarly classification.

The Timurid Era as a Symbol of Civilizational Memory

The findings indicate that the Timurid era was represented in Russian Oriental studies as one of the most important periods of Central Asian political, scientific, architectural, and cultural achievement. Russian Orientalists frequently associated the Timurid period with Samarkand, Amir Timur, Ulugh Beg, monumental architecture, manuscript production, astronomy, and religious authority. This period, therefore, became a symbolic center in the scholarly imagination of Central Asian history.

V. L. Vyatkin's research on Samarkand and Ulugh Beg's Observatory illustrates this tendency. His use of manuscript evidence and waqf documents contributed to the identification and interpretation of one of the most significant scientific monuments of medieval Central Asia. In this context, the observatory was not presented only as an archaeological site; it became a symbol of scientific memory and intellectual achievement.

Russian scholars also paid considerable attention to Khoja Ahrar, a major religious and political figure of the Timurid era. Works by V. L. Vyatkin, L. N. Sobolev, A. P. Khoroshkhin, and N. I. Veselovsky examined manuscripts, waqf documents, and religious narratives related to Khoja Ahrar's life and influence. These studies show that the Timurid era was interpreted through the interconnection of political authority, religious leadership, land ownership, and collective memory.

The Shaybanid Era and the Representation of Historical Transition

The analysis also shows that the Shaybanid era was less extensively developed than the Timurid period in Russian Orientalist discourse. Still, it remained important for understanding historical transition and manuscript continuity in Central Asia. The Shaybanid period was generally interpreted through themes of

post-Timurid political transformation, dynastic legitimacy, religious authority, and the continuation of manuscript traditions.

V. V. Bartold's works are particularly important for this aspect of the analysis. His engagement with Persian and Turkic sources, including *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, *Bahr al-Asrar*, *Rashahat*, and other historical texts, contributed to the scholarly reconstruction of Central Asian history in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These materials allowed Russian Orientalists to interpret the transition from Timurid to Shaybanid rule not simply as a dynastic change but as a transformation in political order, religious authority, and cultural memory.

The findings suggest that the Shaybanid era should not be treated merely as an appendix to the Timurid period. Instead, it represents a key stage in the reorganization of Central Asian historical consciousness. Manuscripts and historical narratives from this period preserved memories of dynastic legitimacy, social order, religious networks, and political continuity.

Imperial Imagination and the Classification of Central Asian Heritage

A further finding concerns the role of imperial imagination in Russian Orientalist scholarship. The study of Central Asia developed within the context of Russian imperial expansion, administration, and knowledge production. Archival documents, administrative reports, statistical materials, scholarly catalogs, travel writings, and manuscript studies helped organize Central Asia as a knowable and classifiable region.

Russian Orientalists and imperial administrators often approached Central Asia through categories such as religion, ethnicity, language, city, dynasty, manuscript tradition, and historical period. These categories were useful for scholarly analysis, but they also reflected the administrative and intellectual priorities of the empire. In this sense, Orientalist knowledge was both academic and political.

The classification of manuscripts, monuments, cities, peoples, and religious institutions contributed to the formation of a cognitive map of Central Asia. This map shaped how Russian scholars and imperial institutions perceived the region. Central Asia appeared as a region of ancient civilization, Islamic learning, manuscript richness, political change, and cultural diversity.

Ambivalence Between Scholarly Admiration and Colonial Hierarchy

The findings reveal an ambivalent structure in Russian Orientalist representations of Central Asia. On the one hand, many Russian scholars expressed respect for Central Asia's manuscript heritage, architecture, scientific achievements, and historical depth. Their work helped preserve, translate, and introduce important sources into scholarly circulation.

On the other hand, some interpretations placed medieval Central Asia in contrast with contemporary Turkestan. The medieval past was often described as culturally rich and intellectually significant. In contrast, modern Central Asian society was sometimes represented through assumptions of decline, stagnation, or dependence on external scholarly interpretation. This contrast reflects a wider pattern in imperial knowledge production: admiration for the historical heritage of the colonized region was often accompanied by hierarchical views of its present.

Therefore, the findings show that Russian Orientalist scholarship cannot be understood only as objective historical research or only as colonial ideology. It should be analyzed as a complex field in which scholarly contribution, cultural admiration, administrative interest, and imperial hierarchy were intertwined.

Central Asian Heritage and Symbolic Identity

The analysis also demonstrates that Russian Orientalist scholarship contributed to the symbolic construction of Central Asian identity. By translating, cataloging, and interpreting manuscripts such as *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, *Rashahat*, *Masmuat*, *Silsilat al-Arifin*, and related sources, Russian scholars helped identify which texts, figures, cities, and periods would become central to modern academic representations of Central Asian history.

Samarkand became associated with Timurid power, architecture, and scientific achievement. Bukhara was connected with religious authority, manuscript culture, and scholarly tradition. Khoja Ahrar became a figure through whom religious, political, and social authority could be interpreted. Ulugh Beg became a symbol of scientific memory. The Shaybanid transition was represented through issues of political continuity, religious legitimacy, and manuscript transmission. These representations show that historical scholarship contributed to the formation of symbolic identity.

Central Asian heritage was not only preserved in manuscripts and monuments; it was also reorganized into scholarly narratives that shaped how the region's past was imagined and remembered.

The findings may be summarized as follows. First, Oriental manuscripts functioned as material carriers of cultural memory and symbolic identity. Second, the Timurid era was strongly represented as a period of civilizational achievement, scientific memory, and architectural prestige. Third, the Shaybanid era was comparatively less developed in Russian Orientalist discourse but remained important for understanding political transition and manuscript continuity. Fourth, Russian Orientalist scholarship was shaped by both scholarly interest and imperial imagination. Fifth, Central Asian heritage was interpreted through a tension between admiration for the past and hierarchical assumptions about the present. Finally, Russian Oriental studies contributed to the psychological and symbolic representation of Central Asian identity in modern scholarship.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that Russian Oriental studies of Central Asia should be understood not only as a historical and philological enterprise but also as a cultural-psychological process. Russian Orientalists collected and interpreted manuscripts, monuments, archival records, and historical narratives; however, these activities also involved perception, classification, memory, and symbolic representation. In this regard, the study contributes to body-mind-culture scholarship by showing how material heritage, mental representation, and cultural identity interact in the production of historical knowledge.

The first major implication concerns the role of manuscripts as embodied cultural memory. Manuscripts are not passive written records. They are material objects produced by human hands, preserved in social institutions, transmitted across generations, and reinterpreted in changing political contexts. Their movement from local Central Asian settings into imperial libraries, archives, and catalogs represents a transformation in the location and meaning of memory. This process shows how the body of culture can be

reorganized through scholarly and institutional practices.

The second implication relates to the psychological construction of historical periods. Russian Orientalists represented the Timurid era as a privileged memory space associated with scientific, architectural, and cultural achievement. Such representation shaped the emotional and symbolic meaning of Central Asian history. The prominence given to Samarkand, Ulugh Beg, and Timurid monuments helped construct a civilizational image of Central Asia that continues to influence modern historical imagination.

The Shaybanid era, by contrast, was less symbolically prominent but remains essential for understanding continuity and transformation. Its relative underdevelopment in Russian Orientalist scholarship reveals the selective nature of cultural memory. Historical periods are not remembered equally. They are emphasized or marginalized according to available sources, scholarly interests, political expectations, and symbolic appeal. A more balanced interpretation of Central Asian history, therefore, requires greater attention to Shaybanid manuscripts, institutions, religious authority, and political narratives.

The third implication concerns imperial imagination. Russian Orientalist scholarship developed within an imperial context in which knowledge was closely connected with governance, classification, and cultural authority. This does not invalidate the scholarly value of Russian Orientalists' work, but it requires a critical reading of their categories and assumptions. The construction of Central Asia as ancient, rich in manuscripts, religious, and culturally distinctive was also a way of making the region intelligible to imperial scholarship and administration.

The ambivalence between admiration and hierarchy is especially important. Russian Orientalists often respected Central Asian heritage while simultaneously interpreting contemporary Central Asian society through assumptions of decline or dependence. This pattern reflects a psychological structure of colonial knowledge: the past of the colonized region is admired, while its present is often positioned as requiring external interpretation. Recognizing this structure allows the article to move beyond both uncritical celebration and simple rejection of Russian Oriental studies.

From the viewpoint of cultural psychology, the study shows that historical scholarship shapes collective identity. By selecting particular manuscripts, cities, figures, and periods, Russian Orientalists helped define the symbolic vocabulary through which Central Asia was represented. Samarkand, Bukhara, Ulugh Beg, Khoja Ahrar, the Timurid legacy, and the Shaybanid transition became elements of a wider memory structure. These elements continue to influence how Central Asian heritage is understood in modern scholarship.

The study's body–mind–culture relevance lies in this interaction. The “body” is represented by manuscripts, monuments, archives, cities, and material traces of the past. The “mind” is represented by perception, classification, imagination, memory, and interpretation. The “culture” is represented by historical identity, religious tradition, manuscript heritage, and scholarly discourse. Russian Oriental studies becomes a useful case for examining how these three dimensions are connected in the making of historical knowledge.

The findings also have methodological implications. A study of Orientalist scholarship should not be limited to listing scholars and their works. It should examine how knowledge is produced, which categories are used, which periods are emphasized, which assumptions are embedded in interpretation, and how material heritage is transformed into cultural memory. This approach makes it possible to connect Central Asian historiography with broader interdisciplinary debates in cultural psychology, memory studies, postcolonial studies, and body–mind–culture research.

Overall, the discussion shows that Russian Oriental studies played a double role. It preserved and introduced important Central Asian sources into scholarly circulation, but it also reframed those sources through imperial categories of knowledge. This dual role is precisely what makes the topic relevant to an interdisciplinary journal focused on body, mind, and culture. The article demonstrates that the study of manuscripts and historiography can illuminate psychological processes of remembering, imagining, classifying, and constructing cultural identity.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Ethical considerations in this study were that participation was entirely optional.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contribute to this study.

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