

DE GRUYTER

PHOTOGRAPHING CENTRAL ASIA

FROM THE PERIPHERY OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE
TO GLOBAL PRESENCE

*Edited by Svetlana Gorshenina, Sergei Abashin,
Bruno De Cordier and Tatiana Saburova*

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WELTEN SÜD- UND ZENTRALASIENS
WORLDS OF SOUTH AND INNER ASIA
MONDES DE L'ASIE DU SUD ET DE L'ASIE CENTRALE



Photographing Central Asia

Welten Süd- und Zentralasiens / Worlds of South and Inner Asia / Mondes de l'Asie du Sud et de l'Asie Centrale



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Volume 13

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We apologise to our readers as some links to Russian servers became inoperative after the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. In particular, access to the catalogue of the state museums in the Russian Federation (<https://goskatalog.ru/>) was blocked at the time of publication of the book.

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Note on transliteration

Russian names for places and people used in this volume are transliterated according to a simplified version of the Library of Congress system, omitting diacritical marks and with exceptions for proper names or geographic sites that will already be familiar to the reader by another spelling.

The original transliteration of proper names and geographical objects in bibliographic references and citations has not been standardised.

The source language for the translation of all quotations in the articles of the volume is Russian.

The dual spelling of the ethnonym “Kyrgyz” / “Kirgiz” is used in the book: in those cases where the authors use the term to designate the modern Kyrgyz, the form “Kyrgyz” is used; in those cases where the archaic terminology of the Russian Empire is cited (“Kirgiz”, “Kirgiz-Kaisak”, and “Kara-Kirgiz”), the Tsarist-era spelling “Kirgiz” is used. This takes into account the fact that the “Kirgiz” and the “Kirgiz-Kaisak” of the Russian Empire were, according to Soviet terminology, defined as modern Kazakhs and the “Kara-Kirgiz” as modern Kyrgyz.

For all place names in the volume the versions current in the nineteenth to early twentieth century are used (e.g. Ashkhabad and not Ashgabat).

The citation of archival documents from the post-Soviet archives follows the standard abbreviated conventions for identifying their locations: F. (*fond* / archival collection); Op. (*opis'* / inventory); D. (*delo* / file); L. (*list* / folio); Ob. (*oborot* / verso).

Editorial style and bibliographical rules follow the usual rules for *Asiatische Studien – Asian Studies*.

Russian transliteration

а – a; б – b; в – v; г – g; д – d; е – e; ё – ё; ж – zh; з – z; и – i; й – i; к – k; л – l; м – m; н – n; о – o; п – p; р – r; с – s; т – t; у – u; ф – f; х – kh; ц – ts; ч – ch; ш – sh; щ – shch; ь – ' ; ы – y; ь – ' ; э – è; ю – iu; я – ia.

Svetlana Gorshenina

1 Introduction: “On the margins of the marginal” – Why are there so few specialists in Central Asian photography of the imperial and early Soviet period?

This volume is the outcome of the “Another Turkestan: Undiscovered Photography of the Asian Periphery of the Russian Empire” conference held in May 2019 at the European University in St Petersburg.¹ Following Basel in 2014² and Munich in 2015,³ it was the third conference dedicated to Russian imperial photography of the nineteenth to early twentieth century. It was, however, the first to focus exclusively on the photography of Turkestan during the tsarist period (1867–1917) and the first decades of Soviet power (1917 to the 1930s). This is cause for celebration, especially since, for the first time, the conference has resulted in an entire book on the subject. Yet it is also somewhat concerning, and immediately raises two interrelated questions. First, why has it taken so long for the history of photography in Turkestan during this period to become the subject of discussion at an academic conference? Second, why is this geographical region – Russian Turkestan/Soviet Central Asia⁴ – still considered “on the margins of the marginal” in the history of photography?

1 The conference was co-organised by the *Alerte Héritage* international observatory (Montreal/Paris/Lausanne) and the European University at St Petersburg (Russia), with the participation of Gerda Henkel Stiftung (Dusseldorf, Germany), Ghent University (Belgium), Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (Germany) and the Marjani Foundation (Moscow, Russia). We extend our sincere gratitude to all these institutions. See also Vinokurov 2019.

2 “Picturing Empires: Photography and Social Change in 19th-Century Multi-Ethnic Environments”, Basel, August 2014.

3 “Photographing Asia: Images of Russia’s Orient and the Far East in the 19th and 20th centuries”, Munich, September 2015.

4 For the definition of this geographical area during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Gorshenina 2012a.

Note: Translated by Adelaide McGinity-Peebles

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The peripheral position of Central Asian studies plays a crucial role here, in that it falls between the cracks of “Western” and “Eastern” area studies,⁵ a well-established if unhelpful dichotomy. Moreover, specific reasons that account for this marginal position can be found in the postcolonial context of the post-Soviet world. In Putin’s Russia, Central Asia has become increasingly invisible, gradually disappearing from the country’s programme of sociopolitical nation-building. The belated interest in and relative marginality of Central Asia as a topic of study has also been facilitated by the reduction of Russian specialists on the region and specialised programmes at Russian universities.

As for photography itself, university courses on the history of this medium – rarely found in Russian higher education institutions – barely touch on the history of photography in Turkestan, or on the more general topic of photography in colonial contexts.⁶ This reluctance to recall one’s own colonial history – which reflects a wider, global trend⁷ – and the active denial of the existence of Russian Soviet colonies chimes with the creation of “new, neocolonial, form(s) of co-dependence with the former peripheries of the Empire”.⁸ This tendency to forget the colonial past is also evident in the Central Asian countries themselves. Despite the fact that historians of Central Asia regularly revise their attitudes to Russian and Soviet imperial “colonialism”, creating various narratives in the process,⁹ the main tendency, albeit with occasional exceptions, is a lack of desire to continue the Soviet tradition of studying the activities of the Russian imperial “enlightenment”. This reflects the decolonial tendencies in knowledge production increasingly perceptible in Central Asia.

Another factor is the distribution of research interests within Central Asian studies itself. Excluding archaeology and research on antiquity, the dominant focus in Central Asian studies is the sociopolitical conditions, as well as religious and national policies, within the republics themselves. Research on the various aspects of Central Asian culture is comparatively minimal, and for specialists within Central Asian cultural studies, the photography of Turkestan of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has largely been ignored or rejected in favour of Soviet-era photography.

⁵ Gorshenina 2009a; Bernet/Gorshenina 2014; Abashin 2015.

⁶ A rare example is Elena Iakimovich, who has written diverse and highly professional courses for the Russian State University for the Humanities (Moscow). See e.g. <http://yaki-art.ru/?cat=4>.

⁷ For more information on the “invisibility” of the legacy of colonial photography in museums, see Edwards/Mead 2013.

⁸ Abashin 2020. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

⁹ Gorshenina 2021a.

Despite their multi- and inter-disciplinary potential, visual anthropology and sociology have not yet fully established themselves in Central Asian studies, even thirty years after the “visual turn”.¹⁰ Mention of the “iconic” or “pictorial turn”¹¹ hardly appears in Central Asian studies, although these approaches since the 1990s have allowed for the appearance of visual material in the humanities outside the disciplinary framework of art history. That events prior to the twentieth century are rarely researched by visual specialists compounds this. Moreover, all humanities-based research conducted on Central Asia that uses visual sources can be linked to visual studies. Thus, these “visual specialists” (who could be historians, anthropologists or art historians) as a rule conservatively interpret their tasks and the scope of the field. Multi- and inter-disciplinarity, though much desired, becomes almost unobtainable since the study of these multifaceted, complex visual data ultimately conforms to the researcher’s personal interests and disciplinary affiliation.

Difficulties in gaining access to source material is another problem. Photographs of Turkestan during this period are scattered across numerous museums, archives and library collections in Russia,¹² the Central Asian

10 On the relationship between visual anthropology and Russian imperial, Soviet and post-Soviet history, see “Forum ‘Vizual’naia antropologiia” 2007; Vishlenkova 2009; “Russian History after the ‘Visual Turn’” 2010; Renner 2014. For a rare attempt that uses the methods of visual anthropology in an analysis of urban, architectural, memorial and commemorative structures in urban settings in tsarist Turkestan, see Crews 2003; Vasil’ev/Liubichankovskii 2018. See also publications that have used the “visual turn” in other disciplinary fields, in particular literary studies (Elkins 2003; Hutchings 2004; Jay/Ramaswamy 2014; Reischl 2018) or to show “Russia’s ride to modernity” with the development of the railway (Schenk 2014, 2016).

11 Boehm 1994: 11–38, 325–343; Mitchell 1995.

12 The largest and most important collections of photographs of Turkestan are stored in St Petersburg, the former imperial capital, but are accessible to varying degrees, whether in person at a given institution or via online publications and digital archives. Work has been ongoing since 2015 to include all museum photographs in the updated state catalogue of the Museum Fund of the Russian Federation (<https://goskatalog.ru>). However, currently the catalogue covers just over 10–15 per cent of photographs stored in Russian museums; see Kizhner et al. 2018. The collections are stored, in particular, at the Institute of the History of Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Sciences and have been extensively discussed by Galina Dluzhnevskaja (2006, 2008). They are also available online at <http://www.archo.ru/struktura-1/nauchnyi-arhiv/fondy-fotootdela/fondy-fotoarhiva>, and at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts at the Russian Academy of Sciences (undisclosed and unpublished); the Russian National Library (partially published by Elena Barkhatova 2009); the Russian Ethnographic Museum (the Samuel Dudin collections are the most widely published); the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences (the *Kunstkamera*) (largely published in detail by Valeriia Prishchepova (2011a) and partially published in the online archive at <http://collection.kunstkamera.ru/>); the Russian state historical archive

republics,¹³ Europe¹⁴ and the United States.¹⁵ Moreover, private collections are virtually inaccessible to researchers.¹⁶ The breadth and quality of these collections is

(in person only); the St Petersburg branch of the archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences (in person only); the Russian Geographical Society (in person, except for a few published collections); the State Russian Museum and Exhibition Centre ROSPHOTO (Maksimova 2019); the Hermitage (in person only); and the Museum of the History of Religion (in person only). In Moscow there are important collections at the Russian State Library, the State Museum of Oriental Art, the Russian State Film and Photography Archive and the All-Russian Museum Association of Musical Culture (all available in person and partially documented in the state catalogue). In parallel, private initiatives are emerging to create large photobanks, such as “The History of Russia in Photographs” (<https://russiainphoto.ru/>), “Pastvu” (<https://pastvu.com/>), “Open Central Asian Photo Archives” (<https://ca-photoarchives.net/>) or the “Great Russian Album” (<http://www.rusalbom.ru/>).

13 In Central Asia, the most important collections are stored in Uzbekistan, mainly in Tashkent, formerly the capital of the Governorate-General of Russian Turkestan. Among the largest holders of collections are the National Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Tashkent), the Uzbek Ministry of Culture’s General Directorate for the Protection of Monuments (Tashkent), the Central State Archive of Audiovisual Documents of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Samarkand State United Historical–Cultural and Art Museum Reserve and the State Museum of the History and Culture of the Ferghana Region. Access to these collections is only possible in person. The state catalogue of the National Museum Fund of the Republic of Uzbekistan (<http://gосkatalog.uz/>) is currently in development; see Erofeeva 2020.

14 In Western Europe, photos of tsarist Turkestan are scattered, among others, across Paris, Reims, London, Rome, Bern, Berlin, Vienna, Helsinki and Warsaw. France’s largest collection is held in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF). See the repository of photographs representing the Russian Empire at the BNF (ca. 4000, the Société de Géographie and the Département des Estampes): Hours 1982. A small but significant part of this collection is available online at https://data.bnf.fr/fr/15342236/turkestan_russe__empire_de_russie__1867-1921_/ and https://data.bnf.fr/fr/15342241/turkestan_occidental/. The substantial archive of the Société de Géographie in Paris is currently being investigated; see <https://cartogallica.hypotheses.org/893> and <https://gallica.bnf.fr/html/und/images/photographies-de-la-societe-de-geographie?mode=desktop>. Photos by the photographer Paul Nadar are particularly well represented (<http://expositions.bnf.fr/les-nadar/>). Nadar’s collection is also available online at <https://mediatheque-patrimoine.culture.gouv.fr/collection/objet/paul-nadar-au-turkestan-1890>. The consolidating resource is the POP open heritage platform; see <https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr>. The new project Europeana (<https://www.europeana.eu/fr/>) presents photo archives from thirty-three European institutions.

15 Significant collections held at the Library of Congress include the *Turkestan Album* (<https://www.loc.gov/item/2006700061/>), Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii’s photographs (<https://www.loc.gov/collections/prokudin-gorskii/about-this-collection/>) and photographs by Charles-Eugène de Ujfalvy de Mezokövesd from his *Atlas anthropologique des peuples du Ferghana* (<https://www.loc.gov/item/41039631/>).

16 The largest collections of postcards to date are owned by Aleksei Arapov (Tashkent), Jean-Claude Beaujean (Paris/Tashkent), Nizami Ibrahimov (Moscow), Iulia Pelipai (Moscow), Sergei

beyond doubt, even if to date they remain unexplored. The very fact that these large collections are dispersed demonstrates that the photographic industry was as prosperous at the Turkestan periphery as it was at the Russian imperial centre, and furthermore that it was very successful in disseminating knowledge about the region to broad audiences.

Analysing these visual documents is undoubtedly a complex process. Perhaps this also explains why the number of historians who research the imperial photography of Central Asia is so small (no more than a dozen worldwide). These historians must reconstruct the complex relationship between sources, establish the most effective methodologies to investigate them, develop a language to describe the images and engage in wider theoretical debates about photography. They are thus engaged in active discussions that are marked both by a contradictory understanding of the region’s colonial past and by tensions arising from the postcolonial discourse on the region.

Nonetheless, being “on the margins of the marginal” is hardly exclusive to the photography of Russian Turkestan. Other fringes of the Russian Empire, such as the Caucasus¹⁷ or Siberia¹⁸ or remote regions such as Tatarstan,¹⁹ remain similarly under-researched, though there has been some interest in the so-called “regional photography” of the former countries of the Soviet Union since the 1990s. The few specialists on the history of photography of the Russian Empire have inevitably focused on St Petersburg and Moscow and the activities of major photographers who worked there.²⁰ The so-called “provincial histories” of photographs of the peripheries of the Russian Empire are, like the histories of the photography of Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, India and Africa in

Priakhin † (Kapchagai), and Bahodir Sidikov (Bern). Boris Golender’s collection, one of most famous of the Central Asian collections of photographs and postcards, has been partially published; see Golender 2002. Other important collections are Shakhnoza Karimbabaeva’s and Tursunali Kuziev’s collections of photographs (Tashkent). Another large private collection, belonging to Tair Tairov (Moscow), though partially exhibited (e.g. in August 2006 in the hall of the Central Post Office in Tashkent), is still awaiting publication. Oleg Karpov’s collection of photographs (in Tashkent) remains unavailable to the public (despite an attempt in 2019 supported by Gerda Henkel Stiftung to publish it as open access).

17 For an overview, see Boglachev 2013; Akoeff 2014; Solovyova/Kouteinikova 2016; Gutmeyr 2017, 2021.

18 See Saburova 2020.

19 See Idrisova 2013.

20 See Elliot 1992; Koloskova 2004; Barkhatova 2009; Gestwa/Kucher 2012; Reischl 2018. The same phenomenon, where the development of the centre of the empire is better studied than that of the peripheral areas, can be observed for the Ottoman and Iranian Qajar empires: Eldem 2018: 29.

particular,²¹ yet to take their proper place in the interconnected global history of photography.²²

Shifts in the scholarship on Turkestan's photography

While I adopt the notion of the “margins of the marginal” to describe the history of photography of Turkestan, I do not mean to describe it as a “blind spot” (*angle mort*), to borrow a term from the French geographer Alain Reynaud.²³ Despite the lack of analytical work on the region, the photography of Turkestan regularly appeared in publications from the second half of the nineteenth century – and not just in passing references. If we take a brief survey of this period (and exclude earlier critiques²⁴), we find that scholarship on photography of Turkestan involves several different stages and publication types.

Turkestan first appears in 1953, albeit very sporadically, in a historical account of Russian art photography from its inception in 1839 to 1917 by the Soviet historian Sergei Morozov. In his earlier book Morozov also tries to give an extensive account of the first Russian traveller-photographers.²⁵ This topic was rediscovered in the 1990s with the publication of various photographic archives

21 While an exhaustive review is impossible here, I suggest consulting the following studies for more detail. On Turkey: Çizgen 1987; Gavin/Tekin/Alpay Tekin 1988; Barkey 2008; Pinguet/Gigord 2011; Esra 2013; Özendeş 2013; Çelik/Eldem 2015; Roberts 2015; Hyde 2019. On Iran: Afshar 1983; Behdad 2001, 2013; Shaw 2003, 2009; Navab 2011; Pérez González 2012b; Sheikh/Pérez González 2013; Tahmasbpou 2013; Hanifi 2014; Hartmann 2019. On Afghanistan: Khalilullah/Dupree 1979; Hanifi 2014. On India: Gutman 1982; Falconer 1990, 2001, 2002; Pinney 1991, 1997, 2008; Ryan 1997; Dehejia 2000; Chaudhary 2012. On Africa: Landau/Kaspin 2002; Sohler 2012. See also transnational research on photographers who have worked on “Asia” in a colonial context: Perez 1988; Edwards 1992, 2001; Osborne 2000; Aubenas 2001; Beaulieu/Roberts 2002; Hight/Sampson 2002; Vogl 2003; Favrod 2006; Jacobson 2007; Morris 2009; Pérez González 2012a; Behdad/Gartlan 2013; Behdad 2016; Blanchard 2016; Ghesquière 2016; Sheehi 2016; Ritter/Scheiwiller 2018; and also the *Trans Asia Photography Review* (<https://asianphotos.hampshire.edu/about.html>), which aims to analyse historical and modern photographs of various regions of Asia.

22 Werner/Zimmermann 2004; Boucheron/Delalande 2013; Behdad 2017.

23 Reynaud 1981.

24 See Stasov 1885, for example, where the *Turkestan Album* and the *Types of Central Asia* album are referenced. See also a brief review of publications on the history of photography of the Russian Empire of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Idrisova 2013: 4–14.

25 Morozov 1953. See also Morozov 1952.

stored in academic institutions across Russia (in Western Europe a similar interest in rethinking archival photographic materials had been apparent since the 1970s). These publications depict pre-revolutionary Central Asia and its neighbouring regions in the form of a visual series grouped by geographical categories (e.g. Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva).²⁶ Usually conceived of as albums, they only provide a rather fragmentary reconstruction of the historical context (despite being written by leading historians of the time). These authors do not analyse many important themes such as the biographies of the photographers, the conditions in which they worked, their objectives, their relationship with the local people photographed or, on a more general level, the role of photography as a modern technology in the colonial context.

This study of individual collections continued in the 2000s.²⁷ Such works are often difficult to read but bear conscientious factual descriptions, and are frequently compiled as reference publications lacking any historical and political context. They nonetheless remain relevant in the absence of detailed catalogues of existing collections found beyond the walls of archival repositories. These works tend to take a linear-chronological approach in presenting the works of photographers and mapping the changes in legislation that impacted them (e.g. on copyright, periodicals, photographic societies, exhibition activities) and defined the framework for the development of photography in the Russian Empire. However, they rarely, if ever, engage in any analytical reflection.

However, some changes are occurring in this field of study. Numerous, largely analytical works devoted to Alexander Kuhn's (1840–1888) *Turkestan Album*²⁸ also follow this pattern of studying individual collections. At the same time, these studies are part of a more global trend of studies on self-representations that have often taken the form of *albumania*.²⁹ Kuhn's album is unique in scale, containing around 1,400 photos, maps and drawings, and, since being digitised and published on the Library of Congress website,³⁰ has become prominent among specialist publications and the main source of amateur collections and discussions about

26 Obolensky 1981; Naumkin 1992, 1993; Naumkin/Nadvetskiy/Arapov 1993; Mkrtychev 2007.

27 Miroliubova/Petrova 1991; Magidov 2005; Dluzhnevskaja 2006, 2007, 2008, 2011; Barkhatova 2009; Prishchepova 2007, 2011a; Popov 2010; Alyмова 2015.

28 For the most complete bibliography on the *Turkestan Album*, see Sonntag 2011: 192–193, n. 74.

29 Examples include Shaw 2009; Brumfield 2020.

30 See http://www.loc.gov/tr/print/coll/287_turkestan.html. The project was implemented with the participation of Heather S. Sonntag in 2005, the site becoming available for use in 2007. Also worthy of mention is the work of Tashkent publisher Media Land, for its scans of the *Turkestan Album* in 2000–2003, which, unlike V. I. Mezhov's *Turkestan Collection*, was not widely available.

early photography of Central Asia. The discovery of new material such as new photographs or postcards also occurs in more general publications that use photography to support narratives about historical events, biographical facts, ethnographic or sociological reconstructions of society or architectural and urban histories of Turkestan cities.³¹

Alongside this trend in studying collections, though it has unfolded rather sporadically since the 1970s, many works have focused on individual photographers who worked in Turkestan. In particular, these pay attention to major figures such as Samuel Dudin (1863–1929)³² and Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii (1863–1944),³³ whose large collections are stored in several state repositories in Russia and the United States. In tandem with this, Anton S. Murenko (1837–1875), an army lieutenant and author of a single album, *From Orenburg across Khiva to Bukhara: Photographic Drawings of Artillery Lieutenant Murenko*,³⁴ also became a key figure in the scholarship. Works on Russian photographers were soon complemented by analyses of the works of Western travel photographers,³⁵ including Paul Nadar (1856–1939),³⁶ Leon Barszczewski (1849–1910)³⁷ and Henri Moser (1844–1923).³⁸ A distinct group

31 Examples include Solov'eva 2002; Gorshenina 2004; Sahadeo 2007; Emel'ianenko 2012b, 2021a; Kaganovich 2016; Kotiukova 2016.

32 For a detailed bibliography, see Laura Elias's article in this volume. Also [Karskii et al.] 1930; Apukhtin 1974; Obiya 2005; Prishchepova 2011c; Emel'ianenko 2012a, 2012b, 2021b.

33 Prokudin-Gorskii's Wikipedia entry has been translated into forty-two languages, the most detailed of which is in Russian and contains an extensive bibliography: https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Прокудин-Горский,_Сергей_Михайлович. See also the open research project dedicated to him that best represents his legacy (<http://prokudin-gorskiy.ru/>), as well as a fully digitised collection held at the Library of Congress (<https://www.loc.gov/collections/prokudin-gorskii/about-this-collection/>). Particularly noteworthy publications include Garanina 2006, Koehler 2013 and Brumfield 2020. The most recent publication about the Turkestan period of Prokudin-Gorskii's work, containing new biographical data, is Mozokhina 2021. There is currently a major research project ongoing at the University of Basel entitled "Imperium der Bilder – Die Farbphotografien Sergej Prokudin-Gorskijs vom späten Zarenreich bis zur Emigration (ca. 1900–1948)"; see <https://dg.philhist.unibas.ch/de/personen/henning-lautenschlaeger/dissertationsprojekt/>.

34 Morozov 1953: 14; Devel' 1994; Dluzhnevskaja 2006: 282–291, 2011: 32–34.

35 Danev 1980; Janata 1984; Maillart/Bouvier 1991; White 1993; Akas 1995; Gorshenina 2000; Koechlin 2002.

36 Dopffer 1994; Çagatay 1996; Malécot/Bernard 2007. See also the latest exhibition at the BNF, *The Nadars: A Photographic Legend*, 16 October 2018 to 3 February 2019 (<https://www.bnf.fr/fr/agenda/les-nadar>), and a list of available documents related to Nadar (https://data.bnf.fr/fr/12339149/paul_nadar/).

37 Strojceki 2010, 2017.

38 Balsiger/Kläy 1992; Giese/Volait/Varela Braga 2020.

is made up of several publications on military photographers, in particular Karl Gustave Emil Mannerheim (1867–1951),³⁹ Alexander Iias (1869–1914),⁴⁰ Alexander Bobrinskii (1823–1861),⁴¹ Bronislaw Grombchevskii (Bronisław Grąbczewski, 1855–1926),⁴² Pavel Rodstvennyi (1870–after 1921),⁴³ Nikolai Petrovskii (1837–1908) and Iakov Lutsch (1854–after 1924).⁴⁴ Short essays about the early local photographer Khudaibergen Divonov (1879–1940) also appeared.⁴⁵

The majority of these biographical studies adhere to the nationalised histories of photography: they do not analyse the multifaceted interactions and influences of Russian, European and Turkestan photographers, and do not show the transimperial entanglements of photographic practices. Nor do they analyse the role of the local population – either as an object or as a carrier of visual practices – in developing the photographic image of Turkestan. It might be that their authors did not wish to acknowledge the colonial aspect of the history of photography in Turkestan, or that they sought to maintain the illusion that Russia was not intrinsically colonial in character. However, their works made it possible to transfer ideas about photography to the level of microhistory and, thanks to their efforts, individual photographers began – mainly from the 2000s onwards – to be viewed as part of the amorphous mass of “photographers of Turkestan”. But these efforts have not produced broader interpretive perspectives.

Both these trends in the scholarship – studies of collections and biographies of individual photographers – are limited in specific ways. Many scholars still appeal to the postulate, formulated in Soviet times, that their work constitutes scientific research free from bias. Yet thousands of photographs by little-known or obscure authors⁴⁶ remain unexplored, which distorts any sense of historical perspective. Even Anatolii Popov’s⁴⁷ detailed dictionary, published in 2013,

39 Mannerheimin 1990; Alyмова 2015.

40 Tchalenko 2006.

41 Khudonazarov 2013.

42 Baskhanov/Kolesnikov/Matveeva 2017.

43 Baskhanov/Shevel’chinskaia 2019.

44 Baskhanov/Rezvan 2021.

45 *Fotovystavka Divanova* 2009; Golender 2009; Karimov 2019. See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAb5JfW9Q4>.

46 There are a few exceptions, such as the description of the collections in the Military Medical Museum in St Petersburg of engineer Nikolai Petrovskii’s (1851–?) photographs from 1900 to 1965, Lieutenant Colonel Iulian Brzezickii (1869–?), and those of the zoologist and specialist in parasitology Evgenii Pavlovskii (1884–1965); see Kozyrin/Nazartsev 2014. Other examples include the collections of Eduard Zimmermann (1822–?) (photos from 1887) and the geographer S. G. Grigor’ev (1874–?) (photos from 1894 to 1895); see Leibov 2020.

47 Popov 2013.

which is more broadly focused on the general ensemble of Russian and Soviet photographers, does not remedy this, since it has been cited by historians of photography of Central Asia only very rarely.⁴⁸ At a general level, no debate on theoretical and methodological specifics mentions Central Asian documentation.

In the first decades of the twenty-first century, various collectors and researchers have touched upon the topic of postcards (and also the postal service),⁴⁹ investigated imperial exoticism in the photography of Turkestan,⁵⁰ identified the connection between painting and photography⁵¹ and tried to build a chronology of photography in Turkestan.⁵² Photography continues to be analysed as a source in ethnography,⁵³ archaeology⁵⁴ and architecture,⁵⁵ but without acknowledgement of its role in global networks of production and legitimisation of knowledge and its circulation. Some authors instrumentalise the history of photography in their revised histories of the newly independent Central Asian countries.⁵⁶

48 The same can be said of the generalist work of Vladimir Nikitin (Nikitin 2006).

49 Golender 2002; Rowley 2013; Sidikov 2017, 2019, 2020. About the postal service: *Pochta Uzbekistana* 2014; Mramornov/Tiukov 2018.

50 Gorshenina 2012b.

51 Vasilii Vereshchagin's work is one of the most interesting examples of the interaction between photography and painting, both in his use of photographic images to create realistic paintings and in the subsequent wide-reaching dissemination of the artist's works. See Sonntag 2003; Chernysheva 2015.

52 Prishchepova 2011b; Golender 2015.

53 Rzehak/Pristschepova 1994; Solovyova 2011a, 2011b; Tolmachëva 2011; Emel'ianenko 2012a, 2012b, 2021b; Dzhanizade 2013. The same principle – photography as an illustrative basis for ethnographic reconstructions – was used in the preparation of the photography exhibition *Travel in Time and Space: Images of the Russian Empire, 1890–1910s*, held at the Ethnographic Museum in Moscow and based on the collections of the Russian Ethnographic Museum in St Petersburg (<http://www.museum.ru/N26072>). See also Bakhodir Sidikov (2017, 2019, 2020), who, based on an analysis of postcards, investigates social practices in a traditional Central Asian society.

54 Dluzhnevskaja 2008; Baitanaev/Yolgin/Panteleeva 2017.

55 Paskaleva/Berg 2019.

56 In many works published in the Central Asian republics since independence in 1991, the history of the photography of Turkestan was re-nationalised: it is presented as part of the development of an exclusively national photography within an ethnic-national framework, neglecting exchange mechanisms across imperial borders and different cultures. For Kazakhstan, for example, see Tauyekel 2005; Baizhanova 2013. See also the “Kyrgyz archive” website at http://www.foto.kg/about_us.html. The same approach can also be observed in Uzbekistan, where Khudaibergan Devanov is described in a number of publications as the “founding father” of Uzbek photography; see Qo'ziev 2005; Karimov 2019.

Moreover, new theoretical developments began to emerge in the 1990s that prompted a rethinking of the history of the Russian Empire, beginning with the “archival turn”, followed by the “visual turn” and, broader in scope, the “cultural turn”.⁵⁷ These ideas led to a revision of the visual legacy of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in particular the place and role of photography of Russian Turkestan in the history of the Russian Empire. New approaches suggested a different attitude towards the photograph: it began to acquire the value of an independent primary source,⁵⁸ having previously been used for illustrative purposes or as an “ethnographic document” loosely related to a sociopolitical or historical context. It was now being recognised as a specific object of inquiry, on an equal footing with practices and discourses, to be studied according to its own rules and on account of the contexts of its conception, implementation, distribution, replication, consumption and preservation.⁵⁹ Photography as an object with its own history began to be treated as a specific medium, on the one hand imperial, and on the other modern. In the latter context, scholars started to theorise about issues of evidence and objectivity, agency (both human and non-human), representation and materiality.⁶⁰ Based partly on the ideas of Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes and Pierre Bourdieu,⁶¹ this approach also involves reading the subject of photography through a philosophical and sociological analysis of the image’s structure, its semantic and semiotic content and the mechanism of its function.

Attempts to relate the history of photography to postcolonial criticism also opened up new interpretive arenas, helping to decentralise the analysis of the history of photography⁶² and alter thinking about empire’s visual history.⁶³ Scholars such as Margaret Dikovitskaya, Svetlana Gorshenina, Kate Fitz Gibbon and Inessa Kouteinikova have analysed the history of photography in Turkestan within the framework of Russian colonial history and illustrated how it was used by the imperial government as an instrument of colonial subordination.⁶⁴ Heather S. Sonntag has reframed photography as a tool of modernisation

57 Dikovitskaya 2005; Narskii 2008; Emeliantseva 2009: 166–167; Sunderland 2011.

58 Narskii 2008; Kivelson/Neuberger 2008; Jäger 2009; Edwards 2012.

59 Schwartz/Ryan 2003: 7; Edwards/Hart 2004.

60 McQuire 1998; Osborne 2000; Daston/Galison 2007.

61 Sontag 1977; Barthes 1980; Bourdieu 1990.

62 Christopher Pinney (in Pinney/Peterson 2003) states that in research on the history of photography “non-Western material” is almost always adapted to “Western” theories, thereby affirming a Eurocentric approach. From his point of view, this means of analysis is a dead end since photography as a technology is a subject of cultural appropriation and can be aligned to other framings of non-European histories.

63 Emeliantseva 2009; Gestwa/Kucher 2012; de Keghel/Renner 2015.

64 Dikovitskaya 2007; Gorshenina 2007, 2009b, 2021b; Fitz Gibbon 2009; Kouteinikova 2015.

on the periphery of the Russian Empire. Comparing the situation in the Caucasus and Turkestan, she analyses in detail the largest photo albums created within the framework of state programmes, and links them to the development of statistics, new technologies, military reforms and colonial governance.⁶⁵ Gorshenina and Sonntag have reviewed the history of photography in the Caucasus and Turkestan through the theoretical prism of cultural transfer and the circulation of knowledge, technological innovations and people, bringing to the fore new transnational and translocal perspectives.⁶⁶ In her doctoral thesis, Jennifer Keating presents the history of photography of Turkestan in terms of its importance to the organisation of space and in constructing an image (particularly through various exhibitions) of Russian Central Asia on the national and international stages.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, Laura Elias connects the history of photography with the history of racial, anthropological and ethnographic theories, and analyses the photographic practices within nineteenth-century academia.⁶⁸

These scholars abandoned the Soviet tradition of perceiving photography as an “objective reflection of reality” or the photographer’s work as a source for “service research”. Without shying away from engaging in direct critique,⁶⁹ they asked questions about the political bias of photography that was used as a tool of colonial enterprise, and its role in spreading hybrid modernity, establishing relations of colonial dependence and subordination, and in the Europeanisation, or Russification, of Turkestani society. Choosing a global perspective, these authors compared the dynamics of Turkestan with other colonial dynamics that receive much greater scholarly attention today – an endeavour that rarely occurs in Central Asian studies.⁷⁰ Their work also complemented equally rare studies that reconstruct links between imperial and Soviet photography, which was instrumentalised in a different direction and subjected to a different kind of self-orientalisation.⁷¹

65 Sonntag 2007, 2011, 2014.

66 Gorshenina/Sonntag 2018.

67 Keating 2016. See also: Kouteinikova 2019.

68 Elias 2019. See also: Edwards 2007; Pinney 2011.

69 See, in particular, Dikovitskaya 2007; Kouteinikova 2015.

70 For further discussion of the relationship between photography, orientalism, colonialism and imperialism, see, in particular, the bibliographic analysis of Hight/Sampson 2002: 1–19. See also footnote 21.

71 Central Asia is very occasionally discussed in broader publications on Soviet photography, e.g. Tupitsyn 1996; Wolf 1999; Stigneevev 2005. Max Penson remains the most famous of the Soviet photographers of Central Asia: see, in particular, Khodjaeva 2005; Khodjaev/Galeyev/Borovsky 2006; Galeyev 2006; Galeyev/Penson 2011; <http://www.maxpenson.com/>. For more information on self-orientalisation, see Abashin 2012. See also Helena Holzberger’s doctoral thesis (2020) on the difficult period of transition from imperial to Soviet photography. See also

The manifold methodologies and perspectives employed in the works reviewed in this survey of the field demonstrate the relative newness of the issues that the photography of Central Asia raises. But it can also be regarded as a feature of the first stages of problematising the history of photography in the tsarist and early Soviet periods, as well as a necessary step in laying a theoretical foundation for subsequent analytical research.

Another result of the efforts of several generations of researchers is the formation of a documentary basis for the history of photography in Russian Turkestan. In parallel with the aforementioned published works, a solid and widely accessible iconographic database has been created online, representing the collections of museums, libraries and research institutes in many countries around the world (see footnotes 12–16). Thanks to several programmes funded by governments and private individuals, these collections are rich in factual material. Yet, despite the breadth of initiatives digitising works of art, many large photographic collections, even scanned ones, remain in archival repositories with limited or no access.⁷² Meanwhile, some private collections have been made visible via Facebook or LiveJournal,⁷³ albeit on a much smaller scale.

These developments reflect the “postcolonial collecting” and “photographic boom” that have swept across the globe, in former colonies and metropolises alike. In the context of the present volume, the most important development is that photography of Central Asia in the context of imperial history has finally been recognised by the scholarly community as a subject worthy of attention, one that constitutes a fruitful object of doctoral research⁷⁴ or an important subject for international academic conferences.

some other studies in which imperial and Soviet photographs were placed in parallel: Northrop 2008; Emeliantseva 2009; de Keghel/Renner 2015.

72 For example, consider the work undertaken in 2008 by Tashkent publisher Media Land in the State Museum of Culture History in Samarkand. Of the 20,000 available photos, 600 were digitised as part of a UNESCO project but are still not available in full via open access, this despite the fact that the national catalogue of the Republic of Uzbekistan has been published online (<http://goscatalog.uz>), containing a significant number of photos. Another example is the digitised photographic collection of the Russian Ethnographic Museum, which can only be viewed at the museum in St Petersburg.

73 The largest private collections are <https://humus.livejournal.com/>, <https://rus-turk.livejournal.com/> and <https://www.facebook.com/tashkentretrospective>. For more detailed information about available digital non-governmental resources, see the article by Svetlana Gorsheina in this volume.

74 Doctoral theses on the photography of Turkestan that have recently been defended include Dluzhnevskaja 2008; Sonntag 2011; Tolmacheva 2011; Alymova 2015; Keating 2016; Elias 2019; Holzberger 2020; Sidikov 2020.

Placing Turkestan within the Global History of Photography

There still needs to be a detailed, analytical and problematised account written of the history of photography of Russian Turkestan combining the micro and macro levels of the production and function of photography as a specific medium. A broad synthesis of the photography of Turkestan should be written, despite the claims of some specialists working with more well-known “Western” materials (especially twentieth century photography) that the time for such investigations has already passed. In my view, such a study should focus primarily on introducing the numerous and virtually unknown state museum, library, archival and private collections – despite the work already done in this area. Concerted efforts should be made to create open virtual archives of Central Asian photographs and postcards.⁷⁵ Another important task is to collate the biographies of the photographers of Turkestan.

Even a perfunctory look at the material leaves the viewer with freedom to choose which approach they will then take to studying the photography of Turkestan from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Such eclecticism in approaches is understandable when one considers the sheer diversity of photographic sources, which are very often difficult to place under a single criterion for selection. Indeed, its analysis can be approached from different points of view, especially given the nature and untapped potential of photography as a medium. On one level, photography, which reflects the cultural knowledge of the era of its creation, has the ability to direct the viewer’s gaze in accordance with its intended message – whether ideological, political or artistic. On another level, the photograph may contradict the photographer and reveal something they did not intend to advertise: it provides a certain freedom to the viewer, who can interpret it in a manner that differs from the photographer’s intention. At the same time, it is also able to question the viewer’s habitual ways of interpreting reality, reveal a past distinct from long-established versions of history and thus destroy the “smoothness” of a linear historical narrative from within.⁷⁶ In any case, the interpretation of a photograph is dependent

⁷⁵ Since 2019 the *Alerte Héritage* international observatory (<https://www.alerteheritage.org/>) has been in the process of creating an Open Archive of Photography of Central Asia with the support of Gerda Henkel Stiftung. Work on the resource continues with the support of the University of Geneva, Ghent University, CNRS and Sorbonne University, and should draw together a number of private collections. The resource was launched in March 2021 (<https://ca-photoarchives.net/>).

⁷⁶ See Campbell 2014 as an example of an analysis of the Soviet photography of Siberia.

on the cultural perspective of its audience, and its interpretation is often related to a general, mainstream view of history in a given society or institutional setting. This is particularly the case in the theoretical debates about globalised microhistories⁷⁷ that continue in numerous research centres around the world, and that so far only tangentially engage with research on the history of photography.

Accordingly, when working with the photography of Turkestan today, it is difficult to avoid analysing it as a symbol of the contradictory hybrid modernity and the so-called "progress" that the Russian Empire "bestowed" upon Central Asia after its conquest. The decision to conduct analysis through the framework of "modernity", despite the ambiguity of this term,⁷⁸ seems more than justified given the fact that photography as a medium originated as a product of Western modernity and almost instantly achieved global prominence. At the same time, photography acts as an agent of modernity. By participating in the creation of a multiplicity of "intertwined modernities", photography contributes to their dissemination through the circulation of knowledge, technical innovations, representations, ideas and people. Photography has also actively participated in structuring knowledge in and on the region through the academic use of the camera, and in the formation of new attitudes to society and social relations, occupying one of the key places in the process of the rational reshaping of culture (e.g. during the construction of visual classifications of "ethnic groups", the elaboration of official portrait schemes of elites, the promotion of the "Europeanness" of cities and the exoticisation of so-called "indigenous" populations).

It is also difficult to discount the existence of a colonial dynamic in this peripheral region, despite all the specificities of this dynamic, particularly at the time of the transition from a tsarist to a Soviet regime.⁷⁹ Therefore, any analytical investigations should ideally use a variety of postcolonial theories that analyse the orientalisation of the photographed subjects. This would elucidate questions about the dependence of photography on imperialist or communist projects where photography is used as a tool to "subordinate" "others" (i.e. colonised subjects), its interweaving within capitalism or the Soviet system, and the often violent appropriation of the image of the "other" for the purpose of scholarly, economic, ideological or social control. In this context, theoretical considerations about the possibility of comparing photos from the postcolonial perspectives of the tsarist and Soviet periods is unavoidable. At the same time, when raising such theoretical questions, future historians of photography of

⁷⁷ Bertrand/Calafat 2018.

⁷⁸ Extensive discussions on this topic include *The American Historical Review* roundtable 2011, and "Sporia o modernosti" 2016. See also: McQuire 1998; Schenk 2016.

⁷⁹ Gorshenina 2021a: 190–192, 210–220.

Central Asia will inevitably face the problem of the colonial and/or ideological exploitation of visual representations, and, accordingly, the problem of restitution.

These future histories of the photography of Turkestan will need to be placed in the broader context of comparative studies that analyse the interdependence of photography and colonial dynamics as well as the connecting photographic practices across the empires. At the same time, the photograph should not be reduced to the role of an exotic illustration of “general history”. Special attention should be paid to the study of the conditions in which photographs are created, of where public and private initiatives intertwine and ensure the circulation of knowledge and technology. In particular, it will be important to focus on the individual trajectories of their authors who were very often rooted across imperial boundaries: professional and amateur photographers, publishers and distributors of photos, sellers of postcards. It will also be necessary to rekindle relations between representatives of these various categories and local populations, more specifically the influence of religious traditions on the development of photographic practices in the region. It will also be interesting to see the mechanism of the professionalisation of photographic practices, including the development of amateur photography, vernacular photographic traditions, the establishment of professional networks of photographers and the creation of photographic unions. Future researchers should take into account how photos functioned as material objects, whether their circulation was significant or negligible, whether any alterations were made (e.g. certain groups or individuals are cut or blurred out), what mechanisms were used to create photographic archives as “a form of collective colonial memory”⁸⁰ and how these materials are used and reused in different contexts (exhibitions, postcards, book products, social networks, etc.). An effective language for working with specific photo archives must be developed, taking into account the diverse contexts in which they are included and indeed excluded or missing.

These new approaches to the study of imperial visual documentation, which shift the emphasis between the centre and the periphery, global and regional history, micro and macro, may draw the photography of Turkestan out of its marginal position and recentre it within global histories. These “refocusings” are only possible if we abolish the centre/periphery framework in favour of a network of crossed, interconnected and transnational histories. They may clarify the chronology of the appearance of this medium at a certain moment and in a certain form (expeditions, exhibitions, studios, commercial sales), as well as the features of its (re)use in a specific situation. At the same time, photography – a subjective transfer from reality to a visual material object – should

⁸⁰ Ryan 1997: 12.

be considered as both a system and a system-forming element, as an *aide-mémoire* that helps us (albeit selectively) to “remember” and to “forget”.

Other Turkestans

Naturally, undertaking these tasks requires a different format. We were not able to include articles from every specialist on photography of Central Asia in this volume, but we have nonetheless tried to address existing gaps in the scholarship. For this purpose, we have brought together historians, art historians, anthropologists and curators from France, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Hungary, Russia and the United States who have long been researching visual culture. Together, we have attempted to change perspectives on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photography of Turkestan and show *Other Turkestans*. We deliberately shifted our focus from cases like Alexander Kuhn’s *Turkestan Album* or Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii’s collection, both of which have received considerable scholarly attention. However, we did include Samuel Dudin because he created a detailed ethnographic exploration of the peoples of Central Asia. Dudin was the exception, however: our general aim was to focus on cases that have been forgotten or have never previously been analysed.

In our research for *Other Turkestans*, we turned to little-known photographers who worked in different periods. This chronological structure allows us to (re)imagine the distinct realities of numerous *Other Turkestans* that dictated these photographers’ forms and themes. We begin the volume in the early years of the Turkestan governor-generalship (1876–1878) with the photography of the French anthropologist Charles-Eugène de Ujfalvy (1842–1904), which constitutes an example of “race science” (or “scientific raciology”) also marked by the exoticisation of photographed subjects at the time of colonial conquest. We then explore the early twentieth century – the most productive period in terms of photography in a by now preindustrialised Turkestan⁸¹ (Konstantin von der Pahlen, Nikolai Shchapov). At the time, Turkestan had a largely stable administrative structure that was inscribed in the general economic and political context of the Russian Empire with the governance processes typical of other colonised territories around the world. Since there was later an unstable transition from the tsarist to the Soviet regime, we reflect on the need to revise the

⁸¹ Turkestan certainly had some minor industrial enterprises (mainly cotton-cleaning factories, oil-crushing mills and some hydroelectric plants), and these were no doubt over-represented in photographs – but it remained an overwhelmingly agrarian economy.

established phases that emphasise the significance of the October Revolution of 1917 (Alexander Samoilovich, Boris Kapustianskii, Georgii Zel'ma, Max Penson). Finally, the first two decades of Soviet power were marked not only by a change in the photographic canon associated with avant-garde theories and movements but also by the much broader use of photography to study the history of the region that was intended for the creation of “national histories” (Alexander Iakubovskii, Alexander Bernshtam, Alkei Margulan, Nikolai Bachinskii).

We wanted to analyse unexamined episodes in the history of photography in Turkestan, particularly in relation to ethnographic, architectural and archaeological studies. This scholarly vision of Turkestan captured through the camera lens was supplemented by other approaches to Russian Central Asia developed among military, colonial administrators, the technical intelligentsia, representatives of commercial agencies that published postcards, and tourist guides. The desire to show “another Turkestan” also led us to focus our attention not on professional photographers (with exceptions such as Samuel Dudin, Georgii Zel'ma and Max Penson) but on anthropologists, ethnographers, military and political figures, engineers, merchants, archaeologists and architects. Accordingly, it was important for us to contextualise the photographs themselves. We were interested in how government programmes (visualisations of the empire's achievements), private initiatives (family chronicles) and the search for evidence to support academic theories interacted in this process. We also wanted to understand what kind of consumer – internal or external (in the metropolis, on the Asian periphery or in the ‘Occident’), contemporary or with an eye to future generations – these visual and intellectual structures were designed to appeal to, what image of Turkestan they intended to form and how that image formation continues to the present day. It was also important for us to understand how and with what aim these visual series were sorted into different collections to determine how large their gaps are and what their reception was at the time of their creation in comparison to today. This last aspect – the integration of photography into the formation of a historical collective Postmemory in the present, where the cultures of showing and of looking at photography are intertwined – proved to be particularly important.

The essays in this volume

The main objective of this volume is to interpret photography as a specific tool that reifies reality, subjectively frames it and fits it into various political, ideological, commercial, scientific and artistic contexts. Without reducing the entire argument to the binary of “photography and power”, the authors reveal the

different modes of seeing that involve distinct cultural norms, social practices, power relations, levels of technology and networks for circulating photography, and that determined the manner of its (re)use in constructing various images of Turkestan.

In the first part of our book, titled “Photography and Orientalisms”, we bring together a number of studies that highlight the subjectivity of the authors of the photographs, whose views were shaped by political situations as well as by their own scientific, artistic or engineering objectives.

In the first two essays, Felix de Montety and Laura Elias examine the mechanisms of visualising ethnographic (racial) concepts. They reject the notion that photography is objective and instead unmask the constructed nature of the visual series. Ujfalvy’s photographs became the first and perhaps sole example of a strict anthropological fixation with the “Turkestani types” that were classified according to the spirit of the scholarly culture of the Enlightenment,⁸² in which models were naked and depicted in headshots and profile shots. Along with photographs in Kuhn’s *Turkestan Album* of the “ethnographic types”, Ujfalvy’s images ultimately consolidated at the visual level the existing racial classifications proposed by Western European anthropologists.

Without abandoning the racialising principles of photography, but changing the structure and dynamics of the framing, Samuel Dudin created his “ethnographic atlas” of the peoples of Turkestan gradually, along the same line. These photographs, made in more or less exact accordance with the results of the population census of 1897, were mostly systematised, annotated and grouped into “national” collections (in accordance with the results of the national delimitations of 1924–1936, which created the Soviet republics of Central Asia) by employees of the Russian Ethnographic Museum and the *Kunstkamera*, the largest holders of Dudin’s works. At the same time, hundreds of his photographs were grouped in museum catalogues in a different order than Dudin intended but in accordance with the much less detailed Soviet nomenclature of “nations” and “nationalities”, reflecting the state of Central Asia after the national-territorial division of 1924–1936.

That the transition from one system of classification of “ethnographic types” to another demonstrates the plasticity of the “objectiveness” of photographs is also observed in Anton Ikhsanov’s essay. Ikhsanov analyses the photographic legacy of the linguist Alexander Samoilovich (1880–1938), taking into account the latter’s “subjectivity” in his approach to photography. The socio-historical context of Samoilovich’s life is also relevant here: he lived through

82 Edwards 1992.

the late tsarist and early Soviet periods and experienced their contradictory ideological attitudes.

The desire to classify the diversity of Central Asian populations and integrate it into a rigid rational frame is also in line with another idea that prevailed among the educated European public in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The search for the “homeland” of this or that people occupied an important place in the racialised world view of this time. As István Sántha and László Lajtai show through the example of the aristocrat György Almásy’s travels, the ideas of Turanism determined the specific attitude of Hungarian elites vis-à-vis Central Asia. The mechanism of searching for the “roots” of the Hungarian people correlated both with their own nationalist ideas and with the Russian colonial presence in the region, which had a major impact on the formation of the Hungarian orientalist narrative. At the same time, the focus of this paper is not on historical analysis but on anthropological discourse, in order to understand the trajectories of photographs and reflections on “ethnographic types” in a contemporary context.

However, the photography of “ethnographic types” was not the sole preoccupation in the photography of Turkestan. Giving preference to the so-called *vidy* (landscape photographs) and focusing more on the sociopolitical practices of photography, Tatiana Saburova gives a broad overview of the activity of the engineer Vasili V. Sapozhnikov (1864–1924), highlighting the importance and role of the camera as a tool for visualisation and, accordingly, for the appropriation and development of the conquered territories, which was strategically important to the Russian Empire. She examines the development and construction of the Russian colonial space through photographers’ visual codes and references, as well as topographers’ cartographic systems and literary interpretations of tourist guides.

Thinking along similar lines, Tatiana Kotiukova compares two disparate visual series that allow us to reassemble the stereoscopic image of the “other Turkestan”. Contrasting the *Turkestan Album* and Prokudin-Gorskii’s photographs, which were intended for public display, she analyses the photographs of the senator Konstantin von der Pahlen (1861–1923), taken during his inspection of Turkestan in which he prepared the Commission of Inspection’s reports and an irrigation plan for the Uch-Kurgan valley. Describing them as “state-sponsored visualisations”, Kotiukova emphasises that these photos, which were probably the result of collective efforts (von Palen often received photographs with his subordinates’ reports), served as documentary evidence. They were intended primarily to show the success of the modernisation programme that the Russian Empire had brought to Turkestan, and the problems of “developing” the colony. Kotiukova contrasts this official visual series with the photographs of engineer Nikolai Shchapov (1881–1960), which he made exclusively for personal use.

Analysing the contexts, stories, comments, photographs, their consumers and the subsequent fate of these collections, Kotiukova attempts to ascertain the socio-professional status of the photographers. She examines how the desire to achieve certain aims with the photograph (to emphasise a new industrial and political modernity, or document the rapidly disappearing traditional Turkestani way of life) would determine which objects were photographed, alter their depiction and orient the gaze of a contemporary viewer in various directions.

In the second part of this volume, "Using and Reusing Photographs", we attempt to understand the mechanism of the use and reuse of photography in different historical contexts. In doing so, we have tried to address not only the (possible) political engagement of photography, but also its plasticity, which allows its content to be read in different ways, and its latent potential to govern the perception of the spectator.

Also examining the role of photography as a tool for the appropriation of the Central Asian khanates by the Russian Empire, Natalia Mozokhina and Bruno De Cordier both focus on analysing the commercial use of photographs. Looking at the history of postcards, they highlight the most popular images that were designed to capture the state-sponsored vision of the new Turkestan governor-generalship and the success of the Russian colonial policy in bringing "progress" and "modernity" to the region. The Russian colonial project easily slotted into the European photographic field and numerous series of postcards showed the commercial value of depicting the "Russian East".

In contrast to these pan-European mechanisms for visualising progress in the colonial context, Helena Holzberger discusses the Soviet use of an altogether different medium – the media press of the 1920s and 1930s. Her analysis focuses not only on the discourse of modernisation but also on the rhetoric of anti-colonial liberation, which required reforming traditional colonial themes. As the goals of the propaganda machine changed, so did the stylistics of the language of photography: against the background of the formation of the avant-garde canon, a new type of "Eastern" photography was created where the revolutionary pathos of social liberation from feudalism, clericalism, colonialism and imperialism nevertheless did not negate the exoticisation of Central Asian people and life.

A different interpretation of the use of photography is given by Natalia Lazarevskaia and Maria Medvedeva. Presenting the current status of photographic collections in the field of Central Asian archaeology, they provide the necessary detailed descriptions of material that has largely been ignored, enriching the history of photography of Central Asia with a new visual range and new names (e.g. Alexander Iakubovskii, Alexander Bernshtam, Alkei Margulan and Nikolai Bachinskii). At the same time, they show how the societal context of photographs taken

during archaeological expeditions has changed, and the various ways in which the collections of photographs collected by archaeologists have been classified.

The last part of our volume is devoted to an analysis of the reception and discussions of photographs of the Turkestan governor-generalship within the framework of social media platforms, which have become the arena of endless virtual “memory wars”, especially in relation to so-called “ethnographic types”. When analysing the mechanisms of interpreting the photography of Turkestan on Facebook pages, the internal conflict between various classification systems of “ethnographic types” becomes abundantly clear. As Svetlana Gorshenina demonstrates, the basis of these online disputes about old images (themselves an indicator of contemporary attitudes to the past) derives from the following discrepancies: (1) the pre-revolutionary system of describing “races”, when basic documentation was created; (2) the Soviet nomenclature of “peoples and nationalities”, which formed stable criteria for categorisation; and (3) the post-Soviet understanding of “nations” that is marked by postcolonial nationalism. Focusing on how the visual memory of the history of Turkestan is constructed in some Facebook groups, Gorshenina shows how photography that is more than a century old is discussed by different social subgroups and accordingly fits into contemporary discourse and is instrumentalised by various political movements and groups.

The book ends with a brief conclusion by the co-editors, who summarise the chapters and share the feelings and ideas that emerged during the three years of work on the book.

Transcending borders and avoiding memory wars

In summarising the ideas presented in this volume, it is no exaggeration to state that photography was the cornerstone of imperial media governance and discourse construction in colonial Turkestan during the tsarist and early Soviet periods. Our volume also demonstrates that photography of Turkestan from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century has been at the forefront of both collective and individual “memory wars” or “memories” (including Postmemories). The various cases here illustrate the complex mechanisms by which images of Turkestan were created, remembered or forgotten from the nineteenth up until the twenty-first century. From this point of view, online platforms, which have become a kind of “platform for memory”, are extremely important and constitute spaces where the reinterpretation of this area of photography has suddenly become very widespread.

The National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) in France has a very evocative motto: *Transcend the boundaries of knowledge*. In this volume, we seek to *transgress* the boundaries *between* different approaches to describing and analysing photographs, *between* specialists from different countries and *between* researchers and curators. We hope that our reflections will help attract more interest in the photography of Turkestan. By decolonising and decentring knowledge, we aim to resist the temptation to divert the analysis of old photographs to the realm of “memory wars”. And by including lost or forgotten visual materials, we hope to contribute to a new understanding of photography in world history and ultimately contribute to changing the very principle of writing the history of this medium, which remains focused on the Anglophone world.⁸³

Abbreviations

MAE RAN Musei antropologii i ètnografii Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk (Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences)

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Part I: Photography and orientalism

Felix de Montety

2 Picturing the Other, mapping the Self: Charles-Eugène de Ujfalvy’s anthropological and ethnographic photography in Russian Turkestan (1876–1881)

Abstract: The French-Hungarian researcher Charles-Eugène de Ujfalvy (1842–1904) visited Russian Turkestan in the late 1870s and early 1880s, and subsequently published anthropological, ethnographic, geographical and archaeological observations about the lands and the people he had encountered in Central Asia, as well as fascinating ethnographic and anthropological photographs. This article is based on French archival documents from the Archives Nationales and the Société de Géographie and shows how the heritage of image-based approaches once put forward to serve imperial exploration can be used to simultaneously enrich our understanding of late nineteenth-century research practices in Central Asia as well as to highlight some of the processes at work in the production of identities in Europe and the Russian Empire.

Keywords: Ujfalvy, anthropology, ethnography, photography, Turkestan

Introduction

“Dreams are not unalterable photographs: they fade in the sun and eventually disappear”, wrote the French novelist Jules Verne (1828–1905) in *Claudius Bombarnac*, published in 1892.¹ The lesser-known “railway novel” from which this excerpt is taken tells the story of a journey from Paris to Beijing, and more specifically of its portion through Russian Turkestan. The main character, a young

¹ Verne 1892: 199. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

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French journalist craving adventure and mystery, first travels by train from the Caspian Sea to Samarkand. Many travelogues about Central Asia had just been published as books or in popular magazines such as *Le Tour du Monde*, or in journals such as the *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie*. The novel's take on this well-travelled route was therefore decidedly Vernian in its imaginative development: Claudius Bombarnac's journey continued eastward from Tashkent to Kashgar, on tracks that did not exist at the time and still do not. While a keen geography and exploration enthusiast himself, Jules Verne never visited Central Asia, but the novel's remarkably accurate depiction of landscapes, monuments and people, as well as the engravings made by Léon Benett (1839–1916) to illustrate it, suggest that Verne's own Central Asian visions might have been inspired by the photographic works published by contemporary travellers, notably his friend Paul Nadar (1856–1939) and the French-Hungarian researcher Charles-Eugène de Ujfalvy (1842–1904).² Late nineteenth-century Central Asia was no longer a terra incognita, and in the decade before Verne published *Claudius Bombarnac*, numerous Russian and Western European photographers had visited the region and taken the “unalterable” photographs Verne mentions: historical landmarks, important figures, ordinary people and daily life were well documented.³ Western European photographers of Central Asia in the 1880s, notably the French, shared a common standpoint: to them, Russian Turkestan was synonymous with exoticism, mystery, as well as with the development of Russian colonialism in the region.⁴ Usually travelling under official supervision, they not only marvelled at the riches of the ancient cities and the diversity of peoples and civilisations, but also at the infrastructure built by the Russian Empire, and at the modern cities and the development of comfort in the challenging environment they encountered. In this they contributed to complex orientalist visions that supported Russian policies in the region and the European “civilising mission” in general as much as they shed light on the cultural specificity of Turkestan. According to Ali Behdad, “although the Orientalist image is born of an archaeological urge for documentary evidence and an anthropological desire for empirical knowledge, its content ultimately reveals a projected fantasy of the Middle East and its people”.⁵ With them, as with the likes of their predecessors in Central Asia and the Middle East, the camera, “the latest device conscripted to the task of Orientalist knowledge production”, renewed the Western aspiration to represent the Orient according to the

² Gorshenina 2003: 272. On Verne's connections to geography, geographers, and travellers, see Dupuy 2009.

³ Gorshenina 2000.

⁴ On orientalism in photography, see Behdad/Gartlan 2013.

⁵ Behdad/Gartlan 2013: 25.

criteria of Western reason and artistic norms.⁶ While this “golden age” of Western European interest in Central Asia faded in the decades that followed and became very restrained for most of the twentieth century, the archives of institutions such as the Paris Société de Géographie (Geographical Society) testify to the fascination in the region among European circles of exploration enthusiasts. Charles Gachet, Gabriel Bonvalot, Guillaume Capus, Jean-Baptiste Paquier, Jean Chaffanjon, Jules de Cuverville, Octave Diamanti, Yves de Kerangat, Fernand Grenard and Paul Labbé are only a few of the many French and European travellers who produced photographs of Central Asia during this period, from the invention of photography to the publication of Verne’s novel. This paper focuses on the work of Charles-Eugène de Ujfalvy, whose substantial photographic archive and wide body of published and unpublished texts document his anthropology and ethnography of Central Asia. It looks at some of the ways the inclusion of photography in anthropological and ethnographic research contributed to the definition of Central Asian and European identities in the second part of the nineteenth century and fed the orientalist geographical imagination.⁷ By looking at Ujfalvy’s photographic archive of Western exploration, it will attempt to show how photography once came to be considered a key instrument to archive humankind’s fundamental diversity.

The Ujfalvy expeditions

The traveller usually known as Charles-Eugène de Ujfalvy de Mező-Kövesd or Charles-Eugène de Ujfalvy (Figure 2.2), according to the French spelling of his name, was of Hungarian descent, like several of the most noted explorers of Central Asia in the nineteenth century, such as Alexander Csoma de Kőrös (1784–1842), Arminius Vámbéry (1832–1913), Béla Széchenyi (1837–1908) and Aurel Stein (1862–1943). Born in Vienna in 1842 as Mezőkövesdi Ujfalvy Károly Jenő, he settled in Paris where he held the first professorship in Central Asian history and geography in France, at the École nationale des langues orientales vivantes (today known as the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales, or INALCO). Ujfalvy, who today could be defined as a philologist, ethnographer, anthropologist, archaeologist and geographer, travelled through Central Asia during three different trips separated by a few years: in 1876–1877, in 1879 and in 1881. He was always accompanied by his wife Marie de Ujfalvy-

⁶ Behdad/Gartlan 2013: 3.

⁷ See Schwartz/Ryan 2003.



Figure 2.1: Klöss Gy. *Marie Bourdon de Ujfalvy*. Budapest: Klöss Gy, 1887. Bibliothèque nationale de France/Société de Géographie archive, photograph no. 1909. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8453362h> (20 February 2020).

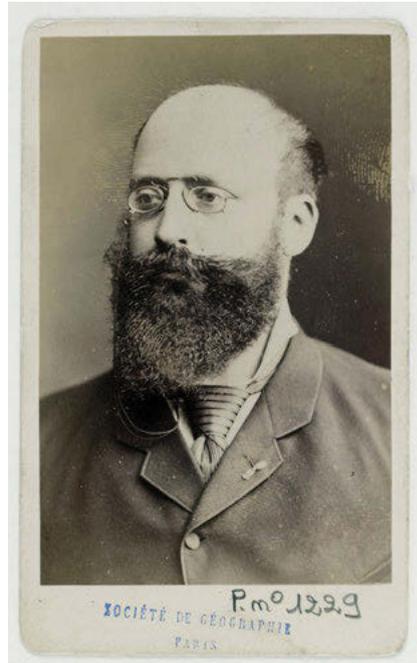


Figure 2.2: Truchelut & Valkman. *Charles Eugène de Ujfalvy de Mezö-Kövesd*. Paris: Th. Truchelut & Valkman, 1883. Bibliothèque nationale de France/Société de Géographie archive, photograph no. 1229. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84505465.item> (20 February 2020).

Bourdon (1845–1904) (Figure 2.1), who became a very successful travel writer in her own right when she published the account of their travels in 1880.⁸ Like his aforementioned fellow nationals, Ujfalvy’s fascination for Central Asia first came from his interest in the ancient origins of the Magyar tribes and the writings of the explorers who had pursued the quest to find what they perceived as their

⁸ Ujfalvy-Bourdon 1880. Two annotated photographs of the Ujfalvy couple can be found in the archives of the Paris Société de Géographie at the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Truchelut & Valkman. *Charles Eugène de Ujfalvy de Mezö-Kövesd*. Paris: Th. Truchelut & Valkman, 1883. Bibliothèque nationale de France/Société de Géographie archive, photograph No. 1229. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84505465.item>; Klöss Gy, *Marie Bourdon de Ujfalvy*, Budapest: Klöss Gy, 1887, Bibliothèque nationale de France/Société de Géographie archive, photograph No. 1909, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8453362h>.

“original homeland”, a concept referred to in Hungarian as *óshaza*.⁹ Having already begun his career in France as a teacher of German and while working on several publications on Hungary, its history, its language and its connection with Finnish and the Finns, he studied ethnography and anthropology and developed an interest in theories on the Asian origins of the so-called “Aryan” peoples.¹⁰ Ujfalvy’s early research on the origins of the Hungarians and historical migrations through Asia prompted his first journey to Central Asia in the mid-1870s. He managed to secure funding from the Ministère de l’Instruction Publique (Ministry of Public Education) to travel across Russia to Siberia and Turkestan with his wife and eventually left Paris in August 1876.

Their three expeditions are well known thanks to Ujfalvy’s and Bourdon’s own published accounts and have been the subject of renewed academic interest since the 1990s with several publications now shedding light on their routes and the main outcomes of those travels.¹¹ Areas that still deserve further investigation include Ujfalvy’s anthropological, ethnographic, archaeological and linguistic methods, the perception of their arrival in Turkestan by the local Russian-speaking elites and his scientific networks.¹² Key known resources that may aid investigation include French national, diplomatic and geographical archives, as well as the lesser-known publications of learned societies, while nineteenth-century Turkestan-based journals and Turkestan archives now located in Uzbekistan and Russia contain invaluable information that may shed light on the local context and perception of such Western European expeditions.¹³

The Ujfalvys travelled relatively easily: the plains of Central Asia were relatively safe, well surveyed, equipped with roads that could be used in summer and winter and were about to see the development of an extensive railway network, initially from the Caspian Sea to Samarkand, and ultimately to Tashkent and beyond. Ujfalvy and his wife noticed the development of efficient infrastructures by

⁹ Surányi 1972: 499–544; Gulya 1974: 258–276.

¹⁰ In the French context in which Ujfalvy’s work evolved in the second part of the nineteenth century, *anthropologie* had come to mean “physical anthropology”, as it did in other European countries at the time. It is to this intellectual tradition rather than to the modern sense of the term that I refer when using the term “anthropology”. When referring to anthropological practices in the contemporary sense used today in English, I use the term “ethnography”. For an overview of the evolution of these terms and their connection to photography in the nineteenth century, see Edwards 2008: 50–54. An excellent synthesis of the “Aryan question” in the nineteenth century was published by one of its contemporary critics: Reinach 1892.

¹¹ Le Calloc’h 1992: 45–54; Gorshenina 1999: 227–234, 2003: 271–278; Laurenche 2018: 71–84.

¹² See Gorshenina 1999: 234; Goubina 2013: 254–272.

¹³ See notably a review of volumes 1 and 2 of *Expédition française en Russie, en Sibérie et dans le Turkestan* in *Turkestanskiya Vedomosti* (6 January 1881): 2–4.

Russia and supported such policies beyond simple politeness towards their hosts. When Ujfalvy taught a course on the “historical and political geography” of Central Asia at the *École nationale des langues orientales vivantes*, he pictured himself as an intrepid explorer and clear apologist for Russian colonialism in Asia: to him, “Nothing proves better the superiority of the European civilisation than the Russians’ progress in Central Asia.”¹⁴ Ujfalvy and Bourdon’s writings testify to their respect and appreciation of Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufman (1818–1882), the governor-general of Russian Turkestan (1867–1882) who had overseen the conquest since the campaigns against the Emirate of Bukhara (1868), the khanates of Khiva (1873) and Kokand (1875) and was organising not only Turkestan’s administration but also overseeing the exploration of the region, its flora, fauna and linguistic diversity (Figure 2.3), as well as promoting it among the Russian public.¹⁵ Ujfalvy was of course not a *Turkestanoved* like Nikolai Petrovich Ostroumov (1846–1930) and the specialists around Kaufman: he was first and foremost a foreign guest who could be at least as useful in spreading positive visions of the Russian administration in Central Asia as in creating expert knowledge the governor-general and his administration could benefit from.¹⁶ Because of this, Ujfalvy and his party were not only allowed to travel in most parts of the governorate’s territory but were logistically and financially assisted by Kaufman, a patron of geography, ethnography and photography who became a corresponding member of the Paris Geographical Society in 1878.¹⁷ Ujfalvy’s foreword to his *Atlas anthropologique des peuples du Ferghanah* confirms that its production was directly facilitated and funded by the governor, who authoritatively encouraged the production and display of images of the “imperial spaces” under his responsibility.¹⁸

The first encounter between the couple and the Russian official is narrated in Marie Ujfalvy-Bourdon’s travelogue: “We went to pay our respects to the governor who, despite being ill, was welcoming people with perfect courtesy. As we went outside, I admired on the gallery a stuffed tiger of extraordinary proportions.”¹⁹ Charles Ujfalvy indeed brought back a photograph of Kaufman standing in his garden alongside this tiger, which he later had the lantern

¹⁴ Ujfalvy 1878a: 20.

¹⁵ On the Russian conquest of Central Asia and Kaufman, see Abashin et al. 2008; Morrison 2014: 131–142; Brower/Lizzerini 1997: 123–126.

¹⁶ Abashin 2009: 353–379; Babajanov 2014: 271–272.

¹⁷ Ujfalvy 1878b: IV.

¹⁸ Ujfalvy 1879a: 5. Kaufman’s images of imperial spaces have notably been analysed in Keating 2016.

¹⁹ Ujfalvy-Bourdon 1880: 255.



Figure 2.3: “Ujfalvy’s ‘Ethnographic map of the Pamir region’”. Ujfalvy. *Carte ethnographique de la région du Pamir*, reproduced in Ujfalvy-Bourdon. 1880. fig. 1. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6211638s/f16.image.texteImage> (20 February 2020).

slides specialist Alfred Molteni (1837–1907) transform into a glass plate and project during a lecture at the Paris Geographical Society.²⁰

As they helped Kaufman produce one of the images of power that seemed to portray him as local royalty within the empire, an equal of the Viceroy of India, the Ujfalvys pictured themselves as elegant Parisians in a world of exoticism. The language they use to describe themselves and their surroundings in their respective writings are suffused with terms denoting a sense of superiority and distance, while the French National Archives show another side of their character and organisation (or lack thereof), and reveal the causes of their eventual fall from grace and demise, both in Turkestan and at home. Within the few years that preceded his discharge by the French Ministry of Public Education in 1881, Ujfalvy conducted three expeditions to Central Asia and produced

²⁰ Charles Eugène de Ujfalvy. *Le jardin du Gl Kaufmann*. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Cartes et Plans/Société de Géographie. “Ujfalvy-Bachkirs” series, SG XCB-10.

several publications – notably an account of his research in six volumes – started teaching a course on the region, communicated the results of his work at many conferences – including the 1878 and 1879 anthropological congresses in Paris and Moscow respectively – and displayed the collection he had gathered at the 1878 World’s Fair in Paris, the Exposition Universelle. Numerous objects, notably skulls, brought back from Central Asia were eventually displayed in museums such as the Musée du Trocadéro (or Musée de l’Homme). Several series of photographs were produced during his three voyages in Central Asia. Ujfalvy was by no means a pioneer of photography in the region but the various types of photographs, which he did not necessarily take himself but published under his name, reveal that his approach was carefully thought out and followed specific aesthetic and scientific norms. They correspond to practices that were common in an age of disciplinary evolutions, including the now evidently outdated “scientist raciology”,²¹ and they testify to a geographical imagination of Self and Otherness deeply rooted in historically and spatially constructed narratives of Oriental and European identity.²²

Photography as anthropology

In both Russia and France, photography as an ethnographic and anthropological tool emerged long before Ujfalvy’s travels: it was the topic of many debates in Europe from its infancy to its widespread use by travellers, researchers and police officers in the 1880s.²³ In an article published in *La Lumière* in 1855, the journal’s scientific commentator Ernest Conduché argues that it was “necessary

²¹ Laurenche 2018: 71–84. The notion of “scientist raciology” translates very literally the expression “raciologie scientiste” and is probably not perfect, but its advantage is that it conveys the idea that such racial classification was deeply rooted in late-nineteenth century scientism: a positivist worldview and philosophical theory praising science as the universal agent of human progress. Because of this nuance, what Laurenche means is more than just “race science”. To me, the idea of “raciologie scientiste” implies critically that the modern French religion of reason and scientific progress legitimised racial inequality in the European worldview, which is a key historiographical argument. I also think that “raciology” is more contextual than “race science” and it is more commonly used by historians of anthropology to refer to such outdated theories.

²² Germana 2010: 80–94; Montety 2018.

²³ See notably Banta/Hinsley 1986; Edwards 1992; Dias 1994: 37–50; Boesch/Savarese 2000: 247–258; Edwards/Morton 2016; On anthropological photography in the Russian Empire, see Elias 2019.

that photography comes to the rescue of anthropology, lest it [anthropology] will stay what it is today”.²⁴ As early as 1839 – the year that the Société ethnologique (Ethnological Society) was founded in Paris, four years before its counterpart in London, fifteen years before the Société française de photographie (French Photographic Society) and twenty years before Paul Broca’s Société anthropologique (Anthropological Society) and Léon de Rosny’s Société ethnographique (Ethnographic Society) – the invention of the daguerreotype, soon followed by Henry Fox Talbot’s calotype, had created the “pencil of nature” that would help the emerging disciplines reach their scientific ambitions.²⁵ Having envisioned its potential usefulness for ethnographic research, the physician and embryologist Etienne Serres (1786–1868) ordered one of Daguerre’s new machines for the Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle (Natural History Museum), and suggested a few years later using that process to build a large “collection of the various human races”.²⁶ While one researcher could not gather such a collection alone, armchair anthropologists could edict norms that travellers should respect to produce scientifically usable pictures. Anthropology and photography’s “doubled history” continued in the 1860s when anthropological photography gained definitive momentum as formal rules were suggested by Paul Broca (1824–1880), the French physician and anthropologist who had founded the Société d’Anthropologie de Paris in 1859 and become one of the main proponents of physical anthropology and anthropometry.²⁷ According to Broca, Ujfalvy’s main scientific influence in the 1870s, two different approaches could be used in an anthropological research project, one consisting of looking at many individuals and trying to find their common traits to define an ideal type that could later be used as a reference, another consisting of studying fewer individuals but in greater detail, by measuring them and analysing them “in the way physicians are used to collect pathological information”. In his *Instructions* (1865) he stresses “the necessity for travellers to make a great number of individual anthropological observations” while also advising combining such an analytical method with “general observations on the races they will need to study”.²⁸

Broca’s normative instructions were also completed by specific instructions on Central Asia, presented and published in 1874 by the anthropologist Julien

24 Jehel 2000: 47.

25 Fox-Talbot 1844.

26 Hamy 1907: 267; *Comptes rendus hebdomadaires de l’Académie des Sciences* 19.2 (September 1844): 490, quoted in Jehel 2000: 48; see also Timby 1996.

27 Pinney 2011.

28 Broca 1865: 20–21.

Girard de Rialle (1841–1904).²⁹ Girard de Rialle never travelled to Central Asia himself but preferred to “rely on the travellers’ zeal and goodwill”, kept up to date with the expeditions, commented on their results, and published Ujfalvy’s notes on the Yaghnobi language.³⁰ The anthropological measurements and observations produced by Ujfalvy on the basis of his first journey, published from 1878 to 1880 in the first and third volumes of his *Expédition* account, show that he committed seriously to this anthropological programme, collecting skulls, carrying out measurements – mainly of the skull – and normed observations – colour of the eyes, skin and hair – on about 300 men and a few women from all the regions he visited, making extensive ethnographic observations and gathering linguistic samples according to Broca’s and Girard de Rialle’s instructions.³¹

The use of photography as an anthropological tool was consistent with this double perspective prescribing both individual precision and perceptive comparison. To Broca, anthropologists should produce two kinds of photographs: faces without hats (“têtes nues”), taken from straight in front or from the side, and standing portraits (“portraits en pied”), the person photographed being “naked, inasmuch as possible”. Broca noted however that “standing portraits with clothing specific to the tribe are also important”; that is, ethnographic photographs with no anthropological interest according to his criteria but of interest nevertheless to a wider understanding of a region’s cultural diversity.³²

It is likely that the French-Hungarian traveller did not take *his* photographs himself: he oversaw the execution of most of them by a Polish-born local photographer named V. F. Kozlovskii, whom he publicly praised (“Kazlovski, le plus habile de Tachkend”)³³ while dismissing his earlier ethnographic work – without citing his name – when complaining that the portraits gathered by the photographer in an “album of the types of Turkestan” did not allow any form of scientific comparison.³⁴ Ujfalvy was also helped by a Tashkent-based Swiss

29 Girard de Rialle 1874a, 1874b. On Girard de Rialle’s *Instructions*, see Gorshenina 2000: 29–31.

30 Girard de Rialle 1874b: 44; Ujfalvy 1882.

31 Ujfalvy. “Tableaux de mensurations anthropologiques relatifs au Ferghanah et au district de Kouldja”. In: Ujfalvy 1878b; Ujfalvy. “Chapitre premier. Résultats anthropologiques d’un voyage en Asie centrale”. In: Ujfalvy 1880a: 1–50.

32 Broca 1865: 6. This passage was not modified when a second edition of the book was published in 1879.

33 Ujfalvy 1879a: 7.

34 Ujfalvy 1879a: 6. Album archived as V. Kozlovski. *170 phot. de types ethniques du Turkestan russe par V. Kozlovskii, phot. à Tachkent*. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Cartes et Plans/Société de Géographie. SG WD-3 (2 February 2020). <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b531679937/f1.item>. Another copy exists at the US Library of Congress: International

teacher named Emile Müller as well as by the Russian naturalist A. Vil'kens (Wilkins?), a pupil of Anatolii Bogdanov who gave him “valuable advice about the execution of anthropological photographs”.³⁵ Ujfalvy’s confessed enthusiasm for the contemporary work of Gustav Fritsch, then celebrated for his photographs in southern Africa, points to another major influence.³⁶ Ujfalvy’s work in Central Asia is an attempt to bridge the gaps between those influences and their key methods. He chose to undertake most of his anthropological observations and anthropological photographic sessions in the Ferghana valley because “thanks to its isolated situation, it would be more likely to find pure types here [rather than in Tashkent]”.³⁷ The album produced by Ujfalvy’s team focused on thirty-five persons representing several “anthropological types”, that is, ethnic categories of which he offered short definitions – Ujfalvy listed eleven peoples in the 1879 *Atlas anthropologique* but thirteen or fifteen peoples in his earlier *Le Kohistan, Le Ferghanah et Kouldja*.³⁸ Most importantly, the photographs were preceded by a table of key identifying anthropometric details: name, race, gender, height, age, skin colour, hair colour and eye colour. The collection process lasted about two weeks in Margelan in Ujfalvy’s presence but continued for a few more days in his absence with his assistant Müller and the photographer Kozlovskii finishing the work on their own. Some of the individuals photographed and measured were then described in greater detail by Müller, whose notes about them are reproduced by Ujfalvy.

One of the individuals whom the *Atlas anthropologique* best describes is a man named Tourdebai Choukourbai, presented as a “Sart”, one of the region’s urban dwellers defined by Ujfalvy as “Usbeks who became Iranians regarding their type as they mingled with indigenous peoples, but who kept their language. Sometimes they are indigenous Iranians who mingled with their victors and adopted their language.”³⁹ According to a table providing details about Tourdebai Choukourbai (Figure 2.4), he was born in Kokand, he is forty-eight, his skin is “yellow, reddish” where it is not covered by clothes, and “reddish”

Congress of Orientalists – Russia. Komitet po uchastiiu Turkestanskogo Kraia na Tret'em mezhdunarodnom kongresse orientalistov, *Tipy narodnostei Srednei Azii* (Asia Central, 1876), <https://www.loc.gov/item/61057703/>; at least one other anonymous – and unidentified – copy with different English-language handwritten notes exists online (5 February 2020). <https://humus.livejournal.com/4299324.html>.

35 Ujfalvy 1878b: 72, 91–92.

36 Ujfalvy 1879a: 5. On Fritsch, see Bank 2001: 43–76.

37 Ujfalvy 1879a: 5.

38 Ujfalvy 1879a: 7; Ujfalvy 1878b: 60–71.

39 Ujfalvy 1879a: 8. Ujfalvy gave a much more developed definition of his sense of the “Sart” identity in Ujfalvy 1878b: 59–61.

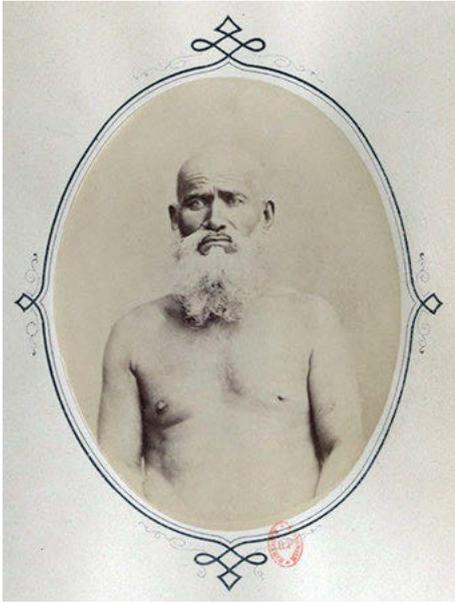


Figure 2.4: “Anthropological portrait of Tourdebai Choukourbai”. Ujfalvy 1879a: photograph no. 69. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k3411829c/f159.image> (20 February 2020).

where it is, his hair and beard are white, his eyes light blue, and he is 150 cm tall.⁴⁰ However, a paragraph reproducing Müller’s dozens of intricately detailed anthropometric measurements and comments lists him as 18 cm taller!⁴¹ In the photograph taken from the front, he looks at something or someone next to the camera, visibly puzzled or, at least, ill at ease with the process he has been asked to take part in.

Tourdebai Choukourbai is not one of the dozens of individuals from Fergana observed and measured by Ujfalvy mentioned in the thirteen tables of “Anthropological results” annexed to the first volume of his *Expédition* account and analysed in the third volume of the same series.⁴² It demonstrates that the *Atlas anthropologique* was not designed to be a visual supplement to the main anthropological results but a different project altogether, justified by Kaufman’s request and the presence of a skilled technician and his instruments. The fact that Ujfalvy left Margelan before the end of the photographic, observation and measurement session and left Müller and Kozlovskii to finish the project by themselves suggests that he was not as interested in this task as in those scheduled in

⁴⁰ Ujfalvy 1879a: 16.

⁴¹ Ujfalvy 1879a: 10.

⁴² “Tableaux de mensurations anthropologiques relatifs au Ferganah et au district de Kouldja”. In: Ujfalvy 1878a; Ujfalvy 1880a: 1–50.

advance in his travel plan and would have improvised this project first and foremost to please Kaufman, before retroactively including it in his six-volume travel account to develop the already impressive mass of scientific results.

This is corroborated by the fact that Ujfalvy's series of anthropological photographs gathered in the *Atlas anthropologique* fail to fully meet Broca's standards: his subjects are pictured from the front as well as from the side, in front of a white screen next to a measuring tape, however the frame only shows them from the waist up, seemingly sitting rather than standing. Both men and women – who were chosen from among prostitutes – are bare-chested but not fully nude as favoured in Broca's indications, with the rest of their body seemingly covered with a piece of white cloth.⁴³ While Ujfalvy shared the physical anthropologists' very precise ideas about the execution of such pictures, it seems that he and his team could not or would not convince his models to show their whole bodies. Not being a photographer himself, he certainly had to follow Kozlovskii's own technical professional habits and trust him to carry out the work in the best possible way, particularly for the last phase during which he was not present himself.

Kozlovskii was one of Tashkent's few photographers in a context where the idea of the photographic atlas was largely defined by the second part of the *Turkestan Album*. This immense album of photographs, watercolours, plans and maps was compiled at Kaufman's request by Alexander L. Kuhn (1840–1888) with the help of several photographers including N. N. Nekhoroshev, Grigorii Krivtsov and Mikhail K. Priorov, and produced in St Petersburg and Tashkent in 1871–1872.⁴⁴ Ujfalvy was familiar with the *Turkestan Album* and certainly decided to focus primarily on anthropological photographs because Kuhn's work covered all of the other fields in which he himself could claim expertise. To Ujfalvy, the *Turkestan Album* had “only one flaw: it is too thorough, and therefore too expensive to reproduce”.⁴⁵ It is therefore no surprise that Ujfalvy's anthropological photographs taken by Kozlovskii strikingly resemble Kuhn's ethnographic compilation more than they diverge from it and only roughly correspond to Broca's scientific ideal. In this, they certainly failed in their primary goal to provide a visual rendition of Ujfalvy's extensive anthropological measurements and observations published in volume 3 of his *Expédition* account, but they nevertheless contributed to the cultural transfer of a Russian visual imagination of colonialism from Central Asia to

⁴³ Ujfalvy 1879a: 5.

⁴⁴ *Turkestanskii al'bom. Po raspriazheniiu turkestanskago general-gubernatora general-ad''iutanta K. P. fon Kaufmana 1-go. Chast' ètnograficheskaia. Tuzemnoe naselenie v russkikh vladieniiax Srednei Azii. Sostavil A. L. Kun. 1871–1872 g. Lit. Voenna-Topogr. Otdela Turkest. Voën. Okrug.* See Sonntag 2007, 2011.

⁴⁵ Ujfalvy 1879a: 6.

Europe.⁴⁶ Retrospectively, they also highlight by comparison the importance of Ujfalvy's ethnographic photographs of Central Asia, which he used as a key support of his exploration narrative.

Displaying ethnography

Having already successfully carried out a first trip, Ujfalvy planned three others, in 1880–1881, 1881–1882 and 1882–1883.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, he spent several months developing, publishing and displaying the results of his journey. In March 1879, Ujfalvy and his peers at the Société d'Anthropologie de Paris used the results of his research in Central Asia to look at the “Aryan question” from the point of view of physical anthropology, history and linguistics.⁴⁸ They concluded that the “Galcha” skull Ujfalvy had obtained in Kohistan testified to the relationship between “blond-haired Aryans” – found in Europe, for instance, they noted, in the French Alps – and “brown-haired Aryans” – found in the mountains of Central Asia.⁴⁹ However, Ujfalvy, who had acclaimed physical anthropology, seems to have stopped using it soon after the death of Broca in 1880.⁵⁰ It may serve to illustrate the dead end that French physical anthropology was coming to, as the likes of Broca, Girard de Rialle and Ujfalvy had largely failed to convince their contemporaries of its relevance beyond the walls of the Musée du Trocadéro and the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle. Anthropological photography itself could not meet one of the illusory goals of physical anthropology, that is, to represent so-called “pure” types, when the reality observed in the field was of a diverse mix of individuals.

Meanwhile, the ethnographic perspective became increasingly successful. Ethnographic photography synthetically captured the richness of world cultures

46 Such processes have been thoroughly described in Gorshenina/Sonntag 2018; Kouteinikova 2015: 85–108.

47 See Ujfalvy's annotated maps of his past and future travels kept in the Archives Nationales, notably a general plan based on a recent map by the German cartographer Augustus Petermann (1822–1878): Augustus Petermann, *Russisch-Türkisch-Persisch-Englische Grenzländer von bosnien bis Kaschgar und Indien* (Gotha: Justus Perthes, 1877), (FR – AN (Archives Nationales – Missions Scientifiques et Littéraires en Russie) F/17/3011, 2).

48 On Central Asia and the “Aryan question” in nineteenth-century Europe, see Benes 2004: 117–132; Laruelle 2005.

49 Ujfalvy 1880a: 44–48. See also Ujfalvy 1879b: 185–214, 219–232; Laurenche 2018: 82–83. See also Ujfalvy 1884: 411–443.

50 Laurenche 2018: 83.

and allowed travellers to vividly display such cultures to their audiences. Especially during his second and third journeys in Central Asia, Ujfalvy conducted ethnographic works, of which most were actually linguistic.⁵¹ While he knew that he could neither carry out lengthy fieldwork and match the results of his Turkestan-based Russian counterparts, nor supersede Kuhn's ethnographic photographs, Ujfalvy tried to collect ethnographic photographs taken by local photographers, and had Kozlovskii and later his assistant Gabriel Bonvalot take ethnographic photographs, which he used as the basis of etchings printed in his books and in Marie Ujfalvy-Bourdon's travelogue to illustrate various episodes of their travels (Figure 2.5).⁵² Those photographs, now kept in the French Archives Nationales, also exist in a different format: they were reproduced as three series of lantern slides for conferences, which are currently held in the archival collections of the Paris Geographical Society, now at the Bibliothèque nationale de France.⁵³

From the 1870s, as it became technically easier to travel with lighter cameras, to reproduce photographs and even project them, European geographers and explorers experienced the "passion of inventory" and began to make the photographic album the *imago mundi* of their time: the new tool was becoming a new way of constructing and spreading knowledge about the world.⁵⁴ By the late 1870s, the pioneering lantern slides of the American daguerreotypists Frederick and William Langenheim had evolved and become a reliable and aesthetically pleasing technology. It was adopted by the Paris Geographical Society thanks to Jules Molteni and his nephew Alfred, whose instructions on the use of lantern slides for visual education were very successful with the science-minded and curious alike.⁵⁵

The Société de Géographie, founded in Paris in 1821, began to keep and display photographs in 1877 and systematically organised their collection from 1882. It was

51 Ujfalvy 1882: 273.

52 See for instance the similitude between Ujfalvy, *Tadjik (Ferghanah)*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Cartes et Plans/Société de Géographie, "Ujfalvy-Bachkirs" series, SG XCB-85. See also the etching in Ujfalvy 1878b: 58.

53 FR – AN (Archives Nationales – Missions Scientifiques et Littéraires en Russie) F/17/2925–3014 & F/17/17265–17294; Ujfalvy de Mezo-Kovcsd (Ch. de), Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Cartes et Plans/Société de Géographie, 18 March 1881 "Bachkirs, Kirgizs, Tadjiks" (19 photographs), SG XCB-1 – SG XCB-10; SG XBJ 206 – SG XBJ 214), 17 March 1882 "Cachemire, Baltistan (petit Tibet)" (31 photographs), SG XCB-44 – SG XCB-74), 4 March 1887 "Turkestan (1876–1877 & 1880–1881)" (33 photographs), SG XCB-75 – SG XCB-101; SG XCD-1– SG XCD-6.

54 Loiseaux 2006: 148; Borlée/Doucet 2019.

55 Molténi 1878.



Figure 2.5: “Excerpt of an etching based on a photograph of a Tajik woman”. Ujfalvy 1878b: 58.

also a pioneering venue for visual education, with conferences that regularly attracted hundreds of enthusiasts. Of its 150,000 photographs now archived in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, more than a quarter are 10 x 8.5 cm transparent glass plates made to project images, about 2,000 of which come from voyages in Central Asia.⁵⁶ Ujfalvy’s collection of photographs in its paper and glass versions represents at least eighty photographs, divided into three series corresponding to his various journeys in Central Asia, which were presented during three conferences given at the Société de Géographie in 1881, 1882 and 1887. A third of the pictures represent natural landscapes, monuments, architectural and artistic heritage – such as the inside of a Kyrgyz yurt and its very visible *tunduk* – as well as local dignitaries such as Kaufman or the former khan of Kokand.⁵⁷

However, most of Ujfalvy’s pictures demonstrate the continuity between his anthropological album and his ethnographic photographs. Most of the photographs displayed at his Société de Géographie conferences were portraits

⁵⁶ Daney 1983: 45–49; Fierro 1986; Duclos 1998; Loiseaux 2006; Lavédrine 2007: 68–73.

⁵⁷ Ujfalvy, *Intérieur kirghis*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Cartes et Plans/Société de Géographie, “Ujfalvy-Bachkirs” series, SG XCB-7; *L’ex-Khan du Khokan*, “de Ujfalvy-Turkestan” series, SG XCB-87; *Le jardin du Général Kaufmann*, “Ujfalvy-Bachkirs” series, SG XCB-10.

representing specific Central Asian individuals, usually in supposedly traditional costumes, with their ethnicity indicated on the glass plate with short labels such as “Kirgiz (Kazakhs ou Kyrgyz)”, “types of Tajik and Sart ladies (Ferghana)”, “Bokhara Tajiks”, “Two Karakalpaks (Samarkand)”, and so on.⁵⁸

These alluring photographs and the short handwritten descriptions beneath them may testify to the era’s physical anthropological ambitions as well as to the traveller’s obsession with classification and “anchorage”.⁵⁹ According to Ali Behdad, “the Orientalist image is marked by excessive textual anchorage”, that is, labels or titles that define “its meaning or content in a monolithic fashion by excessively naming what it depicts”. Thus, Behdad argues, they express “a profound desire to fix the meaning of the image, to deprive it of any symbolic message or alternative meaning” and ultimately “freeze the Oriental other twice: once through an exotic staging of his or her reality, and a second time through an ideological labelling of his appearance in the image”.⁶⁰

While the texts of the verbal presentations that accompanied the projection of each of Ujfalvy’s series of glass plates are not known, we can attempt to reconstruct them by using each photograph’s short title or label, by connecting the paper photographs and glass plates to the passages of his books in which Ujfalvy describes those landscapes and peoples, the ruins of Afrasiab, the Tajik women or the Kara-Kalpaks at Samarkand’s main market, by imagining Ujfalvy’s professorial tone: the pompous echoes of which are attested to in other documents.⁶¹ With this context in mind, we can try to understand how his emphatic narrative and its photographic visions were received by his contemporaries, how they played into the Western European context of the late nineteenth-century geographical imagination of Central Asia and the Orient.

The way Ujfalvy’s work was received is manifold: he was well accepted in the anthropology community, and the Société de Géographie valued his reports, which it published in its journal, and the public certainly enjoyed his popular conferences and their beautiful black-and-white photographs. He was supported by several important figures of anthropology and ethnography, but he was also famous for his unpleasant temper and was never considered a scientific authority. The excessive breadth of his multidisciplinary scientific ambitions, the lack of preparation in his travels and his limited exchanges with Russian researchers and European orientalists more generally (Ujfalvy was not

⁵⁸ Respectively “Ujfalvy-Bachkirs” series, SG XCB-2; “de Ujfalvy-Turkestan” series, SG XCB-98; “de Ujfalvy-Turkestan” series, SG XCB-97; “de Ujfalvy-Turkestan” series, SG XCB-82.

⁵⁹ Behdad/Gartlan 2013: 25.

⁶⁰ Behdad/Gartlan 2013: 26.

⁶¹ Ujfalvy 1878a.

proficient in Russian, Turkish or Persian), as well as the relatively short time he spent in Central Asia, led him to many imprecisions and mistakes that were duly noted by observers.

Conclusion: Picturing Central Asia, staging exploration

The archives of the French Ministry of Public Education's "scientific and literary missions in Russia" tell the story of Ujfalvy's debts, controversies and feuds. By the early 1880s, as his accumulating conflicts with assistants (some of whom would become significant travellers in their own right, notably Gabriel Bonvalot and Guillaume Capus) and debts with bankers and powerful hosts (Kaufman, the Maharajah of Kashmir) became the word on the street, his expeditions' vast but feeble scientific results were eventually remarked upon and dismissed by the scientific commission of the French Ministry of Public Education.⁶² Ujfalvy's project, now considered a case of archaic polymathism in an era of increased specialisation, was indeed already considered negatively by many scientific authorities in his day. A secret report by the Travels and Missions Commission at the Ministry of Public Education considered Ujfalvy's voluminous reports "a sum of details without real scientific interest, that do not bring much to the knowledge acquired until now about Central Asia". As a result, the scorching document continues, "Struck by the insufficiency of the results obtained and rightly concerned about the difficulties that prevent M. de Ujfalvy from entering Russian Turkestan, the Commission, in its 23 March 1881 session, votes, by unanimity minus two, the interruption of a journey now of no usefulness for science."⁶³

By the end of the nineteenth century, Central Asian exploration had become so popular in Europe that it had become a spectacle as much as a scientific quest. A famous cover of the French illustrated magazine *L'Illustration* perfectly captures this situation: it shows the Swedish geographer Sven Hedin at a conference organised by the Paris Geographical Society, standing in front

⁶² Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts, "Note sur M. Ujfalvy", 1 November 1882, FR – AN (Archives Nationales – Missions Scientifiques et Littéraires en Russie), F/17/3011, 3°, Ujfalvy de Mezo-Kovesd (Ch. de).

⁶³ Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts, "Note sur M. Ujfalvy", 1 November 1882, FR – AN (Archives Nationales – Missions Scientifiques et Littéraires en Russie), F/17/3011, 3°, Ujfalvy de Mezo-Kovesd (Ch. de).

of a screen on which a map of Central Asia and the Himalayas is projected.⁶⁴ Certainly in the same position as Ujfalvy a few years before, the heroic traveller shows an elegantly dressed feminine audience the “blanks on the map” – labelled “unexplored” – that he plans to discover. As the image’s subtitle wittily suggests, the lantern slide presentations such as those displayed by Hedin, Ujfalvy and their peers during those popular conferences were running a show in which the main act was no longer the land and the anonymous people that came to life on the white screen, but the intrepid traveller who constructed his narrative verbally and visually. Explicit criticism of such practices would only culminate half a century later when the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss forcefully stated his paradoxical *hatred* of “travelling and explorers”.⁶⁵ Anthropology was now too important a task to be undertaken by superficial amateurs and the joys and hardships of scientific travel should only be treated as the mere by-products of knowledge-making practices in distant lands.

A late polymathic researcher whose contributions to knowledge have not been as scientifically influential as his contemporary fame might have let him believe, Ujfalvy’s archives offer a puzzling insight into the emergence of photography as a scientific tool in the nineteenth century as well as into the institutions and practices of several fields, notably anthropology, ethnography and geography. While his anthropological photographs appear as remnants of long outdated approaches, his ethnographic photographs help reconstruct two parallel realities: that of Europe and its learned societies advocating scientific progress while craving adventure and exoticism, and that of Central Asia, in the late 1870s and early 1880s, enduring rapid transformation under Russian rule. Ujfalvy knew that the latter was about to disappear, and that the progress he wholeheartedly supported would eventually overcome the traditional lifestyles and the “pure” people he had travelled across Eurasia to study, thinking about his and Europe’s own “Magyar” or “Aryan” ancestors in Asia. In this regard, the world in his collection of photographs was “caught in time”, as a famous series of books of historical photographs puts it.⁶⁶ In a letter he sent from Orenburg to the Paris Geographical Society in 1881, he prophesised: “Within a few years, the country will be transformed completely, and the traveller that will have passed through it in 1877 will struggle to even recognise it.”⁶⁷

The world to which he sent those words, that of the European savants, exploration enthusiasts and armchair travellers who gathered in the amphitheatres of

⁶⁴ “Sven Hedin à Paris”. *L’Illustration* 3446, 13 March 1909: front page.

⁶⁵ Lévi-Strauss 1955: 1.

⁶⁶ See notably Nedvetsky 1993a, 1993b; Naumkin 1996.

⁶⁷ Ujfalvy 1881: 257–259.

geographical societies from Paris to St Petersburg, Budapest and London, was becoming aware that the increasingly greater range of European exploration also meant that the world was changing. European researchers could only understand more and more clearly that their own continent's influence would make it even more difficult to find the "primeval people" of Asia and elsewhere in which they had sought a fundamental Otherness and a reflection of their past Self. The pitfalls of anthropological and ethnographic photography were now indicating that the unchanging and idealised identities they had dreamed of or even attempted to construct were not the "unalterable photographs" Verne, Ujfalvy and Broca had believed in: like the Vernian dreams, those categories subdividing humankind in the name of science were soon to "fade under the sun and eventually disappear" as Central Asian identities evolved under the locally negotiated dynamics of late imperial and early Soviet national policy.

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Laura Elias

3 Picturing “Russia’s Orient”: The peoples of Russian Turkestan through the lens of Samuil M. Dudin (1900–1902)

Abstract: Russian ethnographers and anthropologists were pioneers in commissioning, collecting and producing photographs for scientific archives. As early as the 1870s, two different genres were established in Russia: ethnographic and physiognomic-anthropological photographs. This paper focuses on the photographic collection created by the artist Samuil M. Dudin on behalf of the Russian Museum in the Turkestan governor-generalship between 1900 and 1902. It argues that, when it came to anthropological “type shots”, Dudin basically took up the nineteenth-century standards of picturing physiognomic “types”, while giving a completely new impetus to the ethnographic genre of the late imperial and early Soviet period.

Keywords: colonial photography, imperial history, Russian Turkestan, Russian ethnography, physical anthropology

Introduction

In the spring of 1900 the Russian artist Samuil Martynovich Dudin left St Petersburg on a long voyage. He was assigned to systematically photograph the peoples of Russian Turkestan and to study their everyday life and material culture on behalf of the Russian Museum. Dudin was not only a graduate of the Petersburg Art Academy and former pupil of the famous realistic painter Ilya Repin. By the turn of the century, he was also an established photographer, ethnographer, archaeologist and collector.¹ Like many of his contemporaries, Dudin became interested in ethnography during his years in exile in Siberia in the 1880s. Among

¹ On Dudin as a collector, see Dmitriev 2006.

Note: With special thanks to Iuliia A. Kupina and Natalia N. Prokop’eva from the Russian Ethnographic Museum in St Petersburg for permission to publish photographs from the Dudin collection in this article.

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others, he accompanied Friedrich Wilhelm Radloff's scientific expedition to the river Orkhon in 1891 as a photographer and draughtsman. After this expedition, Radloff, the director of the Petersburg Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (*Musei antropologii i ètnografii Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk* – MAE), ensured that Dudin could commence his studies at the Art Academy in the capital after his return from exile in late 1891. The reputable scholar would later hire him as the chief of the museum's photographic division² and encourage him to develop a detailed programme for an ethnographic expedition to Turkestan for the Russian Museum. There, Dudin would collect objects of material culture and take ethnographic and anthropological photographs of the local population. Radloff submitted the plan to the museum's director, Grand Duke Georgii Mikhailovich, who supported the project and hired Dudin to execute it.³

This paper analyses the photographic collection that was created on those expeditions for the Russian Museum between 1900 and 1902. It will discuss the way in which Dudin took up nineteenth-century standards and practices of picturing non-Russian peoples and the ways in which he gave new impetus to Russian ethnographic-anthropological photography. First, a definition of ethnographic and anthropological photographs – elaborated by the historical actors of the second half of the nineteenth century – will be sketched. Second, an analysis of Dudin's images will be conducted and compared with selected photographs from standard-setting nineteenth-century collections.⁴

Early ethnographic-anthropological photography in Russia

The differentiation between ethnographic and anthropological photographs was established in the early 1870s in the aftermath of the First All-Russian

² Prishchepova 2011: 612; Menshikov 1999: 5.

³ REM. F. 1. Op. 2. D. 247 “Samuil Martynovich Dudin. Otchet y poezdkakh v Sredniuiu Aziyu v 1900–1902 godakh, na 471 liste”. L. 1. Dudin went on his first ethnographic expedition to the region in 1899 on behalf of the MAE: Prishchepova 2011: 624; Rezvan 2010: 4; Palavoi 2007. The photographic collection of this journey is archived in the MAE: MAE RAN. Koll. 1199.

⁴ This article is based on the author's research for her PhD thesis titled “The Ethnographic-Anthropological Gaze: Photography and the Exploration of Central Asia in Late Imperial Russia” submitted in 2019 at the University of Basel, Switzerland (Elias 2019). The thesis includes inter alia a more detailed analysis of the Dudin collection as well as the collection of the Ethnographic Exhibition, the *Turkestan Album*, the album *National Types of Central Asia* and the *Atlas anthropologique des peuples du Ferghanah*. It will be published in 2022.

Ethnographical Exposition,⁵ which was organised by the Moscow Society of the Amateurs of Natural History, Anthropology and Ethnography (*Obshchestvo liubitel'ei estestvoznaniia, antropologii i ètnografii* – OLEAE) in 1867. In the context of the Moscow exhibition, an extensive photographic collection of the Tsar’s subjects was produced and reflected Russia’s wider imperial public for the first time. In preparation for the exhibition, its main architect, the professor of zoology Anatolii P. Bogdanov (1834–1896),⁶ had published a Russian translation of Paul Broca’s *Instructions générales pour les recherches et observations anthropologiques*.⁷ This included instructions on how to take photographs of anthropological value. One year later, the photographic commission of the exhibition’s organising committee put out a call for the production of a “collection of photographic portraits”, which also included brief guidelines for photographers all over the empire, who were encouraged to send in their pictures.⁸ In the guidelines, the term “ethnographic” or “anthropological photograph” was not yet mentioned. Rather, the commission simply used the term “portrait”⁹ to express what they were looking for: photographs of members of the Russian lower classes such as peasants, merchants and priests, as well as of non-Russian peoples (*inorodtsy*) of all social strata.¹⁰ The criteria for choosing the representatives was the alleged “typicalness”¹¹ of the model’s physiognomy.¹² To be of scientific value, the portraits had to fulfil just one essential criteria: they had to show the same person in profile as well as in full face.¹³ The British historian Elizabeth Edwards established the term “scientific reference”¹⁴ for this method of staging those portrayed. It was established in the 1860s and 1870s by the European scientific community for “type shots” of foreign peoples as well as the

5 On the exhibition, see Nait 2001; Solov’ëva 2008; Grusman/Kalashnikova 2009.

6 On Bogdanov’s role as an organiser of the exhibition, see Mogilner 2013: 20–27.

7 Broca 1865; Broca 1865.

8 *Ot fotograficheskoi kommissii* 1866: 1. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

9 *Ot fotograficheskoi kommissii* 1866: 1–2.

10 *Ot fotograficheskoi kommissii* 1866: 2. Concerning the term *inorodtsy*, Andreas Renner has shown that it was already used in a pejorative sense in the 1860s to describe the loyal Baltic Germans: Renner 2000: 342. On the term *inorodtsy* and its application to the peoples of Russian Turkestan, see also Slocum 1998: 173, 175, 182, 185–187.

11 *Ot fotograficheskoy kommissii* 1866: 2.

12 Anatolii Bogdanov himself confessed later that his photographic collection of Russian “types” was criticised for not being representative. He admitted that whether someone looks typical for his ethnic group or not depended on the very subjective view of the observer: Bogdanov 1878: 7, 14–16.

13 *Ot fotograficheskoi kommissii* 1866: 1.

14 Edwards 2009: 190.

European lower classes.¹⁵ This “staged unstaging” was supposed to evoke an impression of scientific neutrality and authenticity, while aiding in the identification of generalising physiognomic features and alleged “racial types”.¹⁶

The authors of these first Russian guidelines completely ignored Broca’s wish for full-body portraits and pictures of nudes and only followed his demand for shots in profile and full-face view. The result of these relatively vague guidelines was that photographers from Arkhangelsk to Ufa interpreted them differently and produced a corpora of photographs that were staged in quite varied ways.¹⁷ As a consequence, a very heterogeneous collection of photographs entered the scientific discourse in the course of the 1867 exhibition.

In 1872 a new attempt to establish more control over photographic staging and to limit the photographs’ semantical “excess”¹⁸ was made: the Petersburg-based Imperial Russian Geographical Society (*Imperatorskoe Russkoe geograficheskoe obshchestvo* – IRGO) – a pioneer in the ethnographic exploration of the Russian Empire¹⁹ – published new, more detailed guidelines.²⁰ Initially, the unknown author of the guidelines differentiates between ethnographic and physiognomic shots. Regarding the latter, he distinguishes further between portraits and full-body pictures. The portraits should be taken in front of a light background without any artistic staging. The models should be photographed naked, in profile and in full face, with a focus on the head and chest.²¹ Regarding the full-body portraits, the models should be photographed nude from the front, the side and the back, holding a tape measure in their hands so that the observer could discern their size. In contrast, the author states that ethnographic photographs could not only show a wider range of diversity concerning their staging but also an artistic aesthetic. A significant focus should be placed on the documentation of the costumes, weapons and material culture as well as on dwellings, settlements and scenes of everyday life.²²

While the first part of the guidelines concerned the physiognomic shots and was nearly identical with Broca’s instructions from 1865,²³ the terminological

15 On photographic “types”, see Edwards 2009; Elias 2015; Hempel 2007; Krautwurst 2002.

16 On the category of “race” in the Russian anthropological discourse, see Mogilner 2009; Kholm 2012; Tol’ts 2012.

17 The collection is archived in the photo archive of the Russian Ethnographic Museum (REM) in St Petersburg: REM. Koll. 8764.

18 Poole 2005: 163. See also Edwards 2015: 237.

19 On the RGO and the development of Russian ethnography, see Knight 1998.

20 Anonymous 1872.

21 Anonymous 1872: 87.

22 Anonymous 1872: 87–88.

23 Broca 1865: 6–7.

differentiation between physiognomic and ethnographic photographs was completely new. Neither Broca nor his British colleague John H. Lamprey, who also wrote instructions for photographing native peoples at that time, made this distinction.²⁴ The president of the British Ethnological Society, Thomas H. Huxley, used the term “ethnological photographs”²⁵ for those kinds of images that had, from his perspective, a minor value for scientific research because they would not give exact information about the physical features of those portrayed.²⁶ The Russian scholars were among the first in Europe to articulate the need for a clear differentiation between physiognomic and ethnographic photographs²⁷ and to declare their explicit interest in the photographic depiction of the everyday culture of the peoples that had been scrutinised. In addition, the IRGO instructions from 1872 reflect the technical development of camera equipment. In the early 1870s, cameras were lighter and easier to transport. From then on, it was increasingly possible to take photographs directly in situ.

The 1870s as the decade of “Albumania”

In the history of the Russian Empire the 1870s were the époque of the photo album. The most outstanding project was the production of the *Turkestan Album*,²⁸ initiated by the governor-general of the newly founded Turkestan governor-generalship, Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufman (1818–1882). The *Turkestan Album* was produced from 1871 to 1872 and includes about 1,200 photographs arranged in six volumes under the thematic sections of Archaeology, Ethnography, and Trade and History. The photographs were taken by different photographers, of whom only the owner of a Tashkent-based photo studio, Nikolai N. Nekhoroshev, and the military photographer²⁹ Grigorii E.

²⁴ Lamprey 1869.

²⁵ Quoted in Edwards 2001: 135 (Imperial College, University of London, Huxley Papers, 30. f. 75).

²⁶ Edwards 2001: 135.

²⁷ In the same year, the German medical doctor and anthropologist Adolf Bastian criticised the first part of the photo album “Antropologisch–Ethnologisches Album in Photographien von C. Dammann in Hamburg 1873–1874” (Anthropological and Ethnological Album in Photographs by Carl Dammann in Hamburg 1873–1874) for not differentiating more clearly between ethnographic and anthropological photographs: Hempel 2007: 187–188.

²⁸ *Turkestanskii al'bom* 1871–1872.

²⁹ On the development of military photography and its influence on the development of photo techniques in Russia, see Gorshenina/Sonntag 2018: 327–331.



Figure 3.1: “Ethnic groups of the Turkestan *krai*. Kara-Kyrgyz” (*Tipy narodnostei Turkestanskago kraia. Kara-Kirgizy*). *Turkestanskii al’bom*. Tom I. Plate 5. Library of Congress Online Catalogue. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/phpdata/pageturner.php?type=&agg=ppmsca&item=09950&seq=11>.

Krivtsov can be identified.³⁰ The complete version of this hitherto unseen photo project was produced in seven exemplars that were intended for the tsar himself, the tsarevich, the Imperial Public Library in St Petersburg, the Petersburg Art Academy, the Public Library of Tashkent and governor-general von Kaufman, which shows how exclusive the circle of recipients was.³¹

The Ethnography section is composed of two albums with a total of 496 photographs.³² It starts with portraits of the local population presented under the title “National types of the Turkestan district”. Interestingly, the representatives are not depicted in the profile/full-face style, although the title suggests a pursuit of typification and classification. Rather, the lower classes (Figure 3.1) and the elites are portrayed in a head-on or half-profile view in an aestheticising manner similar to European portrait photography. The local aristocracy, like the khan of Kokand and his sons, are portrayed in half-portraits, typical of the photographic portraiture of sovereigns (Figure 3.2).

³⁰ Soloveva 2010: 65. On Krivtsov, see Morozov 1953: 45.

³¹ The album was presented to a wider public in 1872 at the Polytechnical Exhibition in Moscow, in 1873 at the World Exposition in Vienna and in 1875 at the Parisian Geographical Congress: Fournier 1875: 40; Gorshenina 2007: 330–331.

³² See the digitalised album of the Library of Congress, last modified 22 December 2019. http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/coll/287_turkestan.html#access (12 July 2020).



Figure 3.2: “The Kokand khan and his sons” (*Kokandskii khan i ego synov’ia*). *Turkestanskii al’bom*. Tom I. Plate 11. Library of Congress Online Catalogue. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/phpdata/pageturner.php?type=&agg=ppmsca&item=09950&seq=17>.

The aim of organising the peoples of Russian Turkestan into types that is expressed by the title is not apparent in the visual staging of the people depicted, who are portrayed not as “types” but as individuals. This is underlined by the fact that every single person is presented with his or her name – regardless of their social status. Hence, the *Turkestan Album* did not deliver what scholars had been trying to accumulate since the Ethnographic Exposition: seemingly unstaged “type shots” in profile and full-face view, which focus on the physiognomic features of those portrayed without any aestheticisation. This lack of “scientific reference”³³ might have been the reason why, only three years after the completion of the *Turkestan Album*, another album project was initiated by the Petersburg orientalists – although they were already in possession of one of the seven *Turkestan Albums*, as von Kaufman had donated his exemplar to the Faculty of oriental studies in 1874.³⁴ The Petersburg orientalists around Vasilii V. Grigor’ev (1816–1881)³⁵ contacted von Kaufman regarding the production of a new album, which they wanted to present at the Third International Congress of Orientalists in 1876. For this purpose, again, new guidelines

³³ Edwards 2009: 190.

³⁴ Gorshenina 2007: 333.

³⁵ On Grigor’ev, see Tolz 2011: 8.

were formulated. Surprisingly, the Petersburg orientalists ordered “type shots” exclusively, although the focus of the exhibition that would accompany the congress was the ethnography of the peoples of Turkestan – and not the anthropological study of their physical features. They requested photographs of the different peoples who inhabited the Turkestan district. Some of them were to be photographed nude so that their anatomy and the contours of their bodies would be clear.³⁶ In January 1876 von Kaufman provided 1,104 roubles³⁷ and hired the Tashkent-based professional photographer Vladislav Kozlovskii to put these instructions into practice. Kozlovskii did not deliver the pictures demanded of naked bodies, but his physiognomic photographs arranged in the album *National Types of Central Asia (Tipy narodnostei Srednei Azii)*³⁸ set the standard for “type shots” in the Russian Empire from that point until the period of Dudin’s photographic practice.³⁹

The brown leather album is decorated with golden letters and contains 170 photographs of eighty-five individuals in 20 x 27 cm dimensions on albumen print. The photographs show a full-face view as well as the profile of every portrayed person as demanded and are taken in front of the same dark background. Additionally, the age and the supposed nationality of the models are recorded on every plate. Altogether, the album shows twenty-two different “national types” and includes images of women and men. Kozlovskii’s method of identifying his sitters as members of certain ethnic communities remains unclear. Most likely, the labels under which he portrayed them in the album did not match their self-definition in many cases. Nonetheless, Kozlovskii’s photographic depiction and the presentation of the locals under different ethnic categories strengthened the idea of existing and clearly identifiable “national types”, regardless of how those portrayed defined themselves. This album is the first systematic attempt to photographically document the peoples of Russian Turkestan in a supposedly scientific manner (Figure 3.3).⁴⁰

While Kozlovskii could work independently from his clients in the imperial metropole at that time, he was much more supervised in his next scientific engagement. While accompanying the expedition of the French-Hungarian anthropologist Charles

36 *Tretii mezhdunarodnyi s’ezd orientalistov* 1881: xvi.

37 *Tretii mezhdunarodnyi s’ezd orientalistov* 1881: xvii.

38 *Tipy narodnostei Srednei Azii* 1876. The album is archived in the RGO under the signature “F. 112. Op. 1. No. 247”. The Library of Congress also holds an album which is completely digitalised: <https://www.loc.gov/item/61057703/> (last modified 15 May 2020).

39 On the *Turkestan Album* and the album *National Types of Central Asia*, see Dikovitskaia 2007: 104–108.

40 The album was criticised for depicting individuals deemed unrepresentative of their ethnic group: Gorshenina 2007: 335.



Figure 3.3: “Uzbek, 29 years old” (*Uzbek, 29 l.*). *Types of Central Asian peoples (Typy narodnostei Srednei Azii)*. Plate 22. Library of Congress Online Catalogue. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.35345/?sp=22&st=image>.

Eugene de Ujfalvy de Mező-Kövesd to Russian Turkestan in 1876–1877,⁴¹ he could no longer ignore the scientists’ demand for nude photographs.⁴² The result was the *Atlas anthropologique des peuples du Ferghanah*⁴³ with seventy photographs of twenty-five men and ten women from the Ferghana valley depicted in the nude, who had partly been forced or paid for posing.⁴⁴ Interestingly, he depicted some of the models with a tape measure in the background though they were placed on a chair, so the measurements could not inform the observer accurately about their

⁴¹ On Ujfalvy and the 1876–1877 photo project, see the article by Felix de Montety in this book.

⁴² Ujfalvy published several monographs on the scientific results of this journey, e.g. Ujfalvy de Mező-Kövesd 1880. His wife published reminiscences of her travels: Ujfalvy-Bourdon 1880. On the expeditions of French scholars to Central Asia see Gorshenina 1998: 2003.

⁴³ Ujfalvy de Mező-Kövesd 1879.

⁴⁴ Ujfalvy-Bourdon 1880: 306, 321.

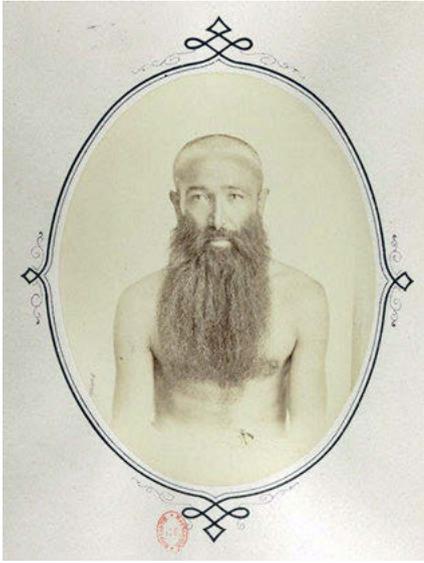


Figure 3.4: Charles-Eugène Ujfalvy de Mező-Kövesd, *Atlas anthropologique des peuples du Ferghanah* (Expédition française en Russie, en Sibérie et dans le Turkestan vol. IV). Paris: Leroux, 1879. Plate 3.

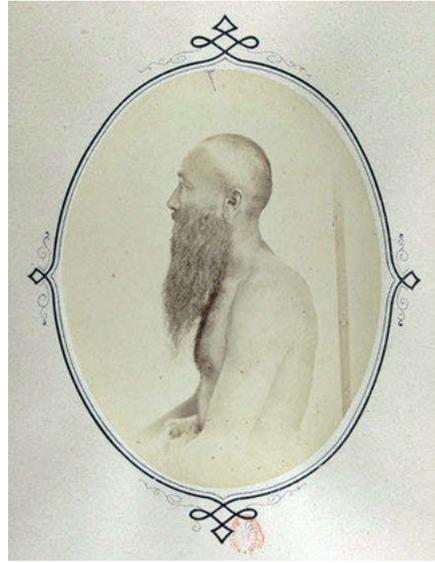


Figure 3.5: Charles-Eugène Ujfalvy de Mező-Kövesd, *Atlas anthropologique des peuples du Ferghanah* (Expédition française en Russie, en Sibérie et dans le Turkestan vol. IV). Paris: Leroux, 1879. Plate 4.

height. The tape measure functions in the staging as a seemingly “scientific reference”⁴⁵ that suggests authenticity and scientific reliability (Figures 3.4 and 3.5).

These two albums definitively set the standards of physiognomic photographs in the 1870s. The differentiation between ethnographic images showing objects of material culture and scenes of everyday life and “type shots” that focused on physiognomy was finally established.⁴⁶ Samuil Dudin produced the former as well as the latter on his ethnographic expeditions commissioned by the Russian Museum. Nude photographs like those in Ujfalvy’s *Atlas anthropologique* remained an exception in the Russian Empire, as they are in the Dudin collection.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Edwards 2009: 190.

⁴⁶ Another example of an ethnographer and anthropologist who made that clear distinction is Aleksei Kharuzin. For an analysis of his photographs of the 1980s, see Elias 2015.

⁴⁷ Dudin took two photographs of naked women: REM. Fototeka. F. 11–1594. Koll. 45–39 / 45–40.

Dudin’s “anthropological types”

About half of Dudin’s 1,427 gelatine print photographs portray the local population or highlight their costumes. Concerning his images, Dudin himself differentiated between “anthropological types” and “costumes”.⁴⁸ The images of “types” focus on physiognomy, the images of “costumes” concentrate on the detailed depiction of traditional clothing presented by locals.

Most of Dudin’s “type shots” show male representatives of the local population, but he also took photographs of women and even some children.⁴⁹ As late as 1921, in an article on photography on ethnographic expeditions, Dudin still recommends producing more images of “types” rather than too few.⁵⁰ To record his “anthropological types” he used a special portrait objective with a long-focus lens. He took care to shoot the photos in the shade so that the models would not be dazzled by the sun, causing them to squint or close their eyes. According to Dudin, it is difficult to find the correct position for the sitter’s head because in both profile and full-face pictures their eyes and ears have to be at the same level. He recommends the use of a special instrument to hold the head in position.⁵¹ It remains unclear how Dudin convinced his sitters to pose in this quite unnatural way, as he does not describe his photographic practice concerning the “type shots”. In Figures 3.6 and 3.7, a physiognomic portrayal of a forty-year-old man from Ashkhabad, one can detect Dudin striving for an identical position of the eyes and ears in both pictures. Although he did not use a light fabric to cover the background, as he recommends in his article,⁵² the sitter’s profile is silhouetted clearly in front of the light wall behind him. Compared to the “type shots” in the *National Types of Central Asia* album, one can clearly see that Dudin adapted his staging in a manner quite close to that of the nineteenth-century standard, though he did not hide the surroundings with the use of a screen backdrop.

It is surprising, however, that Dudin gives advice on how to produce good “anthropological types”⁵³ without reflecting on how the sitters might have experienced

48 Dudin 1921: 49.

49 While it appears there were no problems in taking photographs of nomadic women, it was unthinkable to photograph urban Sart women. In her illuminating article on the costumes of Sart women, Emel’ianenko, has pointed out that almost all photographs of alleged Sart women show prostitutes, see: Emel’ianenko 2020: 98.

50 Dudin 1921: 50.

51 Dudin 1921: 34, 50.

52 Dudin 1921: 50.

53 Dudin 1921: 49.

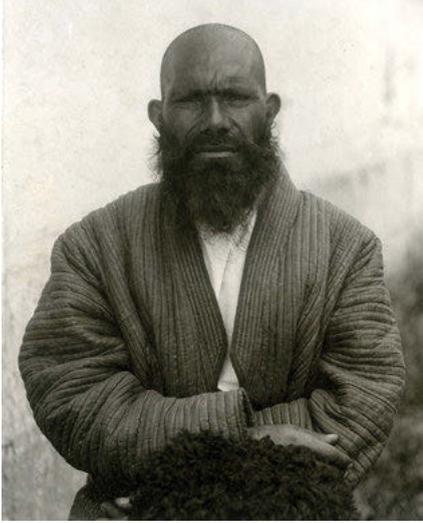


Figure 3.6: “Tekinets 40 years old, Ashkhabad” (*Tekinets 40 let, g. Ashkhabad*). REM. Fototeka. F. No. 11–1594. Koll. 40–104a. Size 13.8 x 9.9 cm.

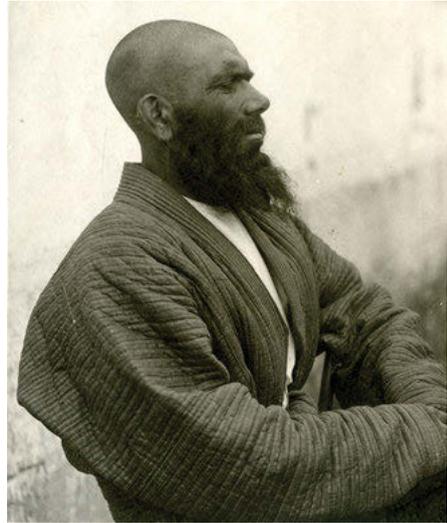


Figure 3.7: “Tekinets 40 years old, Ashkhabad” (*Tekinets 40 let, g. Ashkhabad*). REM. Fototeka. F. No. 11–1594. Koll. 40–104b. Size 13.8 x 10 cm, gelatine print.

this situation of unequal power relations. “Type shots” degrade those portrayed to the role of a passive object of study without any influence on or agency in the evolving image of themselves. In this way, “type shots” were an incarnation of the colonial gaze,⁵⁴ reducing subjects to types and classifying human beings as if they were a plant or animal species. Photographic typing contributed a lot to the visual construction of a “Russian Orient” and the orientalisation of the peoples of Turkestan.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Gadebusch identifies photographs that highlight supposed ethnic physical features as a typical manifestation of the colonial gaze: Gadebusch 2012: 16.

⁵⁵ Said 2014: 11–12, 54. For recent studies on orientalism and photography, see Behdad 2016; Behdad/Gartlan 2013. The ways in which Said’s concept of orientalism is adaptable to the Russian imperial context is discussed by Knight 2000; Khalid 2000; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2010; Tolz 2011.

Dudin’s new approach to depicting costumes

Dudin’s treatment of “type shots” in his article is rather perfunctory, he pays more attention to the photographs of costumes presented by locals. Firstly, he recommends a photo plate format of 18 x 24 cm and a reduction scale of seven to eight.⁵⁶ For photographs of costumes, one needs – according to Dudin – a full-face and a profile view as well as the possible addition of some pictures showing details. In his view, it is difficult to arrange the models in “free poses”⁵⁷ in a way that makes their costumes’ characteristics become visible. Dudin wants to prevent the models from standing in front of the camera stiffly “like soldiers”.⁵⁸ The photographer’s most important aim should be to evoke “natural poses”.⁵⁹ To get this kind of seemingly relaxed posture, the photographer should himself demonstrate the pose he wants the model to take. He reports that a crowd will typically form around the photographer and one of the spectators will usually try to help by posing and mediating between the photographer and the photographed.⁶⁰ The spontaneous aid provided by locals suggests that the inhabitants of Russian Turkestan did not necessarily feel uncomfortable with being photographed. The photographer’s interest in the national costumes might not have been interpreted as orientalisising voyeurism but in a positive light as respect for the local culture and its values. The photographic practice, in this case, created contact between the visitor from the imperial centre and the local population. It initiated an interaction that counteracted a strict hierarchical relationship between the photographer and the photographed. Nonetheless, the poses that seemed natural to Dudin might have been considered unnatural or uncomfortable by the locals. Thus, in this case, the photographic staging was influenced heavily by the expectations and preconceptions of the photographer from the metropole, showing only what he expected to be natural and unaffected.

One photograph is particularly illustrative of how Dudin imagined his “free, natural poses”⁶¹ (Figure 3.8). The image shows two young men dressed in light shirts and trousers and sheep fur hats. If one compares the photograph with a costume picture from the *Turkestan Album* (Figure 3.9), it becomes clear what sets his approach apart and makes his images special. While in the *Turkestan*

⁵⁶ Dudin 1921: 33.

⁵⁷ Dudin 1921: 49: “*v svobodnye pozy*”.

⁵⁸ Dudin 1921: 49: “*stoiianie po soldatski – eto samoe khudshee dlia kostiuma*”.

⁵⁹ Dudin 1921: 49: “*svobodnykh estestvennykh poz*”.

⁶⁰ Dudin 1921: 49.

⁶¹ Dudin 1921: 49: “*svobodnykh estestvennykh poz*”.

Album one can see the stiff, soldier-like poses that Dudin disapproved of, the posture of the two men portrayed by Dudin appear unconstrained and less staged. Also, the chosen background strengthens the impression of naturalness. This is the result of Dudin photographing the two young men on the street, again, without the use of an artificially neutral backdrop. He tries to reduce the photographer's presence by encouraging his models to ignore the camera lens and not to return the photographer's gaze. Yet, the seemingly natural poses of the two models are highly composed and seem to express the typical posture of the portrayed. Dudin's compositions should evoke the accidental and unstaged, but in fact they are conceived with a precise aesthetic.



Figure 3.8: “Men’s costume, tunic, Merv” (*Muzhskoi kostium, rubakha, g. Merv*). REM. Fototeka. F. No. 11–1594. Koll. 40–31. Size 22.4 x 16.6 cm, gelatine print.



Figure 3.9: “Men’s clothing of the Central Asians. Upper Khalat” (*Muzhskaia odezhda Sredneaziatsev. Verkhonii khalat*). Chast 2. Tom 1, Plate 69. No. 201. Library of Congress Online Catalogue. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/phpdata/pageturner.php?type=&agg=ppmsca&item=09950&seq=75>.

Dudin’s ideal of picturing everyday life

Dudin was particularly fascinated by capturing street scenes in snapshots and by depicting movement, even though about half of his collection shows “types” or costumes. In scenes of everyday life, Dudin wanted the depicted scene to be legible to the future observer. To achieve this, the relationships between all of those depicted had to be clear and they had to be “absolutely natural concerning their movements”.⁶² Dudin deemed photographs of street life to be failures if any of the people photographed looked directly into the camera lens. To avoid their gaze, he recommended waiting until subjects had lost their interest in the camera and returned to their work before taking a photograph. According to Dudin, the subject usually stopped paying attention to the camera if the photographer said he had already taken the picture.⁶³ To illustrate the innovation of Dudin’s approach, another comparison with the *Turkestan Album* is quite illuminating. For the most part, photographers thirty years earlier had used a transportable screen backdrop for market scenes or street life, which lent a sense of the artificially staged to the depicted scenes. The subjects photographed, who usually looked directly at the camera, seemed exposed – as on a stage – and frozen in their movements and interactions in front of the screen (Figure 3.10).



Figure 3.10: “Scenes in Samarkand Square (Registan) and its bazaar types. Selling *khalva*” (*Stseny na Samarkandskoi ploshchadi (Registan) i eia bazarnye tipy*). *Prodavets khalvy [khalva furush]*. *Turkestanskii al’bom*. Chast 2. Tom. II. Plate 139, No. 425. Library of Congress Online Catalogue. http://www.loc.gov/pictures/phpdata/page_turner.php?type=&agg=ppmsca&item=09952&seq=61.

⁶² Dudin 1921: 51.

⁶³ Dudin 1921: 51.



Figure 3.11: “Copper engraver” (*Gravër po medī*). REM. Fototeka. F. No. 11–1594. Koll. 48–114. Size 16.9 x 22.4, gelatine print.

Contrary to this photographic staging, Dudin aimed to hide the construction and artistic composition of his scenes, and to seemingly catch a moment of everyday life incidentally. To get this kind of photo, Dudin recommended using a field camera (*momental’nyi apparat*) so that the photographer could react quickly and ideally without being noticed by the subject.⁶⁴ By using this kind of inconspicuous camera, one could avoid having the depicted persons “brighten up”⁶⁵ their movements in order to create a more attractive photographic motif. His remark suggests that being photographed was perceived as something positive and desirable by many locals.

Dudin’s composition of his street and market scenes is shown in a picture of an engraver doing his work in Samarkand (Figure 3.11). Seemingly without noticing the photographer, he works diligently, surrounded by objects ready for sale. Dudin’s harmoniously composed image does not stage the tradesman in his workshop; rather it observes the engraver as if the photographer were not even present. The *Turkestan Album* contains many pictures that show tradesmen and merchants too, but there the people depicted usually interrupt their work and look directly at the camera, which creates unnatural, frozen poses and puts these people on display (Figure 3.12). While the photographs in the *Turkestan Album* were taken

⁶⁴ Dudin 1921: 38, 46.

⁶⁵ Dudin 1921: 38: “[...] chto uchastniki sceny, zametiv zhelanie fotografirovat’ ee, prekrashchaliut svoi deistviia [...]”.



Figure 3.12: “Shoe making. Selling ready-made shoes” (*Sapozhnoe proizvodstvo. Prodazha gotovoi obuvi*). *Turkestanskii al’bom*. Chast 3. Tom. 1. Plate 28, No. 133. Library of Congress Online Catalogue. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/phpdata/pageturner.php?type=&agg=ppmsca&item=09954&seq=33>.

directly from the front, Dudin chose a lightly sloped perspective, which allows the observer to become more deeply immersed in the scene and gives an impression of immediacy. The introduction of gelatin dry plates in the 1870s and the increasing incorporation of aperture stops in cameras for regulating exposure time in the late 1880s made it easier and easier to capture movement, which benefitted Dudin. But even in the late 1860s and 1870s, this was technically possible, albeit difficult.⁶⁶

In capturing street life, Dudin preferred to work in Samarkand, where – unlike Bukhara – the urban population already knew him well and was no longer frightened of his camera.⁶⁷ Dudin tried to familiarise himself with the locals because their trust in him and his unusual technical equipment was required for him to be able to catch moments of Turkestan street life in the unobtrusive, casual style he had developed.

Dudin would start work in the early morning and spend the whole day strolling the streets looking for new motifs.⁶⁸ On one occasion, he reached Registan Square in Samarkand during Friday prayers, and captured the scene in a series of ten photographs (Figures 3.13–3.15).

⁶⁶ See: Ward 2008.

⁶⁷ REM. F. 1. Op. 2. D. 247. L. 21.

⁶⁸ REM. F. 1. Op. 2. D. 247. L. 21.

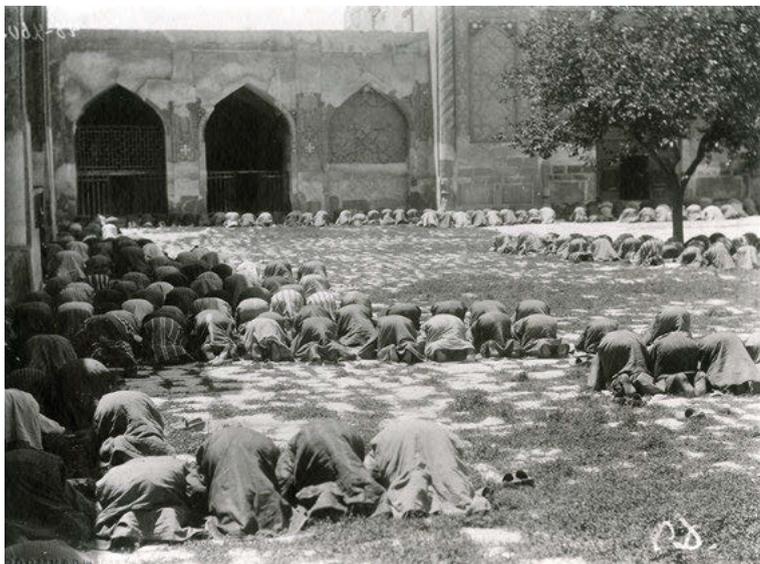


Figure 3.13: “Prayer at the Tilya-Kori Madrasah” (*Molitva v medrese Tilli-kary*). REM. Fototeka. F. No. 11–1594. Koll. 48–261. Size 22.4 x 16.7 cm, gelatine print.



Figure 3.14: “Prayer at the Tilya-Kori Madrasah” (*Molitva v medrese Tilli-kary*). REM. Fototeka. F. No. 11–1594. Koll. 48–262. Size 22.4 x 16.7 cm, gelatine print.



Figure 3.15: “Prayer at the Tilya-Kori Madrasah” (*Molitva v medrese Tili-kary*). REM. Fototeka. F. No. 11–1594. Koll. 48–263. Size 22.4 x 16.7 cm, gelatine print.



Figure 3.16: “Rituals performed by Muslims during prayer / *namaz*” (*Obrjadi sovershaemye musul'manami pri molitve / namaz*). *Turkestanskii al'bom*. Chast 2. Tom. 1. Plate 58. Library of Congress Online Catalogue. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/phpdata/pageturner.php?type=&agg=ppmsca&item=09950&seq=64>.

Together, the photographs portray the successive ritual movements of the prayer precisely, like a flick book. To produce these ten images, Dudin mingled with the praying Muslims like a participant-observer, photographing them from behind without causing protest or even being noticed. He used a method generally associated with Bronisław Malinowski's new fieldwork approaches and the British social anthropology of the 1920s,⁶⁹ which shows how innovative Dudin's method of photographing street life was. His depiction of people practising an activity counteracts visual essentialisation, since Dudin's focus is on dynamic action and not on the typing of a single person.⁷⁰

This contrasts sharply with the depiction of praying people in the *Turkestan Album* (Figure 3.16), where the subjects were not photographed in actual prayer during a service in a mosque or madrasa, but rather were asked to roll out their prayer rug in front of a screen backdrop and pretend to pray in front of the photographer and his apparatus. In this visual staging, the photographer had absolute control over the scene depicted and the emerging image by displaying the photographed people as if they were on a stage while performing their "exotic" rituals. The Muslims portrayed were reduced to passive objects of curiosity and were completely exposed to the voyeuristic gaze of the camera.

The motion that Dudin captured during the Friday prayers was slow and becomes apparent only in the series of pictures. But Dudin was also capable of recording faster sequences of movement, like dancing. In Bukhara he came across a group of dancers, whom he captured with surprising clarity despite their quick movements. Whereas one picture portrays a single dancer in close-up (Figure 3.17), the other shows the whole group in the midst of the assembled spectators (Figure 3.18).

As with the series of Friday prayers, in these two photographs it seems as if Dudin was among the dancers himself, thus reducing the distance between the observed and observer, with the latter appearing as a participant in the scene. Dudin's camera does not physically look down on the photographed but rather shows them at the same level, levelling the hierarchy between photographer and photographed. The slightly blurred hair, arms, legs and costumes of the dancers evoke a sense of authenticity and strengthen the impression of fleeting moment. In contrast to the displaying and exposing "type shots" or costume pictures, the dancer evades the foreign control of the photographer with his dynamic movement. At the same time as Dudin loses control over the staging as the producer of the

⁶⁹ On Malinowski's method of participant observation, see Barth 2005: 18–19. For a comparison of British social anthropology and the Russian ethnographic tradition, see Hofmeister 2014.

⁷⁰ On a more or less "non-hierarchical" way of staging by the depiction of movement, see Burghardt 2015: 19.



Figure 3.17: “Bukhara. Bacha dance”
(*g. Bukhara. Tanets bachei*). REM. Fototeka.
F.No. 11– 1594. Koll. 42–120, gelatin print.



Figure 3.18: “Bacha dance during a feast (*Tamasha*)” (*Tanets bachei, na Tamashe*). REM.
Fototeka. F. No. 11–1594. Koll. 48–297, gelatin print.

image, the portrayed dancer gains power over his own visual depiction. This manner of catching a passing moment was Dudin's ideal of ethnographic photography.

Conclusion: The photographer as a participant observer

The Dudin collection produced between 1900 and 1902 for the Russian Museum is an ambivalent photographic archive. Dudin took a large number of “type shots” and even some pictures of nude women, which degrade the depicted by making them passive objects of study and embody an orientalisating colonial gaze towards the peoples of Russian Turkestan. Regarding his “types”, Dudin continued the nineteenth-century traditions of anthropological photography without any reservations concerning its usefulness or legitimacy.

At the same time, his oeuvre is also characterised by a completely new approach: the aim of the photographer to gradually step back, cease to be noticed and capture the subjects in their daily routines. At the turn of the century, the ethnographic genre still lacked the standards for staging that it had for physiognomic photographs. Dudin took advantage of this semantic uncertainty and initiated a new era of ethnographic photography in which the photographer increasingly mingled with the subjects and shot photos “from within” and not “from above”. While the situation of the photographic recording itself remained a colonial one, the new pictures – which try to observe and not to expose, and which increasingly capture motion – were less hierarchical than before. The capture of motion and the accentuation of the “momentariness of the recording”⁷¹ constitute, for Anja Burghardt, the essential characteristics of a “hierarchy-free depiction”.⁷² Burghardt, however, dates this development to as late as the 1920s, in the context of the New Vision (Neues Sehen) movement. Yet, one can already recognise the beginnings of this tendency in Samuil Dudin's photographic oeuvre, which illustrates a shift between the photographer's perspective and the subject under scrutiny; in the case of the dancer in Bukhara, for example, the subject is captured in a moment of ultimate artistic expression without any degrading typification.

71 Burghardt 2015: 21.

72 Burghardt 2015: 20.

Dudin’s occupation as a lecturer at the Faculty of Geography at Leningrad University after the 1917 revolution⁷³ and his publication of two articles on photography in ethnographic expeditions of the 1920s⁷⁴ ensured that his ideal of the fleeting, momentary record was spread to a new generation of photographers, who could implement and develop it further on their own ethnographic expeditions.⁷⁵

However, his large collection was only produced for the museum archive and was never presented to a wider public.⁷⁶ In this regard, Dudin’s ethnographic-anthropological photographs of Russian Turkestan had a similar fate to most nineteenth- and early twentieth-century collections, which were largely unexamined on the basis of a special analytical framework and rarely integrated into scientific publications.⁷⁷ Until the picture postcards that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century⁷⁸ began to spread images of Russian “national types” throughout the empire,⁷⁹ ethnographic-anthropological photographs were confined to a very limited circle of recipients.

73 Karskii 1930: 341–358; Nikitin 2006: 44.

74 Dudin 1924; Dudin 1921.

75 The photographic collection of an expedition to Central Asia from 1926 to 1929 in the Museum of the Academy of Science includes several pictures that show people in motion. As Dudin was the head of the museum’s photographic department until his death in 1929, it is most likely that the photographers of this expedition were influenced by Dudin’s approach. Seventy of these photographs are printed in Rzehak/Pristschepova 1994.

76 The approximately 2,000 photographs from the ethnographic expeditions to the Jewish pale of settlement taken between 1912 and 1914 under the leadership of Semen An-sky experienced a similar fate, see: Ivanov 2009: 35–36. Ulrike Huhn has shown that, even during the Soviet era, photographs of ethnographic expeditions generally disappeared into museum archives immediately after they were taken and were neither published nor exhibited: Huhn 2017: 374. Only some photographs and drawings Dudin made of figures and costumes from the collection of the *Kunstkamera* were exhibited in the museum in 1903: see Abaidulova 2020.

77 Also Valeriia Prishchepova assumes that the photographs were intended first and foremost for the museum archives: Prishchepova 2014: 215. One of the rare scientific publications of the nineteenth century that includes printed photographs is Aleksei N. Kharuzin’s monograph: Kharuzin 1889. On how Kharuzin uses his photographs as evidence in his scientific arguments, see Elias 2015.

78 Rowley 2013: 19–31.

79 The University of Basel holds a digitalised collection of Russian picture postcards from the imperial period that includes many ethnographic motifs. <https://dg.philhist.unibas.ch/de/be-reiche/osteuropaeische-geschichte/forschung/postkarten-russland/> (9 August 2020).

Abbreviations

MAE RAN	Musei antropologii i ètnografii Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk (Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences)
OLEAE	Obshchestvo liubitelei estestvoznaniia, antropologii i ètnografii (Society of Amateurs of Natural Science, Anthropology and Ethnography)
REM	Rossiiskii ètnograficheskii musei (Russian Ethnographical Museum)
IRGO	Imperatorskoe Russkoe geograficheskoe obshchestvo (Russian Geographical Society)

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Anton Ikhsanov

4 The photographic legacy of Alexander N. Samoilovich (1880–1938)

Abstract: This article is dedicated to the study of photographic activity by the prominent Russian Turkologist Alexander N. Samoilovich (1880–1938). The primary focus of modern-day investigations of his career is concentrated on his linguistic and literary studies or his public service in the 1920s–1930s. However, photographic activity was an essential part of his academic methodology. In this article this practice is studied as a “net of beliefs”, determined by cultural space and the dominant academic methodology. Academicians of this epoch believed in the dominance of textuality and the importance of aesthetics in their explorations of the “Orient”. They applied those categories to their work on the visual materials to explore the inner meanings behind the local communities and their lives. Moreover, the practice of photographing is examined in this article as an act of communication. This article studies the change of this practice in connection with the scholar’s vision of the concept of “academic truth” and his main object of study (the “Orient”), which was changing due to political and cultural circumstances. The analysis is based on three photo collections Samoilovich created in 1902, 1906 and 1921.

Keywords: Samoilovich, Turkmens, photographic collection, cultural self, scholarly persona

Introduction

Similarly to a photograph print – if a photographic plate is insufficiently sensitive, its exposure is for a short time and the photographed object is poorly illuminated – [it] will give us only the shape and the most prominent elements of an object [...] this study is far from being the complete research of the Teke vernacular.¹

¹ OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 129. L. 5. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

Note: I want to express my gratitude to Dr Rabia Latif-khan for proofreading the first draft of this article and Marina P. Samoilovich for providing me with access to her home archive. I want to thank the editors of this volume and colleagues from the archives and academic institutions who were involved in the work with these materials.

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These words are an introduction to the thesis written by the prominent Turkologist Alexander N. Samoilovich. Samoilovich was a Turkologist-encyclopaedist, academic and representative of Petersburg/Leningrad oriental studies. Samoilovich is well known due to his comparative studies of the Turkic vernaculars and their academic classification and due to his public activity within the cultural policy of the “Soviet Orient”.² The comparison of blurred focus as characteristic of a photograph to the limited data about a vernacular presented in his thesis is closely connected to the scholar’s methodology of knowledge construction about the “Orient”. Photography is a practice of visualising reality, which was considered to be more precise than drawing. Its goal was to make a study more detailed and more verifiable by introducing an additional source of information. However, this comparison reveals the controversial nature of this practice, which could be a source of falsification and misrepresentation.³ Orientalists, in turn, positioned their community as a specific institutional structure with a monopoly on the formulation of “objective” knowledge about Asian and African peoples and cultures. This knowledge was determined by a particular academic standard. An “objective” representation was based on the collecting of facts and on their analysis and publication.⁴ However, by that time this sphere of academia was already seen as somewhat dubious and was later severely criticised.⁵ Samoilovich’s comparison of photography and linguistics is a form of reference to the necessity for “learnings of fundamentals” (*fundamental’noe osvoenie*) and “detailed description” (*detal’noe opisanie*) within academic research.⁶ Detailed description and validity are the basis for “objective” knowledge construction. Visual and audio recording, interviews with informants or a search for primary sources were crucial for the orientalist’s work.

This article examines Samoilovich’s creation of “objective” knowledge about the “Orient” through studying one of his research practices (photography). My idea is not to track the career or biography of Samoilovich but to see how the comprehension of “objectivity” as an “epistemic virtue” by Russian academia constantly affected his work and his legacy. Therefore, my attention is concentrated on the relationship between ethics in academia and practices of knowledge creation (in particular, Samoilovich’s photographic activity as a marker of validity in

2 Blagova 2008: 353–479.

3 Ionov 1915: 217–222.

4 Volkov 2014: 26–63.

5 The initial wave of critique of Oriental studies was written in the 1910s by Ahmed Zeki Validov. But it was not until the 1950s that serious conceptual criticism of the discourse emerged.

6 OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 31. L. 22.

his research). This focus determines a dimension of practices not as a concept – the constant imperative of “truth” – but as an intertwined ethical “net of beliefs”.⁷ This methodology avoids overgeneralising concepts (e.g. the *épistème* of the “Russian cause” (*russkoe delo*) in Denis Volkov’s thesis⁸), because “every principle related to a human being has its ‘history before’ and ‘history after’, and every variation of cultural space is local within the cultural time”.⁹ Consequently, we can speak about a scholar’s Self being interconnected with the realisation of a practice. Otherwise, not all the scholars who were identified as disciples of Baron Victor R. Rozen (1849–1908)¹⁰ or adherents of “the new school of Turkic linguistics”¹¹ were strictly following all the approaches proposed by their tutors. The interaction with “Other”, working conditions and the complex nature of the practices themselves may have influenced the researchers’ perception of the “universal” approaches that were created by previous generations and learned during their university training. In our case, Samoilovich contradicted the instructions that he received from St Petersburg during his in-field research. For example, he found out that the necessity to communicate with educated Turkmens was more important to understanding their culture than a survey of the illiterate population.

My methodology also requires an avoidance of conventional linear structures. The concept of a “scholarly persona” as a “model” of who a scholar is, “characterised by distinct combinations of talents, virtues, and/or skills [...] [which] became visible only when it was contrasted with others”¹² can be fruitful for the presentation of Samoilovich, not within any summarising “school” or “group”, but as a complex individual in time (an independent subject of knowledge production). Thus, the scholar’s activity can be described not as a part of the linear transition of approaches introduced by his predecessors but as a reaction to changes in his social status and the conditions of in-field work. Rather than present the transition of the scholar’s activity within changes in his career path (from privatdozent at the university to a public figure and state counsellor) or the change in universal approaches used within his field of analysis (such as colonial knowledge creation or the Japhetic theory), a key task of this article is to correlate this transition with a multilayered “net of beliefs” (in a slightly abstracted manner). This “net” is determined by the ways in which his criteria of “truth” formulated the grounds of his knowledge production.

7 Daston/Galison 2018: 34.

8 Volkov 2014: 26–63.

9 Daston/Galison 2018: 34.

10 Tolz 2011.

11 Blagova 2008: 17–94.

12 Herman 2019: 4–8.

These criteria are closely connected to his “epistemic vices and virtues” (for example, his intention to use “objectivity” combined with an orientalist comprehension). The analysis presented in this article also reveals the dynamics of the apprehension of meanings behind the photographs created by the researcher. It is important to stress the gap between the initial meanings introduced by Samoilovich himself and their later interpretation by his colleagues and other generations of scholars. Modern-day scholars actively use Samoilovich’s collections of photos for their studies of the Central Asian communal order and everyday life. However, these studies lack the contexts of the photographs’ creation. The conditions of their making make them very specific, with a particular relationship to time and spatial dimension.

This point requires a reference to the following idea: “[...] in the ambit of philology, [the epistemic vice] emerges out of the problematic of semantics, of generating knowledge about linguistic meanings. In philology, epistemic vice – as a broadly formative force that generates a rich experiential and agential subject – aims at undermining the explication of meaning and works toward the absurd, rather than power”.¹³

Oriental studies and ethnography concentrated on the explication of meanings behind social phenomena. The ultimate goal of scholars was to explain how local communities functioned and to find the reasons behind the inner processes of these groups. But scholars’ views were affected by previous studies and approaches (for example, this could lead to an exaggeration of religion’s impact on local life). This led to an overproduction of new narratives, which blurred scholars’ vision of their objects of study. In some cases, ethnographic research based on a fragmented picture of everyday life or an attempt to subdivide it could lead to “a cumulative process of data loss”.¹⁴ This article argues that the cataloguing of Samoilovich’s photographs standardised and flattened the meanings behind his photography. This process formulated the vision of his activity in the eyes of the generations that followed.

To make this idea clear, it is worth noting that a photograph is composed of at least four levels: framing, layout, image and text. These elements interact with one another. This interaction can generate new meanings than those held by the image on the photograph itself, and so can be part of a process of “Othering”.¹⁵ In this case, a photograph created by an orientalist but attributed to other specialists can create new limitations for interpretation.¹⁶ This reveals the double meaning of

¹³ Trüper 2019: 83–84.

¹⁴ Piette 2019: 135.

¹⁵ Holzberger 2018: 489.

¹⁶ Behdad 2013: 26.

visual documents – a doubling that can be both a result of an attempt to imply objectivity and a source of new objectivity (or misconception).¹⁷ For example, an attempt to use a photograph of a particular case (the house of a rich Turkmen) as an index for a category (Turkmen houses) can create a new “imagined” order of things. This “virtual reality” can be an important point of reference for a scholar, but has a limited relationship with a local community and its life.

Based on this theoretical framework, this article is composed of four parts. The first is dedicated to Samoilovich’s comprehension of the object of his research (“the Orient”), and the goals and tasks of his studies. This section delineates the centrality of “objectivity” as a goal in his research. Samoilovich’s methodology was based on several principles that created bonds between his epistemic constructs (such as the “vanishing nature” of Turkmen culture) and the referential meanings he created during his in-field research. Thus, photography was a bond between a reference and a reality. Photography was a crucial practice as a possible means of creating validity for his work and ideas. The second part is devoted to the influence of the extensive literature about “the Orient” on his view of the indigenous population. This influence is visible in the gallery of “*the oriental personae*” (*vostochnye cheloveki*), as Samoilovich called them in his diaries (see below). His exotifying perception of the Turkmens, taken from popular literature, was enhanced by his views of his future career in literature and academia. The third part describes the epistemic violence perpetrated by the museum catalogue. The specificity of the cataloguing process was a source of the re-formulation of meanings that were initially created by the orientalist. The cataloguing was based on the formulation of standardised indexes that facilitated the classification of the research objects. However, the erasure of context from the catalogues changed the interaction between framing, layout, image and texts. For example, a newly written description can easily erase the initial context of a photo’s creation. The same is true of the interpretation of an image itself. Therefore, Samoilovich’s photographic legacy has become a source for additional meanings and different interpretations that were not associated with the scholar’s experience. The last part overviews Samoilovich’s activity as a diplomat. It reveals his adherence to the same methodology that he previously used for his linguistic and ethnographic studies. He continued to use the bond between written texts (in particular, poetry) and the visuality of photography to show the significant and ambiguous change (the shift to the Soviet period with its new reality and heroes) that occurred during this epoch in regional history. This part aims to show the relationship between knowledge and authority in his research.

¹⁷ Daston/Galison 2018: 16.

Samoilovich as a scholarly persona

First of all, we should determine the object of Samoilovich's research for a better understanding of his research practices. This type of research is based on ego-documents: a group of sources primarily composed of diaries and correspondence. Currently, twenty-six of Samoilovich's diaries are preserved in the Department of Manuscripts at the Russian National Library.¹⁸ The diaries can be categorised into three groups: daily reports during his expeditions; the collection of linguistic and literary material (complemented by marginalia and commentary); and a collection of quotations from the main magazines and newspapers of his epoch, including descriptions of his work at the university. The idea of keeping a diary was initially related to his first expedition to the Transcaspian region in 1902. Samoilovich was not qualified in ethnographic research. Guided by the advice of his academic adviser Platon M. Melioranskii (1868–1906), he tried to fill this blank by reading the book *The Letters by N. F. Katanov from Siberia and Eastern Turkestan*. This work formed his approach to in-field studies, and was supplemented by the travelogues of the Hungarian orientalist Arminius Vambery (1832–1913) and Irish military journalist Edmund O'Donovan (1844–1883) about their life among Turkmens.¹⁹

Extracts from Samoilovich's diaries and early works clarify that, at the initial stages of his academic career, he had given particular attention to the discursive concept of “the Orient” and its functioning in orientalist research. For example, in one of his articles, written under the alias of “Isgender Muzafferogly”, he mentioned this term in relation to the specific period:

Thus the region was previously trampled by the nomadic cavalry to become the wild desert and bleak graveyard. Its gloomy monuments preserve the memories of the brightest past of ancient Persian and oriental Muslim epochs. [However], nowadays its uncertainty is over in favour of the more joyful times. And in [the epoch of] the established peace, the region starts to revive again. Undoubtedly, there are some difficulties and slow pace. But this revival is related to the Christian-European culture.²⁰

According to this quote and other diary entries, the scholar's vision of his research object was formulated by the terms “Orient” (“oriental Muslim epochs”), “oriental matters” (*vostochnye materii*)²¹ and “oriental personae” (*vostochnnye*

¹⁸ OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 77–81.

¹⁹ Abramzon 1978: 169–198.

²⁰ Isgender Muzzafer-ogly 1903: 157–158.

²¹ “I was talking with Semenov about the oriental matters. I wrote down what I should send him and what I should read myself.” OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 77. Notebook 1. L. 64.

cheloveki).²² It is worth noting that in this context those terms and notions were connected solely to Central Asia. Subsequently, in 1904, the Turkologist referenced Osip I. Senkovskii (1800–1858), one of the founders of Turkic philology studies in St Petersburg: “East and West are not two different world systems. But they are two planets orbiting two different Suns.”²³

This quote has two, interrelated meanings. First, the ontological difference between “East” and “West”, which were not limited by temporal or geographical boundaries but were formed by different contexts. Second, the idea that only an orientalist who was guided by specific rules of academic “truth” formulation could recognise the “Orient”. Only knowledge formulated that way could be the “truth”. The orientalist-academics reacted with incredulity to popular orientalism. It was a sphere where academic rules were inoperative. But Samoilovich had his own, personal attitude to this issue. This aspect of his activity is studied below.

In the last period of his academic career Samoilovich gradually deconstructed Senkovskii’s quote. Initially, his reflections were presented in the articles “Soviet Orient (The Sketches by an Enlightener)” (1930) and “N. Iu. Marr as an orientalist” (1934). He justified his refusal of the dichotomy between the “Orient” and the “West” not only as a reaction to the reforms then taking place in Turkey and the USSR (that created the “New East”) but as an understanding of the inner structure of “oriental” and “western” societies.²⁴ Thus the Turkish and Tatar republics were considered “western” countries, while the “lowest stratum” of European society was considered “oriental”. In his obituary of Sergei F. Oldenburg (1863–1934),

22 “I was accompanied by two oriental personae, one ‘European’ Armenian, who was a director of the local gymnasium, and the other apparently another lawyer.” OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 77. Notebook 1. L. 19. “[The ship’s cargo] was unloaded by the oriental personae in Astrakhan. 10 June. They were singing a local song: *janym* [my soul], *gardaşym* [my sibling], *kuzum* [my love; literally, my lamb] – and some additional words. It seems that it was the song about a girl. One oriental persona interprets it as *läle* [a maiden song]. Their method to carry cargo (absurdly imperfect) was a reason for an admiral’s irritation: ‘Freaks’ (*vot urody*). The personae understand that he addresses them and they start to shout ‘Ura!’. He reacts: ‘No, “ura!” is for Russians only’. When they come back to their song, he said: ‘That is more appropriate for you.’” OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 77. Notebook 1. L. 5.

23 OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 77. Notebook 2. L. 58. The original quote reads: “East and West are not two different countries of the world. They more resemble two different planets orbiting two different suns. The current Rome of the Pope is more similar to the ancient Rome of Caesar than the Asian state is to the European one. [The] East was understandable and comprehensible exclusively for Orientalists. They became bonded with the oriental languages and affairs by long-term studies. They understood its notions, the gist of its religion, its law, beliefs, prejudices, means and actions. Their sources were the most trustworthy and were the original ones. Their sources were the Orient’s original writings.” Senkovskii 1859: 41–43.

24 Samoilovich 1930: 115; Samoilovich 1934: 789–796; Samoilovich 1935b: 43–49.

Samoilovich referred to Senkovskii one more time. This time he mentioned his disagreement with the dichotomy: “Previously, a conception was strengthening that *East and West are two different world systems* [italics mine]. This conception was based on the colonial policy of the West towards the East, the domination of an exploiter over an exploited.”²⁵

However, these thoughts are controversial because Samoilovich had himself reproduced this terminology in his articles. This “methodological rearmament” (based on Samoilovich’s words)²⁶ and his change in approach were provoked not only by the shift in methodology introduced by the Soviet authorities²⁷ but also by Samoilovich’s expeditionary activity and his communication with the young linguists, ethnographers, historians and indeed citizens of the national republics.²⁸ It was not a linear evolution of thought correlated with his career path. His reasoning over the same source in 1904 and 1935 are rather the indicators of continuous reflection. This “net of beliefs” is a dynamic rather than stable concept. The scholar was able to refer to different sources and works (without their temporal borders). Every single reference assumed new meanings, new “nuances”.

While the object had changed, the ultimate goal of his activity was also changing. In the diaries dedicated to his second expedition in 1906 Samoilovich mentioned that the local culture would disappear under the pressure of colonialism.²⁹ He justified this prediction in a series of articles in 1908–1912.³⁰ By the end of the 1920s, this doctrine would be supplemented by his idea of the need to use ethnographic material to further construct national cultures in Central Asia. For example, he was one of the founders of the commission on folk music studies.³¹ He urged his colleagues to quickly collect and research cultural

25 Samoilovich 1935a: 7–11.

26 Blagova 2008: 462.

27 In the article entitled “The Soviet Oriental Studies in the Epoch of Lenin” Samoilovich analysed the use of the terms “East”, “Orient”, “colonised community” and “subordinate countries” in works written by the orientalist Vasilii Barthold, Sergei Oldenburg and Mikhail Pavlovich and the politicians Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin and Josef Stalin. Samoilovich’s original thought was to show the multiplicity of meanings behind the term “Orient” and to argue for the future abandonment of “Oriental studies” as an outdated sphere of study. Samoilovich 1934: 789–796.

28 Samoilovich 1930: 116.

29 OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 79. Notebook 5. L. 17–18.

30 Abramzon 1978: 172–173; Samoilovich 1908: 111–114.

31 “Any single element which could be lost these days would be lost forever. Ancient songs, old-fashioned tunes – they will never be repeated. Even the most popular music instruments could be lost because the way of life is changing and the social life of every single people will

heritage “in the interest of the history of the culture of humanity and for better understanding of the new East”.³²

Samoilovich’s goal to preserve historical and cultural heritage, that he formulated during his academic career, introduced numerous tasks. One of these was the creation of “scientifically proven” knowledge. In 1904 Samoilovich was doubtful about formulating “objective” knowledge. According to his diary, all scholarly knowledge has the “seal of its creator” inside it.³³ Yet later he changed his mind:

2 August 1905. It is possible to be objective. It is possible to impartially depict modernity. The main condition is to accuse only in exceptional cases if it is even possible to do that. Humans, humanity – all of them are equal in their essence but vary according to the circumstances [surrounding them]. But to accuse the circumstances (regime) is a short-sighted action. To blame a human being means to exaggerate its role. To condemn the circumstances means to abolish the role of a human being. Both human beings and circumstances are toys in the hands of Nature. You can blame it if you consider this action fruitful. To be objective means not to be a judge, not to mention extremity. [To be objective] means to be an artist.³⁴

This quote requires its own analysis, but it proves Samoilovich’s desire to seek the meaning behind “objectivity”.

According to his later notes, Samoilovich’s research was based on positivist conceptions. The key element of his evidence base was empirical verifiability, verification based on different groups of sources (such as interviews with informants). His research approach was also a source of dispute with his professor, archaeologist Nikolai I. Veselovskii (1848–1918). Veselovskii severely criticised Samoilovich’s idea to interview Turkmens as “the living witnesses of the recent past of the former independent Turkmenia”. Veselovskii argued: “What are you talking about! You never know what lie they will tell you!” (*Nu chto èto za istorii! Malo li chto oni navrut!*).³⁵ In response, the young scholar mentioned the work of “Badaulet Yakub-bek, atalyk of Kashgar” written by Veselovskii and based exclusively on oral

change completely [...]. The main goal of the commission is to collect and capture, study and save the folk music and songs of tribes and peoples of Russia and neighbouring countries. The reason for that is their mutual influence, in some sense, on the everyday life of the contiguous regions” (Findeizen 1926: 3). Evidence of Samoilovich’s support for these intentions can be found in the book of autographs collected by Findeizen: “The Orient led me to you, highly respected Nikolai Federovich. I want to believe that we will organise the study of music created by the oriental peoples.” OR RNB. F. 816. Op. 1. D. 335. L. 14–15.

³² Samoilovich 1930: 116.

³³ OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 77. Notebook 1. L. 72.

³⁴ OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 77. Notebook 1. L. 118–119.

³⁵ OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 78. Notebook 1. L. 39–40.

materials.³⁶ Samoilovich concluded that “even the oral stories *could be* [italics by Samoilovich] criticised”. One of his approaches for such a critique, both in the fields of linguistics and ethnography, was comparative studies.³⁷ Another approach was demonstrativeness (visualisation, references to informants).

Using scientificity as a criteria for study meant that a gap between scholarly research (correlated with scholarly “truth”) and material collection was predetermined. Samoilovich mentioned this in his correspondence: “The goal of my lectures is not a simple statement of facts, but the explanation of the methodology for the academic study of a language, the paths to get the scholarly ‘truth’.”³⁸

Within this context the discourse of his mentor, professor Barthold, holds a peculiar interest: “Here [in Azerbaijan], they love to speak about history as it was meant to be based on the logical suggestions, instead of studying it based on the sources as it was in fact. These two aspects are not frequently equal [...]”³⁹

Barthold’s thoughts were sometimes criticised by other scholars. The outstanding features of these criticisms were recorded by Nadezhda V. Briullova-Shaskolskaia (1886–1938). This ethnographer was exiled to Central Asia for her cooperation with the Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries. She was working as an ideologist on ethnic relations issues for the party, which opposed the Bolsheviks.⁴⁰ In her request to Leningrad to receive books written by Franz Boas (1858–1942) and Sir James George Frazer (1854–1941), she wrote:

I will not be the sole reader of those books. The youth here is always asking me about a comparative-ethnographic method which is not taught here. Here, all the professors are reputable. However, their studies are specialised on local history and full of fear of comparison and synthesis. I would call it “Bartholdism”. Of course, it is better than a synthesis without the facts. But facts and little facts are in demand by others.⁴¹

The critique of Briullova-Shaskolskaia, a student of the prominent ethnographer Lev Ia. Sternberg (1861–1927), is important to our understanding of how this research approach determined the path to the scholarly “truth”. This view was shared by Samoilovich, who was also working with Sternberg.⁴² Samoilovich thought methodology was more important than the knowledge of facts.⁴³ He underlined it in his instructions on ethnographic studies in Crimea and

36 OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 78. Notebook 1. L. 48.

37 Kubel 2019: 62.

38 OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 161. L. 2.

39 Blagova 2008: 144.

40 Kan 2008: 87–105.

41 SPbF ARAN. F. 250. Op. 4. D. 51. L. 3–4.

42 Abramzon 1978: 170.

43 Blagova/Nasilov 2005: 112.

Azerbaijan. These instructions included the advice to take photographs of local craftwork. But Samoilovich did not mention the main goal of these photos: was the purpose of their production based on the visualisation of textual data or were they viewed within the context of their inner potential?⁴⁴

However, this discussion requires one additional comment about the difference between study and material collection. In a series of obituaries dedicated to his teachers and inspiring personalities, Samoilovich created a typology of orientalists developed during his academic career.⁴⁵ In an article dedicated to his predecessor Ilia N. Berezin (1818–1896), Samoilovich wrote:

There are three types of orientalists-academicians. For the first group, their scholarly interest is connected to the love of oriental countries and peoples. For another group, the Orient is a subject for deep objective study. The third group does not love oriental countries or peoples. But its representatives acknowledge the necessity and importance of oriental studies due to general scholarly reasons or due to studies of their native country and its benefit.⁴⁶

Samoilovich also supplemented the characteristics of the last group by writing: “[...] to those orientalists who have [an] interest in the Orient, but do not worship it. On the contrary, they treat it condescendingly and with slight disdain”.⁴⁷

Samoilovich considered himself part of the first group. He wrote that “his heart sustains him” only in the countries of the “Orient”.⁴⁸ The third group was the main target of his critique, due to their intention to collect materials rather than to create scholarly knowledge. For example, he severely criticised his group mate, the amateur-scholar and worker in the colonial administration Ivan A. Beliaev (1877–1920):

Beliaev is a very pessimistic person. His overconfidence adjoins his impertinence and is enhanced by narrow-mindedness and a lack of the values of civility. He uses the words “shtrift”⁴⁹ [and] “sheshnadsat”.⁵⁰ In the conversation about the fate of his fellow group mates, he said: “there was no honours student except myself and Krachkovskii!” He loves the words “visit” and “aristocrat”. During the conversation on my future visit to Subbotich,

⁴⁴ Samoilovich 1917: 130–136.

⁴⁵ Interesting descriptions of the “Orient” evolution can be found in Samoilovich 1930: 115–116.

⁴⁶ Blagova 2008: 481.

⁴⁷ Blagova 2008: 493.

⁴⁸ Blagova/Nasilov 2005: 24.

⁴⁹ In place of *shrift* (script).

⁵⁰ In place of *sheshnadsat* (sixteen).

he asked me to tell the general-governor about him, because he was helping me: “you know ... we should support each other!”

How could he be a teacher in the Sart school with his knowledge of the Sart and Persian languages? [...] But this world saw all sorts of surprises! What is fine enough [is] that he does not hide his intention: to make a career and earn money. Although he insists that this is essential for the development of science. He does not have an intuition for language studies. I understood that at the university during the initial years of our studies. Nowadays, I see it again: he does not have linguistic flair: he does not distinguish syllables, does not understand the structure of a phrase. And his answer to an attempt to correct his concepts is always the same: “Accordingly, it means nothing!”

It seems that he is a perfect master of bluffing. One day probably they will call his bluff, but maybe they will not. And if he will make some contribution to the academic knowledge due to his activity and insistence that he should do that – God willing! Even such kinds of specialists are not numerous in Russia these days!⁵¹

Beliaev and Samoilovich had the same tutors (Melioranskii and Barthold), they were both graduates of the Faculty of Oriental Languages at St Petersburg University, and studied the same subject (Central Asian folklore and languages). They even had the same informants (such as Turkmen secretary Hojeli-molla Myrat Berdi-ogly). But their approaches to the construction of knowledge about the “Orient” were distinguishable. Beliaev proved this himself: “I cannot work in an academic manner, but I love to collect data; it is a purpose of my life [...]”⁵²

Such opposition within a group of scholars with the same education is important for two reasons. First, it demonstrates the necessity to study the “Self” within the history of oriental studies as a counterbalance to static and generalising approaches. From another point of view, this opposition is correlated with the difference between scholarly study and the collection of materials. The status of “scholarly knowledge” in oriental studies was determined by the methodology of analysis and verification.

The cornerstone of Samoilovich’s comprehension of the condition for gaining knowledge was the relationships between languages (texts), practices and artefacts.⁵³ His comprehension of meaning in language was connected not solely to translation but also to his ethnographic explorations.⁵⁴ The interrelationship between artefact/image and text was one reason for Samoilovich’s critique of ethnographers like Samuil M. Dudin (1863–1929): “I took a look that way [together with his Turkmen informants] at the description of the Turkmen

⁵¹ OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 78. Notebook 10. L. 10–12.

⁵² SPbF ARAN. F. 68. Op. 2. D. 21. L. 28.

⁵³ Blagova 2008: 278.

⁵⁴ Blagova/Nasilov 2005: 984; Samoilovich 1917: 130–136.

ethnographic collection composed by Dudin. His numerous faults were proof of my idea that an ethnographer should know the language of the people who are the subject of his research.”⁵⁵

In the context of audiovisual content, research approaches became even more important. This idea was articulated by one of Samoilovich’s colleagues, Vsevolod M. Ionov (1851–1922): “If I do not know the grammar forms and the use of cases, a phonograph would be useless in my hands.”⁵⁶

This was one reason why the feedback provided by informants was so important to Samoilovich, while Dudin used the “hidden camera” technique.⁵⁷ In turn, informants were the main heroes of Samoilovich’s photography. The participation of informants in the creation of knowledge about themselves is correlated with an idea of Ali Behdad’s:

Indigenous photography in and of itself, I maintain, does not constitute an oppositional locus or resistant iconography, for it too belongs to the orientalist network that mediates its vocabulary and thematics of representation. A network theory of orientalism concerns itself neither with the motivations of individual artists nor with the attributes of art objects; instead, it studies the symmetrical and asymmetrical relations between discrete objects, specific individuals, and concrete practices.⁵⁸

In other words, the collections of photographs created by Samoilovich are not simply a source of ethnographic data but a representation of a situational communication (those symmetrical and asymmetrical relations) which was, in Samoilovich’s conception of ethics, an essential part of his practice creating “objective” knowledge about the “Orient”. This knowledge was determined by the rule of verification which correlated with Samoilovich’s position in the academic community as a mediator who was able to communicate with the local informants (even despite the asymmetrical impact on the final product).

Unfortunately, Samoilovich did not create a tutorial on photography. The data about this process is limited to some practical notes. However, the study of his collections can reveal some peculiarities of his practice, which we can analyse to determine its development and place in his studies and his legacy.

In summary, the main object for Samoilovich’s research was the discursive concept of “the Orient”. His main task was to create “objective knowledge” about “the Orient”. He believed in the domination of methodology over fact collection in the construction of “academically proven truth”. Therefore, the basic principle of his

⁵⁵ Blagova 2008: 96.

⁵⁶ Ionov 1915: 217–222.

⁵⁷ Prishchepova 2011: 83–102. See also the article by Laura Elias in this volume.

⁵⁸ Behdad 2013: 13.

ethos was the link between the language and the object of his research. He used photography as a means of making bonds between them. But this was possible only within the context of communication with his local correspondents. Thus, we can create an overview of photography as a social practice that was connected to the validity of his ideas. But the asymmetry of knowledge producers and the career strategy of the scholar were two crucial points of the process of “orientalisation” in his work.

“Oriental personae”

The expedition of 1902 to Transcaspia (from 31 May to 4 August) was an initial step in Samoilovich’s academic career.⁵⁹ In this period he was a student at St Petersburg University, had not developed an approach to in-field work and was obliged to follow instructions from correspondence with his academic adviser Melioranskii.⁶⁰ As mentioned above, he read books by several travellers to fill his lack of ethnographic methodology. This was the methodological background of his first journey to the land of the Turkmens.

Furthermore, Samoilovich was not an experienced photographer. He was granted a camera for the first time in his life for temporary use in the town of Kostroma before the expedition.⁶¹ He also took a phonograph with him. These gaps in his preparation were the reason that from the list of fifty photographs on the last page of one of Samoilovich’s diaries,⁶² only nineteen were of good quality. Today, seventeen of his photographs are preserved in the archives. One additional photo was bought by Samoilovich in Ashkhabad. The same troubles were present in his audio recordings. In his report to the Faculty of Oriental Languages, Samoilovich writes: “all the singers I was able to meet with had weak voices and slurred speech (this is a common blemish for all the representatives of Teke tribe)”.⁶³ This note demonstrates the syntheses and generalisations the young scholar often used.

In his diaries, the most widespread term for the citizens of Transcaspia was “oriental personae”. The description of rituals, housekeeping, and so on – all presented new circumstances to a researcher full of notions of oriental

⁵⁹ TsGIA SPb. F. 14. Op. 3. D. 15730. L. 147–153.

⁶⁰ Blagova 2008: 193–194.

⁶¹ OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 175. L. 1.

⁶² OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 77. L. 106–108.

⁶³ TsGIA SPb. F. 14. Op. 3. D. 15730. L. 151.

“backwardness”. For example, Samoilovich described with astonishment a Turkmen musical instrument that he saw for the first time (*gyjak*).⁶⁴

The catalogues reveal his main object of interest. The majority of his photographs were portraits of those “oriental personae” who were involved in his work (such as the *arçyn* (elder) of Bagyr village and his son, the singer Kurwan-bagşy, the secretary Ýar-Mamed at the foot of the mountains, the elder Gul-Batyr, Ýazlyk-molla from Gökdepe and Aman-Kuli-khan from Bagyr) or photographs of celebrations (such as Hudaý-ýoly, a religious commemoration, in Bagyr on 3 July 1902, and a wedding in Kaňşal). These topics are correlated with instructions by the Geographical Society about typical photographs of ethnographic material.⁶⁵ Other categories are composed of photographs of the bazaar (Teke bazary in Merv on Thursday 18 July 1902) and landscapes (a view of Bagyr). Furthermore, there are a number of photographs presenting archaeological sites (Köne Nusaý) and Islam (a *mekdep* (school) in Bagyr, the ruins of a mosque near Bagyr).⁶⁶ This collection, complemented by other photographs and data, was one of the reasons for Samoilovich’s election as a member of the Russian Archaeological Society in 1907.

One photograph was particularly meaningful and was included in a specific catalogue:⁶⁷

A photograph of one of the heroes of the war between Teke tribesmen and Russians in the epoch of the Turkmenia conquest. His name is Dykma-Serdar. This photo was bought by Samoilovich from a photographer in Ashkhabad, 31 July 1902. The hero from the Teke tribe was photographed in military armour with a rifle with a bipod (*soshki*) laying on his shoulder.

Samoilovich’s interest in the history of relations between Russian and Central Asia was not an accident. The scholar was born in December 1880, just a month before the battle for Gökdepe started at the beginning of January 1881. This event was one of the most important episodes of the Russian conquest of Central Asia.⁶⁸ During his initial expeditions, Samoilovich had tried to collect some materials about this event. He mentioned some of them in his diaries: “I try to speak with Gul-Batyr about [...] the Gökdepe battle. But he shakes his head and makes a gesture claiming that it was all water under the bridge. He changes the subject. I heard that he was on the forefront, but was not injured.”⁶⁹ In 1906 Samoilovich collected a series of poems

⁶⁴ OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 77. L. 67.

⁶⁵ Elias 2015: 5–14.

⁶⁶ OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 77. L. 106–108.

⁶⁷ REM. The repository of photographic negatives. Collection 4830.

⁶⁸ Morrison 2020: 409–475.

⁶⁹ OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 77. L. 106–108.

dedicated to this historical event. He started writing an article dedicated to Gökdepe but did not finish it.⁷⁰ Unfortunately, the vast gallery of portraits created in Bagyr, including the photo of Gul-Batyr, is not mentioned in modern-day catalogues.

After his return from the expedition, Samoilovich used photographs as illustrative material in his report at the university.⁷¹ Afterwards, they were preserved in his room at his dormitory (Figures 4.1–4.2⁷²). Later, the photographs were taken to the apartment of the young privat-docent of the university (Figure 4.3). However, in 1932 Samoilovich granted the negatives to the Ethnographic Department at the Russian Museum (the present-day Russian Ethnographic Museum – REM). He was the head of this institution until 1929.⁷³ According to the catalogue, some photographs were published. Four of them were included in the work titled “Turkmen Entertainments”.⁷⁴



Figures 4.1–4.2: “Collegia. No. 69. The 1902/3 school year. A fourth-year student of the Arabic department at the Oriental [Studies] Faculty, Alexander Samoilovich, after his journey to the Transcaspien region”. Marina P. Samoilovich’s archive.

⁷⁰ OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 112.

⁷¹ TsGIA SPb. F. 14. Op. 3. D. 15730. L. 147–151.

⁷² A portrait of a Turkmen (standing in the frame in the locker) is not found among the collection at REM.

⁷³ REM. The repository of photographic negatives. Collection 5486.

⁷⁴ Samoilovich 1909b: 65–82.



Figure 4.3: “[This photo] was filmed with my camera. 13x18, 85 rubles”. No date. Marina P. Samoilovich’s archive.

The other four photographs were published in 1903 in the magazine *Pictur-
esque Russia*.⁷⁵ This article, titled “The Bazaar in Merv: Russian Turkmenia”, reveals the emergence of the scholar’s alter ego within the space of popular orientalism. He had even mentioned it in his letter to Veselovskii.⁷⁶ An extract from this article has already been mentioned above. The article comprised a brief statistic description of the Transcaspia and some personal impressions written in an unscholarly style. It seems that his idea that “[to be objective] means to be an artist” was realised in his literary sketches. We can deconstruct the vision of the young scholar by identifying the key narratives in his text and his diaries. Extracts from his diaries clarify that at the initial stages of his academic career, he paid particular attention to publications written in the space of popular orientalism (i.e. narratives about the so-called “oriental countries” written for the mass reader in magazine articles and fiction). Such publications were widespread at the time.⁷⁷ Samoilovich was interested in the relationship between Russia and Central Asia. Due to this interest, he wanted to understand the

⁷⁵ Isgender Muzzafer-ogly 1903: 157–158.

⁷⁶ RGALI. F. 118. Op. 1. D. 613. L. 4.

⁷⁷ Bessmertnaia 2017: 144.

“pacification of the Transcaspia” narrative: an assessment of the invasion constructed gradually by the colonial administration.⁷⁸ Another narrative that affected the young scholar was the positioning of Central Asia as one of the centres of an ancient civilisation. This concept was introduced and developed by a group of scholars, including Samoilovich’s tutor, Barthold.⁷⁹ The relationship between those two narratives was based on the contradistinction between the concepts of a “golden age” and a “decline”. The “pacification” was supposed to have been an initial step in the continued prosperity of the local population under Russian rule. Thus, the idea behind “The Bazaar in Merv” is to show the gradual inclusion of the Turkmen community within the body of the Empire. But it was only the starting point for Samoilovich as a writer. In 1905 this literary activity led to the writing of his book *My Transcaspia Memories*.

I wrote these memories in the summer of 1905 under the impression of *Sketches of Central Asia* by Arminius Vambery. My book was given to Iomudskii, Beliaev and Krachkovskii. It was sent to the editors of the magazines *Niva* and *Historical Digest*. But they both refused to accept it. I did not attach considerable importance to these notes. They were written just for fun and their meaning was the same. Iomudskii liked the book. It was given to Veselovskii due to his possible patronage and aid to submit it to one of the popular journals. I needed money. If I had no need for money, this book would lay under the cloth. [...] Veselovskii took two copybooks with my manuscript and said: “The general impression of mine after the reading of this work – naivety. This work reflects its author’s character.”⁸⁰

Samoilovich’s attempt to join the field of popular orientalism under the alias of Isgender Muzaffer-ogly came to an end after Veselovskii’s critique and that of another professor: Vasilii D. Smirnov (1846–1922). These rivalries had their impact on the scholar’s development, but were ended in 1913 when the Turkologist became part of the “inner orientalists’ circle” at Petrograd University.⁸¹

Samoilovich described this trip several times as a starting point to his academic career.⁸² The influence of popular orientalism led to his “exotifying view” of Turkmen culture and daily life. He followed colonial narratives in his texts. This was one reason for his later severe criticism of his early works. However, another outcome of this journey was the emergence of a gallery of portraits that he preserved for a long time in his private archive. These images were a source of inspiration for his further academic interests.

⁷⁸ Campbell 2019: 35–47.

⁷⁹ Gorshenina/Tolz 2016: 90.

⁸⁰ OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 78. Notebook 3. L. 39–40.

⁸¹ Blagova 2008: 17–94.

⁸² Blagova 2008: 358.

The cataloguing issue

The second expedition of 1906 to Central Asia was distinct from the first in important ways. Barthold was responsible for the academic supervision of the mission rather than Melioranskii (who had died in 1905). Samoilovich's aims were to study the language, the people and types of literature, and to conduct ethnographic observations. This time he prepared more attentively. For example, he studied the materials collected by Dudin. He also decided to live among the Turkmens in Merv county, and resided in the village of Agyr-Baş (in present-day Şordepe). He was sheltered by the family of a secretary of the district administrator named Sabyr molla Soýun ogly.⁸³

The cornerstone of his photography on this trip was the direct relationship between his communication with informants and the data both in the text and the photographs.⁸⁴ Samoilovich photographed local poets, knowledgeable personae, “scholars” and their families (Figure 4.5). Regrettably, the photographs of his main informants, the key participants in his knowledge transfer, have not been preserved in their entirety. In the collection of 1906 there are shots of Sabyr molla and Gör-molla. The photos of Ramazan-khan and his son Garrybeg were corrupted (according to Samoilovich's diary), while the destiny of the images of Hojeli-molla and Baý Muhammad molla is unknown.⁸⁵

Most of the 1906 collection is composed of portraits (Figures 4.6 and 4.7), group shots (Figures 4.4 and 4.5) and photos of dwellings. This typology is based on Samoilovich's observation that autochthonous Turkmen culture was disappearing under the pressure of colonialism. To be more precise, this idea was based on Samoilovich's impression of the situation in Merv and on Cheleken island, where significant sociopolitical changes were taking place. First, these changes related to the religious sphere in the region. Samoilovich mentioned the widespread movement of Bukharan clerics. Specifically, he met a Bukharan mullah on Cheleken island (he also took some photographs of the clerics). In numerous cases, Samoilovich himself was considered to be an “Orthodox missionary”. This misapprehension among the local population complicated his research. It was one reason why he had not been able to live with Baý Muhammad molla, his informant, since the first expedition of 1902.⁸⁶ Second, a new social group had emerged in

83 OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 31.

84 During the 1908 expedition to Khiva, Samoilovich would additionally buy some artefacts for the collection of the Ethnographic Museum.

85 Nuralyýew 1971.

86 “Because the mullah told me that [the] *işan* would not be pleased to hear [the] *bagşy* singing. Moreover, he is not pleased that I am Russian”. OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 78. Notebook 10. L. 56.



Figure 4.4: “An opening ceremony of a new home for the local interpreter of colonial administration”. A group of people consists of: “von Pfaler family, Dmitriy Nikolaevich, Kopitsa, a chief of a Cossack troop and an architect”. 1906. Marina P. Samoilovich’s archive.



Figure 4.5: “Mamed Orazov standing in a tent overnight in Teke village during a boar hunt. He wears a white papakha. On the side is sat the folk singer Aman-bagsty. On the other side, the relatives of the chief of the county are sat”. 1906. The REM’s archives, 5493-28.

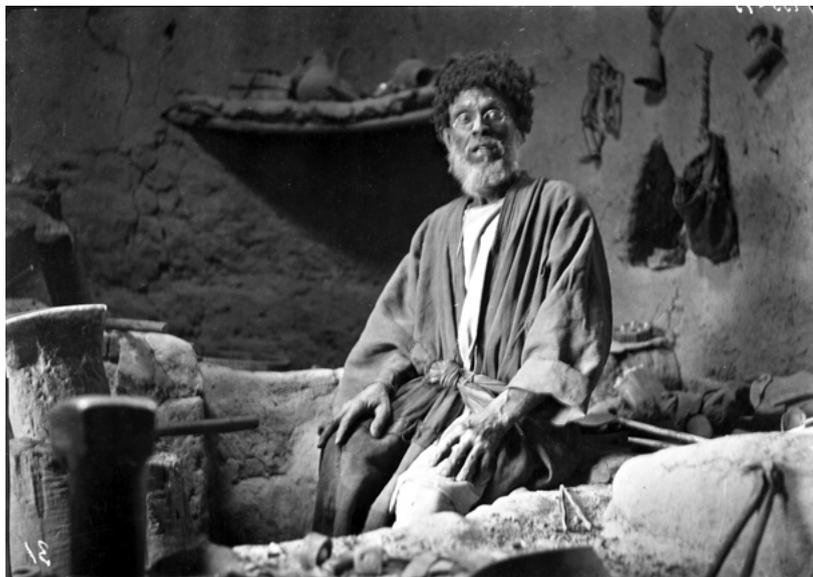


Figure 4.6: “The blacksmith Usta [Göz-Alla]. He is a formerly captured Iranian who was living in a village of a Teke tribe which is situated nearby Merv”. 1906. The REM’s archives, 5493-45.



Figure 4.7: “A type of a Turkmen from the island of Cheleken. A representative of a prosperous group (*baystvo*)”. 1906. The REM’s archives, 5493-50.

the region connected directly to the colonial administration.⁸⁷ It was composed of Turkmens who were involved in formal and informal relationships with the colonial administrators and their families, who were able to lobby for their personal interests. One example of such a personality can be identified in the catalogue of Samoilovich's photographs:

A stone house of Russian type. The mansion of a prominent Young Turkmen, the representative of the immature Turkmen bourgeoisie, a landowner and owner of an orchard, and consequently of a canned fruit factory, a member of the bank board in Merv, cotton seller Mamed Orazov (Teke tribe, Otamyş clan, a citizen of Merv). At his young age, he was an interpreter. Before the world war he was sent into exile by the tsarist government to the city of Ufa due to accusations in pan-Islamism. He died circa 1917.⁸⁸

The third aspect was the scholar's interest in educational issues in the region. It was in Orazov's house that Samoilovich had conversations with the owner's brother, Muhammed Durdy (sixteen years old) and the "Young Turkmens".⁸⁹ Soon after, Samoilovich created a series of photographs specifically dedicated to the life of this new social group. These photographs depict housekeeping (in Persian houses, or *tam*, decorated in a Russian manner) and new social phenomena (for example, a trial under the guidance of a Russian officer; cooperation between a Russian hydrologist and his Turkmen counterpart; the common hunting practices of Mamed Orazov and the relatives of Franz-Karl von Pfaler (1865–1937), a Finnish officer and the governor of Merv county). The relations Samoilovich depicted here between the colonial administration and the local population may suggest why he suspected that Turkmen culture was at risk of dissolution under the influence of colonialism.

While the 1902 collection was published, the 1906 collection took a very different path. First, some of the photographs were gifted to a German officer who was in Transcaspia at the time (he can be identified in one of the photos) and to

⁸⁷ Sartori 2016.

⁸⁸ REM. The repository of photographic negatives. Collection 5493. According to an obituary published in the "Transcaspian newspaper for the indigenous population" written by Niiazmurat molla, Mamed Orazov died on 17 Rabi-al-Awwal at the age of forty-five. Niiazmurat Molla 1917: 2.

⁸⁹ According to a letter sent to Samoilovich by a former secretary of the colonial administration: "on sekizimçi dekabrda Maruf geldim bu hatyny ýazyp göz doktora bardym sizgä ibermek üçin aýyplaşmagaýsyz henüz Muhammad Oraz ogly goýup maslahat gelmedim" (on 18 December, I arrived at Merv and after writing this letter, I gave it to the eye doctor for sending it to you. Please, do not grudge. And I have not gone yet to the meeting in the house of Mamed Orazov; translated by Timur Slesarev and the author): IVR RAN. The collection of documents is written in Arabic script. Document C–162. L. II.

Samoilovich's friend, the Russian officer and ethnographer of Turkmen origin Nikolai N. Iomudskii (1868–1928).⁹⁰ In 1909 Samoilovich granted the selected photographs to the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE). In 1932 the negatives of almost the entire series of photos were granted by the scholar to the Ethnographic Department of the Russian Museum (modern-day Russian Ethnographic Museum, REM). But two photographs were preserved in the home archive of his granddaughter, Marina P. Samoilovich. The first depicts a celebration dedicated to the construction of a new house for the colonial secretary.⁹¹ The second is the scholar's portrait with his pregnant wife in a garden in Samarkand.

However, of particular interest is the catalogues of the two collections mentioned (Table 1). The first catalogue is from the MAE and was compiled on 17 March 1909. Its author is Klavdii V. Shchennikov,⁹² an archaeologist who was tasked with registering photo collections (from 1908) and was later appointed the chief of the Photography Department at the MAE.⁹³ According to the preserved materials, the catalogue was based entirely on the photographs themselves. If a mount had an inscription naming the location of a photograph or the person in the shot, it was mentioned in the catalogue. Otherwise, Shchennikov identified only types and kinds (*tipy i vidy*), that is, tribal identity (Teke, Ýomut, Saryk, Salor) and some behavioural features that were represented in the photo. The catalogue is written in the pre-revolutionary language (*chl'iad', esaul*). It constructs a one-dimensional reality: its task was to systemise ethnic categories, which led to their essentialisation. Hence, in the works dedicated to these photographs created by Samoilovich (who is considered not a researcher but a collector), their authors describe the images as an essential component in understanding Turkmen life without referring to the changes in the region during this period.⁹⁴

The REM catalogue created by T. S. Barnakova⁹⁵ was compiled in 1933 and is completely different. It seems that, initially, Samoilovich took part in its creation. The Merv part of this register is described in detail. It includes brief biographies and descriptions of events and locations. The Cheleken part is, by contrast, very brief and includes only types and characteristics of different kinds. One might

90 Part of the photos in the photo album preserved in the home archive of the ethnographer's granddaughter Jeren K. Iomudskaia (Ashkhabat, Turkmenistan) are identical to the collection of the Russian Ethnographic Museum.

91 OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 79. Notebook 10a. F. 70.

92 MAE RAN. Photo archive. F. 1397.

93 Krasnodembskaia/Kotin/Soboleva 2018: 452.

94 Prishchepova 2011: 105.

95 REM. The repository of photographic negatives. Collection 5493.

assume that Samoilovich, after twenty-seven years, had forgotten the people depicted in the pictures. However, during his stay in Baku in 1923, Samoilovich described in his letter to Barthold a meeting with “a friend from Cheleken who I have been acquainted with since 1906”.⁹⁶ The language of this list of photographs is based on Soviet clichés (the representatives of labour intelligentsia, Turkmen bourgeoisie, the tsarist government, etc.). The change of language was connected with “methodological rearming”, but on the scale of the entire discipline. The new Soviet ethnography was working on analysing the class structure and reproaching the imperial policy of colonisation. The term “Young Turkmens” represents a particular source of interest. It was mentioned only in this catalogue; other works written by Samoilovich do not contain the phrase. This might reveal Samoilovich’s attitude to the changes in Turkmen social structures. It seems that he compared it with similar phenomena in Bukhara, Khiva and Turkey. Despite all the particularities, the additional classification of types and kinds in the catalogue is noteworthy because of its universalisation. Who authored these additions – a registrar? a donor? – is unknown. In general, the Merv part of this catalogue reveals the photographer’s intentions and vision.

In conclusion, this collection reveals the nature of Samoilovich’s photographic vision. His main focus was portraits of his informants (this idea could be traced back to 1902). But the particular aim of this collection was to visualise Samoilovich’s ideas about the influence of colonialism on Turkmen culture and society. This collection is more structured and verified than the 1902 photographic series. He intended to create a mutually complementary structure of text and visuals. He continued this practise in several published articles that contain information about Turkmen literature and daily life. All the references in the texts can be connected to the photographs.⁹⁷ In turn, his visual work records physical embodiments of the meanings expressed by the texts he collected or created in his expeditions. Samoilovich’s comprehension of social structures was also a text which requires proof. The photographs were an essential part of his analysis. The REM catalogue is an example of how this structure should function. However, the MAE catalogue, and the Cheleken part of the REM catalogue, create new meanings based on the aesthetics of the photographs themselves. They nullify the initial specificity in favour of universalisation.

⁹⁶ Blagova 2008: 135.

⁹⁷ For example, the photograph of Subhan-berdi Öwez-berdi-ogly (Gör-molla) can be seen as illustrative material to an article about him: Samoilovich 1907.

A story of one album: Official reports or materials for personal use?

The last collection of photographs was presented to the academic community only once, in 1971, at a conference in memory of Samoilovich. In the half-century since, the photo album *Bukhara-Khiva 1921* has been preserved at the home archive of his granddaughter Marina P. Samoilovich.

In 1921 Samoilovich, despite his initial distrust of the slogans of the Soviet government, was working as an expert on Central Asia in the People's Commissariat of International Affairs of the Russian Soviet Federalist Socialist Republic (NKID RSFSR).⁹⁸ Working in this position, he was sent to Central Asia as an interpreter and expert from 9 March 1921 to 19 January 1922 as a member of a mission under the guidance of the party worker David Iu. Gopner (1884–1925). The preparation for this mission consisted of conversations with members of foreign delegations in Moscow. Modern-day Uzbek scholars study this mission as a part of the discourse about “the Young Bukharan movement”,⁹⁹ and Samoilovich was also interested in this phenomenon.¹⁰⁰

The collection is based on the same fundamental principle of verification and visually supplements the collected texts. Thus this series of photographs should be studied in correlation with the collection of Bukharan and Khivian texts currently preserved in the Department of Manuscripts at the National Library of Russia.¹⁰¹ Ninety-seven photos are included in the album. Five additional photos are preserved in other parts of the home archive. Samoilovich was not the sole photographer; another author who made his contribution to this collection was his son Platon.¹⁰² All the photographs were commented on by Samoilovich himself.

A thematic analysis of this album reveals some key categories correlated with the documents collected by the scholar. For example, Samoilovich made a significant impact on expert study of the Young Bukharan party. In Moscow this movement was the subject of heated debates: could they be considered as allies or, like Islamists, as potential enemies? The Turkologist is well known for

98 Blagova 2008: 414–415.

99 Tosheva/Shimada 2010.

100 In 1931 Samoilovich was one of the key personalities in the “brigade on the study of Young Bukharan movements” at the Institute of Oriental Studies.

101 OR RNB. F. 1240.

102 “Please, say hello to ‘unquiet ghost’ – dear Tosia [the family nickname of Platon]. Why has he not sent me new shots?” SPbF ARAN. F. 782. Op. 1. D. 16.

his work with the manuscript of “The History of Intellectual Revolution in Bukhara” written by Sadr al-Din Ayni,¹⁰³ who was familiar with Samoilovich before the revolution.¹⁰⁴ However, his draft of an article about this party reveals intense direct communication with members of this political organisation:

All the materials that were collected by us are primarily connected to the further destinies of the society’s members. According to Ayni, their number was twenty-nine with the stipulation that he made this list from memory.

Out of twenty-nine, nine are already gone. I was not able to find any reference to the two others.

Deceased due to natural causes: Mirza Pulat, Selim-jan, Sofi Abdurrahim. Mirza-Hasrullah (4) for his participation in the manifestation of 1917 took seventy-five hits by a stick and in three days died in Kazan hospital.

Due to the attack by Kolesov, the following personalities were strangled in the fortress’ jail: (5) Hamid-khoja Migri, (6) Haji Abdussatar Dallal, (7) Mudarris Haji Sarraj, the brother of Ayni.

After the Kolesov attack, the following personalities escaped to Tashkent and died there due to typhus: (8) Fazleddin Mahzum, (9) Mudarris Haji Rafi.

I have not collected any data about: (10) Kurban-bek yuzboshi Shamsogli, (11) Mirza Muhammad.

Out of the eighteen currently alive former members of this society, I had no meeting with five personalities: (12) Haji Halfa Yuldashev (he was a deputy minister (*nazir*) of State Control, later he resigned, but currently he is vice-minister of International Affairs). (13) Ahmed Kemal (a worker of the All-Bukharan Extraordinary Commission).

[pages 16 to 25 of the manuscript (according to author’s numeration) are missing]

[...] I have met him at the railway station in Samarkand heading from Bukhara to Moscow. He seems to me a person whose reaction to modern-day events is rather nervous. Currently, he is taking a keen interest in his work on the Mangit dynasty of Bukhara.¹⁰⁵

Only two sources can supplement this data. First, a little collection of poems about the mission written by Samoilovich under the pseudonym “Drunken Sasha” which were preserved in the archive of his friend Ignatii Iu. Krachkovskii (1883–1951), a

103 Tosheva/Shimada 2010: LXXII.

104 Blagova/Nasilov 2005: 957.

105 Another part of the text was removed from the draft: “The founders of this society in Istanbul were the following Bukharans: Fitrat, Mukimeddin-bek and Sadik Ashur-Ogli. And their fellow colleagues were: a citizen of Kuldja Abdul-Aziz Efendi and a Tatar from Russia, Alim-jan al-Idrisi”: OR RNB. F. 671. Op. 1. D. 107. L. 265–270.



Figure 4.8: “A library on Central Bazaar”. 1921. Marina P. Samoilovich’s archive.

specialist on Arabic literature. This collection includes some satiric poems about “Gaibulla Turia-Khozhaiev, a member of a Bukharan trade mission to Western Europe” and “Mirza-Amin Mukhitdinov, a member of the same mission”.¹⁰⁶ The second source is an album (Figures 4.9–4.10). In this document, photographs from the meetings with Abdukadir Mukhitdinov (1892–1934), Abdurauf Fitrat (1885–1938), Sadr al-Din Ayni (1878–1954), Enver Paşa (1881–1922), Abdulkhamid Sulaimonov (Cho’lpon; 1897–1938) and Domullo Ikromcha (1847–1925) are persevered. The shots reveal that Mirzo Abdulvokhid Munzim (1875–1934) was the mediator between the party and the scholar. Their relationship continued even after the end of the mission.¹⁰⁷

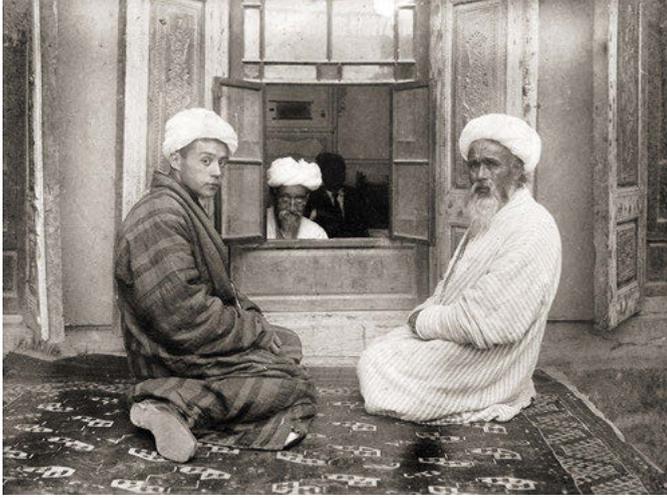
A significant part of the album is dedicated to portraits of the mission’s members. Their names can be identified from the same collection of poetry:

A. M. Briskin – a manager of the Extraordinary Diplomatic Mission of the RSFSR [Russian Soviet Federalist Socialist Republic] to Khiva. A merry man, a balalaika singer, bold in his treatment of women. Became a friend of the author of poems on the ground of “optimistic pessimism”, S. Galperin is a representative [...] [illegible] connected to the mission, a participant of the world war, the owner of a loud voice. Amalia A-n, a young lady, a cryptographer of the Mission, a communist, a dashing horsewoman. Clara D-ia, a young lady, the most interesting of the Mission’s employees – a stenographer and typist.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ SPbF ARAN. F. 1026. Op. 2. D. 112. L. 7.

¹⁰⁷ Ikhsanov 2020.

¹⁰⁸ SPbF ARAN. F. 1026. Op. 2. D. 112. L. 7.



Figures 4.9–4.10: “Domullo Ikram and his clients”. 1921. There is Mirzo Abdulvohid Munzim on this photo. Marina P. Samoilovich’s archive.

Samoilovich commented on one of the photos by referring to the satiric poetry of Antiochus Kantemir (1708–1744): “They consider political power extraneous for the Church’s hands – they whisper that estates and ancestral lands are not suitable for their stance. Sylvan. Bukhara, 1921.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Dohnal 2013: 33.

The relationship between the semantics of this satiric poem – created during the period of reform by Peter the Great and the Bukharan revolution – and the activity of the mission can be connected to the “optimistic pessimism” that Samoilovich had towards the slogans of the Soviet regime.¹¹⁰ Further answers could also be revealed after studies at the Archive of Russian Foreign Policy.

The portrait series is connected to the photographs of political events. For example, the regulation of interethnic conflict (April–May 1921) and political crisis in the Khorezm People’s Soviet Republic. The photos of the Second All-Khivian Summit (Kurultai; 15–23 May 1921) were included in the album. There are also selected portraits of its members, including Khudaibergan Devonov (1879–1940) who had been familiar with Samoilovich since 1908.¹¹¹ The nature of the interactions between the texts and photographs in the album is evident in the juxtaposition of the photograph captioned “celebration of the union between Turkmens and Uzbeks” and the manuscript “Ähd-nama [Treatment] of Turkmen-Ýomut” (copy of original document).¹¹² Samoilovich also visited the ruined palaces of the emir of Bukhara and khan of Khiva (Figure 4.11). In the manuscript collection, some documents from the emirate paperwork are preserved, such as requests to the emir and tax documentation.¹¹³

The series of reports about the political and economic circumstances of the Bukharan People’s Soviet Republic (BNSR)¹¹⁴ is correlated with the collection of photographs of Bukhara previously destroyed by Soviet troops and later repaired (“The view of the destroyed part of the city”) and the activities of the local population (“Bowl shop in the bazaar”, “Caravanserai”). Some photographs are connected to the pre-revolutionary topics of Samoilovich’s study: education (“A shelter-school in Khiva created in 1920 after the revolution”, “An exemplary school in Khiva”), gender issues (“A founder of a Women’s Union in Khiva”), ethnography (a collection of photographs on the lifestyles of Bukharan Jews and German Mennonites in Khorezm) and the collecting of manuscripts and epigraphic materials (“Khan’s seals” in Khiva, “Library at the Central Bazaar in Bukhara” (Figure 4.8)).

110 This quotation can be compared with the poem “The Thoughts of a Person with Malaria in Bukhara (Summer, 1921)” written by “Drunken Sasha”:

Liberty, equality is a lie!

The red rebellions in all the countries

Are actually the fight for [filling] the bellies!

SPbF ARAN. F. 1026. Op. 2. D. 112. L. 4.

111 Samoilovich 1909a: 15–29.

112 OR RNB. F. 1240. D. 123.

113 OR RNB. F. 1240. D. 124–127.

114 OR RNB. F. 1240. D. 128–129.



Figure 4.11: “The negotiations in the Sitorai Mohi-hosa, a former palace of a Bukharan emir”. 1921. Marina P. Samoilovich’s archive.

In the album, two types of photos are combined. Some of them were made for an official report for the NKID RSFSR. Others (for example, a photo of Samoilovich on a horse) were intended for personal use. The home archive also contains duplicates of some photos (for example, two copies of the photos “the emir’s throne in the citadel” and “photos from the holiday of unity between Turkmens and Uzbeks”). In the end, this collection of photos is so different in semantics that it must have been at Samoilovich’s personal disposal.

The album preserved the key principles of photography that Samoilovich followed during his in-field work. Despite the shift from ethnographic and philological research to analysis and interpretation, the scholar’s photographic vision for creating content was preserved. However, the album was created in a period of major political change in the region. Just as the 1906 collection demonstrated the colonial processes that were transforming social structures in Turkmen, the 1921 album illustrates the collapse of the former world order and the emergence of the so-called “Soviet Orient” with all its internal contradictions.

Conclusion

By summarising all the aspects mentioned above, we can conclude that all of Samoilovich's activities were connected to different spheres of knowledge, including academic orientalism, ethnography, literary studies, "enlightenment", diplomatic work and analytics. Samoilovich was able to track the change of his object of study toward the inner processes inside local communities. His adaptation to these changes, "methodological rearming", direct communication with his informants, and his reflection on the circumstances demonstrate the inner dynamism of "the net of beliefs" behind his research practices. Simultaneously, some basics of his approach to study remained constant, for example his use of the verification principle and understanding of the empirical verifiability of knowledge.

We can trace the evolution of his photographic practice from a landscape view of the Kopet-Dag mountains to a collection dedicated to a major shift in the history of the region. His photographic activity was connected to the concept of a "vanishing nature" that needed preserving. Photography was an essential part of his activity, of equal importance to the collection of objects of historical and cultural heritage (manuscripts, folklore, artefacts). The photographs enrich and supplement the collection by introducing portraits of "oriental personae": the participants of knowledge transfer.

The scholar aimed to stress the "objectivity" of his research by supplementing his data with photographs. However, his adherence to methodological frames and narratives reflected a central practice of the "orientalising" process. In Samoilovich's vision, the backwardness of "oriental personae" and their "vanishing culture" led to the deconstruction of their world by the Soviet regime. The asymmetry of knowledge producers put this idea at the forefront of discourses on the history of Central Asia, erasing the complicated inner structure of social and cultural phenomena. Therefore, the "epistemic violence" of "objectivity" led to its double nature. "Objectivity" was an "epistemic vice" while being viewed as an "epistemic virtue".

After classification and cataloguing, the photographs lost their initial meaning. They became universal "types and kinds" that erased personal connections, empathy and context. They were reduced to evidence for the universalisation of knowledge about tribes, lifestyles and rituals. A researcher who tried to speak about the shifts in regional history become a collector of ethnographic material and the standards of Central Asian everyday life. This process led to the essentialisation of any reception of specific examples and cases, and, inevitably, to the disappearance of particularity.

But one feature of the photograph is its ability to prompt new interpretations based on aesthetics. For example, during one of the expeditions to Stavropol (in

the mid-2010s), citizens of this region informed ethnographers about an important character of local cultural memory: Musa Isheev. Stavropol Turkmens asked ethnographers to find information about him in the archives. In 2017 colleagues managed to find in the collection of REM a photo of Musa Isheev taken by Samoilovich. This shot was immediately transferred to the Turkmens of Stavropol. In this way, they received an image of their distant ancestor.¹¹⁵ This case shows how group memory can give new meanings to an image that has lost its initial meaning between the walls of academic institutes, and thus contribute to the reproduction of identity and intergenerational communication.

Appendix

Table 4.1: A part of the union catalogue of the 1906 collection.

Russian Ethnographic Museum		Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography	
Number	Description according to the catalogue	Number	Description according to the catalogue
5493-29 (types-groups)	Mullah Sabir, from the Ārsari tribe, who was living among the Teke tribe, and his wife from the Sakar tribe	1397-017	Sabur-molla with his elder wife (Sakar tribe). The village of Agyrbaş
5493-30 (types-groups)	Mullah Sabir with his two wives, one a native of the Sakar tribe, the other from the Salyr tribe, which lives near the border of Bukhara and Afghanistan	1397-016	Mullah of a village – Sabur-molla (Ārsari) with his two wives: a woman of Sakar tribe (left) and a woman of Salor tribe (right)
5493-20 (ancient monuments)	Aryk (irrigation ditch) near the ruins of the Porsu-gala fortress	1397-029	Reeds on the ditch that run through the fortress
5493-23 (ancient monuments)	Remains of the Teke fortress of Porsu-gala, dated to the middle of the nineteenth century, the period of the Teke-Persian wars for the possession of Merv	1397-033	Inside view of the wall of the Porsu-gala fortress near Merv

¹¹⁵ Brusina 2016.

Table 4.1 (continued)

Russian Ethnographic Museum		Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography	
Number	Description according to the catalogue	Number	Description according to the catalogue
5493-11 (villages)	The sedentary Teke village located in the district of Perreñçäge near the city of Merv, where A. Samoilovich lived for some time	1397-014	A Teke tent. The village of Agyrbaş.
5493-28 (types-groups)	Mamed Orazov standing in a tent overnight in Teke village during a boar hunt. He wears a white papakha. On the side is sat the folk singer Aman-bagşy. On the other side, the relatives of the chief of the county are sat.	1397-021	Hunters camped in a tent near the ruins of Porsu. On the side, Aman-bagşy is sat with a <i>dudara</i> (dutar: Persian musical instrument) in his hands.
5493-25 (types-groups)	One of the Merv Teke khans, Sary-khan of the Otamyş clan, in his estate. On the side sits an interpreter of the colonial administration. He originates from Azerbaijan. On the other side is sat an officer of the German general staff who had travelled through Central Asia. In the centre is the chief of the county, von Pfaler, with his wife in Teke clothes. Behind them stand the servants of Sary-khan and the county chief's assistants (<i>jigit</i>).	1397-024	Sary-khan with guests and servants (<i>chel'yad</i>). The Otamyş kin.
5493-26 (types-groups)	The old lady from the Teke tribe is the wife of Sary-khan. In the centre is sat the county chief's wife. On the side, a Teke girl is one of the Sary-khan's relatives.	1397-022	In the centre is the wife of the Merv county's chief. Either side are the wife of Sary-khan and a Teke girl who characteristically bites her headscarf.
5493-32 (types-groups)	The elder of a Teke village near Merv in the district of Perreñçäge (sat), the mullah Sabir (standing) and the guests from Merv, the representatives of labour intelligentsia (wife of the chief doctor, etc.)	1397-023	Near a Teke tent. The elder (sat) and secretary (<i>mirza</i> ; standing) of the village of Agyrbaş.

Abbreviations

BNSR	Bukharskaia Narodnaia Sovetskaia Respublika (Bukharan People's Soviet Republic)
IVR RAN	Institut vostochnykh rukopisei Rossiiskoi akademii nauk (Institute of Oriental Manuscripts at the Russian Academy of Sciences)
MAE	Muzei antropologii i ètnografii (Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography [the Kunstkamera] at the Russian Academy of Sciences)
NA RGO	Nauchnyi arkhiv Russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva (Scientific Archive at the Russian Geographical Society)
NKID RSFSR	Narodnyi Komissariat inostrannykh del Rossiiskoi sovetskoi federativnoi sotsialisticheskoi Respubliki (People's Commissariat of International Affairs of the Russian Soviet Federalist Socialist Republic)
OR RNB	Otdel rukopisei Rossiiskoi Natsional'noi biblioteki (Department of Manuscripts at the Russian National Library)
RGALI	Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art)
RSFSR	Rossiiskaia Sovetskaia Federativnaia Sotsialisticheskaia Respublika (Russian Soviet Federalist Socialist Republic)
REM	Rossiiskii ètnograficheskii muzei (Russian Ethnographic Museum)
SPbF ARAN	Sankt-Peterburgskii filial Arkhiva Rossiiskoi akademii nauk (St Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences)
TsGIA SPb	Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv g. Sankt-Peterburga (Central State Historical Archive of the city of St Petersburg)

Archives

MAE RAN. Photo archive. F. 1397 (Received from Samoilovich – 1909).

NA RGO. F. 1–1917–1929 (Chancellery). Op. 1. D. 15.

OR RNB. F. 671 (Samoilovich, Alexander Nikolaevich). Op. 1. D. 31, 77–81, 107, 112, 129, 161, 175; F. 816 (Findeizen, Nikolai Fëdorovich). Op. 1. D. 335; F. 1240 (Turkic-documents collection), D. 123–131.

REM. The repository of photographic negatives. Collections 4830 (Received from Samoilovich – 1928), 5486 (Received from Samoilovich – 1932), 5493 (Received from Samoilovich – 1932).

RGALI. F. 118 (Veselovskii, Nikolai Ivanovich). Op. 1. D. 613.

SPbF ARAN. F. 68 (Bartol'd, Vasilii Vladimirovich). Op. 2. D. 21; F. 250 (Bogoraz-Tan, Vladimir Genrikhovich). Op. 4. D. 51; F. 782 (Samoilovich, Alexander Nikolaevich). Op. 1. D. 16; F. 1026 (Krachkovskii, Ignatii Iulianovich). Op. 2. D. 112.

TsGIA SPb. F. 14 (Imperial Petrograd University). Op. 3. D. 15730.

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5 Hungarian orientalism as seen through the photographs of György Almásy's second expedition to the Kazakh and Kyrgyz territories in 1906

Abstract: Central Asia was an important place of investigation for Hungarian explorers searching for their presumed ancestors in Inner Asia. This was especially so after Ármin Vámbéry's travels there in 1861–1863. Vámbéry gave one of the very few detailed European personal accounts of this region before the Russian invasion. György Almásy, who came from an aristocratic background in the west of Hungary, regarded himself as Vámbéry's follower, in particular through his establishment of a research infrastructure in Kazakh and Kyrgyz territories. At the very beginning of the twentieth century, he led two expeditions to the region to study the people, flora and fauna of the Semirechie region. After his first journey he published one of the best written monographs about the region. Unfortunately, it was only published in Hungarian. Sadly, he wrote almost nothing about his second expedition. Very recently, there has been an attempt to publish his letters and diary about this second expedition, including a collection of photographs found in two photo albums preserved by his granddaughter. Based on our research and fieldwork in the region, this article introduces the practice of Hungarian field-oriented orientalist anthropologists in the twentieth century by analysing Almásy's personal relationships, network-building capacities and approaches towards the people in the research field and by examining the photographs he took in 1906 in the Kazakh and Kyrgyz regions.

Keywords: György Almásy, anthropology, ethnography, photography, Turkestan, colonialism

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Introduction

Colonialism is primarily seen here as military action, when a military power, typically a political state, sends military expeditions to explore, occupy, set up and defend new territories.¹ Military occupations are often preceded by expeditions to distant, unknown territories. These inevitably serve colonial interests, even when the explorers are from a different country than the later colonisers.² Those explorer expeditions can be of a particularly colonial nature when they are carried out in the border zones of powerful colonial states.

We understand infrastructure as military jargon³ for the facilities an occupying power establishes to run newly colonised areas; this may include roads, road traffic (to supply the army with weapons, ammunition, etc.), a supply of water, and supplies of energy (such as food, heating, and so forth). The primary aim of infrastructure is to serve the army; nevertheless, civilian forces, in particular administrators of colonial institutions and their families, can also use it. Local inhabitants can also benefit from infrastructure in previously unexpected ways.⁴ Colonial, often military, expeditions are just the first steps in the establishment of an infrastructure. The colonisers, especially the first explorers, often use the local inhabitants' existing infrastructure for their purposes until they have set up their own.⁵

Imperialism is established, in our interpretation, when a new infrastructure is integrated and maintained by a colonial administration as part of an empire. We conceive imperialism as a system of information, a kind of imperial file catalogue, where all matters, information, facts and knowledge have their own place, role and interpretative context in the configuration of existing data, and which can continuously be updated to assist new colonial endeavours.

We use orientalism as a descriptive term for various perspectives and attitudes. Said only studied British and French orientalism in their approaches to Africa and Asia. In our understanding, the term orientalism can be extended and generalised, in line with Said's presumed intentions, in order to understand some of the finer, critical details of its process. The need for an analysis of other kinds of orientalisms, for example German or Austrian-Hungarian, was already apparent

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2 As in the case of Almásy's expeditions, which came from an Austro-Hungarian to a Russian imperial context.

3 Edwards 2003.

4 Mrazek 2002; Larkin 2008, 2013; Dias 2010; Elyachar 2010; Sántha 2014.

5 On infrastructure, see also Distribution Cognition Cooperative n.d.

before Said's work.⁶ Those other orientalisms show some unique imperial and nationalistic features. In this article, we are highlighting the nationalism of Hungarian orientalism. The zones of interest for Hungarian orientalism⁷ are the Balkan peninsula, the areas of Turkic peoples in Europe, and Anatolia, the Ural mountains, the Caucasus, Siberia, Central Asia and Tibet. That is, all the areas where Hungarian "ancestors", i.e. related peoples, might have lived.

Oriental ideas are "stored" in the imperial structure – in our case in the photo collections⁸ – and in fortunate circumstances, when European orientalist ideas do not clash significantly with local realities, they can be taken and integrated into the overall imperial apparatus, should local political or economic goals require that. Imperialism can be a system that accepts and maintains oriental content and even gives it meaning, even when the content is partly the direct result of European ideations or self-reflection.

The critical approach to orientalism (such as Said's) is mainly based on analyses of texts. The second expedition of György Almásy has some textual sources that have been preserved, like the diary compiled from his letters to his wife, or the publications of his fellow expedition member, Gyula Prinz. However, this study intends to focus on the images of Hungarian orientalism in Almásy's photo albums. We would like to demonstrate how orientalism can also be manifested in visual material and how visual information can be transformed back into texts.

György Almásy's biography

The Almásy family was an old Hungarian aristocratic family (Figure 5.1). The family's aristocratic roots go back to the conflicts with the Cuman people⁹ in the thirteenth century. György Almásy (Georg von Almásy) was born in 1867 in Felsőlendva.¹⁰ Not much is known of his childhood. It seems from his sister's family photo albums that he lived like an aristocrat, and often visited other members of his extended family. According to the aristocratic customs of the day, he studied law. For a while, he worked for the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹¹

⁶ See, for example more critical details about Said's *Orientalism* in a Hungarian context in David Mandler's recent work on Vámbéry (Mandler 2016).

⁷ Erdman 2021.

⁸ Photo collections becoming part of imperial archives is one way of preserving oriental ideas.

⁹ *Kun* in Hungarian, *polovets* in Russian.

¹⁰ Now Grad in Slovenia.

¹¹ One of only three common Austro-Hungarian ministries. The other two were in different parts of the country.



Figure 5.1: “György Almásy and Hubert von Archer before their leaving”. Graz in April 1906. Wilhelm Helfer – Graz, private collection (István Sántha) – Csákberény/Hungary.

His mother died tragically young in 1890. This might have been one reason for Almásy’s sensitive and complex personality. After her death, his father sold their castle and they moved to another in Borostyánkő, in the county of Vas (today, Bernstein in Burgenland, Austria). It seems that it was felt he should marry someone who could run his household. His first wife, Ilona Pittoni, came from an Italian aristocratic family in South Carinthia. They had three children. The youngest, László, has become famous through the popular novel and film *The English Patient*¹² – of which he is the hero. Almásy showed an interest in zoology and ornithology from a young age and had many zoologist, ornithologist and botanist friends. He even had a taxidermy workshop in his castle. He hunted – but not as passionately as his fellow traveller, Hubert von Archer.

Between 1897 and 1917 he lived the life of an active researcher. In 1897 he made his first major journey: to the delta of the Danube river where he studied the

¹² László Almásy (1895–1951) was a Hungarian traveller, scholar and officer in the German intelligence service in General Rommel’s Afrika Korps. He was also the hero of *The English Patient*, the novel written by Michael Ondaatje in 1992 which was adapted into the Oscar-winning film directed by Anthony Minghella in 1996.

native bird populations. Later, he wrote a monograph on his findings and experiences there.¹³ It was on this trip that he conceived the idea of a major expedition.

He carried out his first, nine-month-long Eastern expedition among the Kazakh and Kyrgyz peoples in 1900. He himself organised and financed the expedition. In his 1903 monograph, Almásy gives a long account of how he organised the journey, detailing all the contacts he used. He developed many contacts in both the Austro-Hungarian and the Russian Empires in the political period between 1897 (his journey to the delta of the Danube) and March 1900 (the first expedition to Kyrgyz territories of southern Semirechie). He notes that both individuals and official circles supported him,¹⁴ and acknowledges the common imperial, multi-ethnic and aristocratic framework within which both the Romanov and Habsburg empires operated in allowing him to enter Turkestan, then a closed area, and freeing him from the border taxes he should have paid on the vast amount of equipment he brought with him.¹⁵ He also describes the aid of the Hungarian and Austrian authorities and his successful manoeuvres. The foreign ministry in Vienna and the embassy in St Petersburg recommended him to a number of Austro-Hungarian representatives within Russia, and gave him advice and practical help.¹⁶

To obtain practical information, Almásy corresponded extensively with explorers who had visited the area.¹⁷ He gives a list that includes Russian and German researchers (from Tashkent and Jena), “Russian” bureaucrats of German origin (from Kharkhiv), Russian gentlemen from St Petersburg and Moscow, an “Austrian” councillor-engineer of French origin (from Galati), the Hungarian consul in Tbilisi and the “Austrian” vice-consul of English origin in Baku.¹⁸

During his first Eastern expedition between March and December 1900 he had followed an itinerary around Vernyi, lake Balkhash, lake Issyk-Kul (Ysyk-Köl, Issyq-Kul), Przhevalsk and Tien-shan (in the Khan-Tengri region). One of the members of his first expedition was Rudolf Stummer von Traunfels (1866–1961), a zoologist and taxidermist and later professor of zoology at the University of Graz in Austria. Many *jigits* worked for his first expedition, the most famous of which was a man called Oruzbek. Oruzbek named his son Doktorbei after Almásy. This son later became a general of the Soviet People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (*Narodnyi komissariat vnutrennikh del*, or NKVD) and a street has been named after him in Karakol. Almásy liked people to address him as Mr Doctor. The friendship between

13 Almásy 1898.

14 Almásy 1903: 3.

15 Almásy 1903: 3.

16 Almásy 1903: 4.

17 Almásy 1903: 4.

18 Almásy 1903: 4.

Almásy and Akim Kutsenko began during this first expedition.¹⁹ There is evidence to suggest that Kutsenko was the expedition taxidermist. The first expedition was quite scientific in the sense that a great deal of energy was invested in zoological research. The expedition not only brought its own taxidermist but also employed local taxidermists in addition to the *jigits*. As mentioned, Almásy's experience was published in his well-written and now classic travel account *Vándor-utam Ázsia szívébe* (My journey to the heart of Asia) published in Budapest in 1903.²⁰

In this work, descriptions of social, economic and especially geographic, botanic and zoological details are very rich and accurate. Pictures of the Kazakh *bakshi* and *duana* are of high value to the history of shamanistic research. In the sixty-two-page appendix, Almásy summarises his findings on anthropology, linguistics,²¹ the economy, family and marriage, religion, superstition, festivities, dress, jewellery, weapons, dwellings, household objects, home manufacturing, and so on. The expedition was partly an international enterprise and the Austrian element enriched its zoological work. This publication is a fine example of Hungarian orientalism; both its introduction and the ethnographic descriptions fit the "Turanist" ideology. Almásy met Vera Apraxin,²² an aristocrat of Russian background who became his second wife, in the period between the two expeditions.

In 1906 Almásy travelled to the Kazakh and Kyrgyz territories for the second time. Less is known about the more private preparations for the second expedition. But we do know that Almásy had extensive correspondence in Russian with governor Mikhail E. Ionov (in his letters Almásy calls him Ionoff) prior to the journey.²³ He informed Ionov about his plans and asked for support. Again, Almásy himself organised and financed the second expedition. The plan was to set out together with his friend Hubert von Archer (1865–195?). Later, upon the recommendation of Lajos Lóczy, Almásy's friend, they allowed the young geographer Gyula Prinz (1882–1973) to join them. The itinerary of this expedition was Andijan, Tien-shan, Issyk-Kul, Przhevalsk, Narynkol, Kuldja and Orenburg. The timeline was six months between the beginning of May and mid-November 1906.

¹⁹ On the relationship between foreign travellers and their local assistants, see Sántha 2002; Kaim 2019; Gorshenina 2019.

²⁰ Almásy 1903.

²¹ See also Almásy 1902.

²² The correspondences contain only the spelling 'Apraxin' while the more traditional transliteration of this name is 'Apraksin'.

²³ Mikhail Efremovich Ionov (Ionoff) (1846–1924) was the governor of Semirechie from 1899 to 1907. He led the military expedition in 1891, which occupied the northern part of the Pamir Mountains for the Russian Empire.

This second expedition to Central Asia can be considered less ethnographic and scientific but more explorative and geographical. This was largely due to the presence of the geographer Prinz; though Almásy was the explorer. The original idea was to explore an area around 200 km long and 300 km wide on the Tekkes plain and the Agias river. Since they met an English expedition en route they had to postpone their plans for a while.²⁴ They had also planned to go as far as Ladakh, but this was never realised. The relationship between Almásy and Prinz became so acrimonious that they ceased working together and never met again.

Nevertheless, Prinz and not Almásy published a written account of the second expedition.²⁵ The second expedition had much less of an oriental touch. Prinz was not interested in finding a Hungarian ancestral homeland. He was interested in geography and geomorphology. Perhaps bringing Turgan Berdike-uulu, a young Kyrgyz man, to Hungary for the *Manas*²⁶ translations also weakened the orientalist approach. Almásy returned from Central Asia accompanied by Turgan. In Almásy's castle in Hungary²⁷ they translated *Manas*, a Kyrgyz epic, which they collected during the expedition. Almásy published a short excerpt from *Manas* in the Hungarian orientalist periodical *Keleti Szemle*.²⁸

Almásy divorced in 1912 and moved out of the family castle. He gave up his aristocratic lifestyle and dedicated himself to research but, like so many others, the First World War brought significant changes to his life. He served as a major in the army. Many other male family members also served and some were injured.

After the war he was impoverished. Contracts made before the war lost their validity. Almásy had given his land up to his elder son as part of the divorce agreement, and now his son and former wife decided not to pay Almásy his part of the family income. He moved to Graz with Vera, where they lived in his daughter Georgina's villa. Several times he retreated with Vera to his sisters' – Marie's and Margherita's – relatives' castles. He devoted most of his time to zoology and wrote a doctoral study on vitalism in the context of zoology.²⁹ He died in Graz in 1933.

²⁴ Prinz 1911: 39.

²⁵ Prinz 1911.

²⁶ See Manasz 2017.

²⁷ In Hungarian, Borostyánkő; in German, Bernstein; in Austrian, Bugenland.

²⁸ Almásy 1911.

²⁹ Vig 1999.

György Almásy and Turanism

Hungarian orientalism has deep historical roots. Following Friar Julianus's journey east at the beginning of the thirteenth century, Hungarian travellers picked up the search again for their Hungarian roots in the East from the nineteenth century. Here we need to mention Sándor Kőrösi Csoma's Tibetan studies, Antal Reguly's Obi-Ugric, Ármin Vámbéry's and György Almásy's Central Asian, Benedek Baráthosi Balogh's East Siberian, Jenő Zichy's Caucasian and Siberian and Béla Széchenyi's East Asian expeditions. Two important factors should be mentioned regarding the origin of Hungarians. Firstly, the so-called "Ugric-Turkic war" at the end of the nineteenth century. Secondly Turanism's flourishing before the First World War and between the two wars. Both influenced public opinion and education. The Ugric-Turkic war was an intellectual debate about whether the Hungarian language was of Ugric or Turkic origin. The Hungarian version of Turanism opposed the Finnish version by including the Altaic branch (Turkic, Mongolic, Tungusic, Japanese and Korean) as related languages. It also opposed the Turkish version called pan-Turkism, by including the Uralic branch (Obi-Ugric and Samoyed). In Turanism, the Ural-Altaic ethnic groups are unified by a common "race" (or, we could say, by a common "culture"). After the Second World War, Uralic and Altaic linguistic studies unwillingly kept Turanism alive. There was significant academic fieldwork in Hungary in the interwar period as a compensatory activity for the Hungarian territories lost after the Paris (Trianon) Treaty in 1920. Political and economic "colonial" ideas and fantasies dominated Hungarian activities related to the East. In reality, academic fieldwork could no longer be conducted in the territories of the Soviet Union because the idea of Hungarian Turanism united the "inner enemies" of the Bolshevik state – native peoples fighting for their own national sovereignty. The Ugric-Turkic war and Turanism provide a good framework for interpreting Hungarian research activities in the East.

To understand Hungarian Turanism and Almásy's relationship with it, it is important to put this phenomenon in historical perspective. In 1867 the Hungarian and Austrian ruling classes made an agreement that formed the basis of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy between 1867 and 1918. From 1867 it seemed the future of the Hungarian people and society would depend on the partnerships they could find within and outside the monarchy.³⁰ After some time³¹ it

³⁰ Trencsényi 2007.

³¹ Especially after the First World War and the Trianon agreement, when Hungary lost a lot of its territory and population.

became easier to find such coalitions outside Hungarian territory. The Turanist movement, which revived the idea of Hungarian-Eastern interconnectedness, became an experimental vehicle for such connections.³² In addition to the Finnish and Turkic branches, it included other possible connections, even to Japan.

Some theorists have recently³³ framed Hungarian Turanism in contrast to current, intensifying ultra-right political trends and tried to make it an example of Said's theoretical criticisms and to justify its relevance not only to British or French orientalism but also to Eastern or Asian areas. Michael Erdman, the curator of Turkish and Turkic collections at the British Library, presents the case of Sándor Újfaly (Eugène de Ujfalvy), a French orientalist of Hungarian origin who asked whether Hungarian orientalist research traditions in Central Asia and Siberia could be integrated into a general, Western imperial system without directly targeting the political and economic aims of the Habsburg, Romanoff or Ottoman empires. Erdman suggests that, in contrast to southern-oriented French imperial interests, the Hungarian-Fenno-Ugric relationship as conceived by the Turanist-orientalist ideology remained a more scientific orientalism and was not co-opted for colonial purposes.

Legends of relatedness and belonging to a so-called “common stock” or family may drive contacts according to political and economic interests. Once these lose their relevance, the corresponding legends tend to fade away. The fate of these legends depends partly on their importance for individual and community identity and on the levels of activity needed to keep them alive in support of ambitions. They may give credible explanations and rationalisations for the realisation of political and economic goals.

In Almásy's time, the systematic use of references to relatedness based on ethnographic data were only acceptable if they were grounded in dense multi-disciplinary research. Today, this has changed with the development of genetic research, which can give the legends a material basis.³⁴

György Almásy belonged to a group of orientalist field anthropologists who wrote important work on Hungarian Turanism. This group included Ármin Vámbéry and Benedek Baráthosi Balogh.³⁵

³² Ablonczy 2022.

³³ See e.g. Erdman 2021.

³⁴ Fóthi, Gonzalez and Fehéret 2020; Konkobaiev 2013; Juhász et al. 2016; Németh et al. 2017; Bíró et al. 2014.

³⁵ Benedek Baráthosi Balogh (1870–1945) was a Hungarian (Transylvanian) scholar who explored the Manchu-Tungus peoples living in the Russian Far East at the very beginning of the twentieth century. He was a theorist of the Turanist movement. He published about twenty popular books in Hungarian about his journeys.

Even with hindsight, Almásy cannot be condemned as a racist. Nowadays he could be regarded as modern and even liberal. He did not differentiate between the top Russian functionaries, the Kyrgyz *Manaps* (nobles) or even the *jigits* who were so close to his heart since they possessed vast local interpersonal networks. Important to his success were his fruitful connection-building within the Russian imperial system, his rigorous interpersonal approaches and his ability to adapt well to local environments. He continued the history of Turanist research that Vámbéry (and Molla Isakh)³⁶ had begun, and set an exemplary precedent for future generations of researchers (for example Benedek Baráthosi Balogh). His complex character, his wide-ranging curiosity (anthropology, zoology, ornithology, linguistics and philology) and his pliable preconceptions allowed him to look at the world from the perspective of an anthropologist. He was indeed ahead of his time.

During Sven Hedin's³⁷ visit to Budapest in 1906, a group photograph was taken of Hedin with the Hungarian elite of field orientalism. One can see György Almásy next to Ármin Vámbéry, Lajos Lóczy, Jenő Cholnoky and Mór Déchy.³⁸

Almásy's book was published³⁹ by the Section of Natural Science at the Hungarian Scientific Academy with the support of Lajos Lóczy who was the scientific expert on Béla Széchenyi's expedition in 1877. Although he was not a founder member of the Turan Society in 1910, he worked for the journal *Turan* in 1913 and became a committee member of the Society in 1914.

Almásy did not lose all contact with orientalist research after the First World War. However, as mentioned above, he no longer made any major journeys but withdrew to his own territory, the new post-war Austria.

36 Molla Isakh (1836–1892), a religious student who lived in Kongrat (Qongirad) in Karakalpakstan, accompanied Vámbéry when he travelled back to Europe. Molla lived in Hungary till the end of his life, worked as a librarian at the Academy of Science and translated the lost Hungarian Epic of Origin recreated by János Arany, the famous novelist, into his mother language.

37 Sven Hedin (1865–1952), a well-known Swedish Asia explorer.

38 Mór Déchy (1851–1917), a Hungarian geographer and alpinist who lived between 1882 and 1887 in Odessa (he married Paulina Steinberg, a daughter of a local banker), and worked and conducted expeditions in the Caucasus (and also in the Indian Eastern Himalayas).

39 Almásy 1903.

Searching for detailed information in photos from Almásy's second expedition (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, 2017–2018)

In 2017–2018 we (Dávid Somfai Kara and István Sántha) conducted three short research trips to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to clarify several unanswered questions related to Almásy's second expedition.

Our two major achievements on the first trip were as follows. We met a Manaschy, an epic singer, who could sing short extracts from *Manas*, which had been published by Almásy. We also found the building (the Karakol Pedagogic Institute) that had served as the base for Almásy's expedition in 1906.

In May of 2018 we returned to Almaty. We took part in the unveiling ceremony of György Almásy's memorial plaque organised by the ministry of foreign affairs for Hungary. We organised an exhibition of the photos of the 1906 expedition and presented papers in Russian and Kazakh at a roundtable workshop arranged for the event. Here we met Nelia Böketova, a local historian, who drew our attention to the unique local historical value of Almásy's photos about Almaty.⁴⁰ She also connected us with Nataliia Kareeva, the Semirechie governor M. E. Ionov's great-granddaughter, who now lives in St Petersburg.⁴¹ As explained above, the success of both Almásy's expeditions (1900 and 1906) had depended hugely on Ionov's benevolence.

We have not found traces of I. G. Ryzhkov, the photographer who worked in the former Przhevalsk (now Karakol), in the archives in Bishkek (the Kyrgyz National Archive). He was the photographer who prepared a business card (*vizitnaia kartochka*) for Turgan, a necessary tool for Turgan to find work. This situation was similar in Karakol when we tried to search for the memory of Akim Kutsenko – Almásy's friend, the director of the native school – and his family members.⁴²

⁴⁰ Böketova n.d.

⁴¹ Kareeva's personal website: <http://kareeva.com/>.

⁴² Unfortunately, with the establishment of the Soviet system, a lot of textual and visual memories of institutions (governmental offices, register offices, native schools, photo studios) of the previous tsarist regime were erased. The early Bolshevik system destroyed these institutions' documents; moreover, individuals, like members of Ionov's family, were also instructed to censor their private collections (burning documents, photos and even books). Because of the lack of surviving documents, no historic details about the institutions prior to the revolution have remained. Thus we had to face the fact that we did not find answers to many questions that intrigued us.

Akim Kutsenko was Almásy's host during the 1906 expedition to Przhevalsk. He and his female family members were mentioned warmly by Almásy and they were captured in photos. Almásy reported in detail about social life in Przhevalsk. The Hungarian traveller enjoyed it a great deal after his tough journeys across wild and undeveloped territories. Kutsenko was the central figure behind Almásy and his companions' life in Przhevalsk. Almásy's detailed descriptions encouraged us to study the history of the Kutsenko family in Karakol. Finally, with great luck, we found a young member of the family. With his support, we contacted some older family members and so had a chance to hear new information about Almásy and his expedition.

Unfortunately, we could not find any contemporary relatives or descendants of Turgan: the young Kyrgyz man who accompanied Almásy in 1906. There were no clues in the modern institutions, such as archives, museums, public registers, and so on, that we could access. It was a huge challenge to search for personal data in a nomadic system of bureaucracy, or networks and we could not achieve a breakthrough.⁴³

Colonial, imperial and oriental elements in Almásy's descriptions of his first expedition in 1900

Hungarian researchers and other readers interested in Eastern matters primarily valued the ethnographic content on the aboriginal (Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uyghur) population in Almásy's work. This work raised him to the level of the best explorers of his time, for example Vámbéry, Lóczy, Déchy and Cholnoky. Our journey to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in 2017 focused our attention on another important strand of his work that has been largely disregarded. His descriptions of local history and the Russian bureaucratic administration of that time and his photo documentation of local people are still highly significant today. Below, we attempt to reinterpret these fields, first by using his monograph about the 1900 expedition.

In his account of the route to Vernyi, Almásy describes the roads and road traffic, writes a detailed description with a drawing of a post station and even

⁴³ Additional research in the near future on *sanjira*, clan genealogies, could be a fruitful approach to finding data about Turgan.

provides a photograph of the head of this station.⁴⁴ He writes about the history of the Semirechie governorate (1854–1924): a historic example of Russian colonialism.⁴⁵ He discusses territorial reorganisations in and around the Semirechie governorate. He describes Tashkent, the capital of the Turkestan governor-generalship. His work delineates the connections and interdependence of the colonial and imperial aspects of the Russian Empire.⁴⁶ He tells us that the governor of Semirechie is simultaneously the ataman of the colonial army and the commander of each of the governorate's military units.⁴⁷

The governor's military power was almost infinite while his administrative duties were tiresome and stressful. M. E. Ionov – governor between 1899 and 1907 – is mainly known in Europe for his expeditions (i.e. his colonial activities). While commander of Russian forces he extended the borders of the Russian Empire to the Pamir Mountains (1891).⁴⁸ Almásy describes the administration of the area as principally of a military nature and primarily subordinate to the Ministry of Warfare. The governorate is described as divided into six districts (*uezd*), each lead by a district chief (*uezdnyi nachal'nik*).⁴⁹ The six towns of the governorate are the capitals of the six districts (Vernyi/Almaty, Djarkent, Kopal, Lepsy, Pishpek/Bishkek and Przhevalsk/Karakol).

Furthermore, Almásy records more than official data. He gives a detailed description of the functioning of the imperial state. In Vernyi (Almaty) he set up the expedition and employed staff. He prepared for this task in the major towns (Tashkent and Pishpek), which he had previously traversed and where he tried to obtain letters of recommendation from reliable people (professors, doctors, etc). It is telling that out of the many recommendations he obtained there was only one of Russian origin.⁵⁰ Almásy gives a detailed description of how he met the important personalities of Vernyi, especially the governor and his family.⁵¹ Here he explicitly mentions colonialism and uses the word “colonialists” in arguing that the privileges given to the town helped it thrive. He describes the different districts and pinpoints their various characters, links to the imperial system and colonial and military traits.⁵² He then launches into a long

44 Almásy 1903: 93.

45 Almásy 1903: 96.

46 Almásy 1903: 96.

47 Almásy 1903: 96. The Military governor of Semirechie was also the ataman of the Semirechie Cossack host.

48 Almásy 1903: 96.

49 Almásy 1903: 96.

50 Almásy 1903: 98.

51 Almásy 1903: 101.

52 Almásy 1903: 101, 116.

analysis of the public provisions of the town, which would be of major interest to local historians if they could obtain copies of his texts. His topics include water supplies, building sizes, pavements, malaria risk and even dress codes (including uniforms).⁵³

By introducing the main participants of the imperial administration Almásy describes public life in detail. General Ionov is the most relevant link here; his elder daughter acts as interpreter between him and Almásy in French. Ionov shows great interest in Almásy's plans and supports them wholeheartedly. It seems the Russians adopted Almásy's orientalist focus: Almásy romanticises and exoticises them; for example, their limitless hospitality, their ease of adapting to uncomfortable colonial conditions while moving with confidence between the colonies and the centres.⁵⁴ He also describes the network of foreign "compatriots" and highlights the role of the French councillor-in-chief architect, Gourdet, who served both governors of Turkestan. Gourdet tried to teach Almásy how to treat subordinates when procuring horses and equipment. He not only designed colonial buildings but also important infrastructure, including bridges.⁵⁵ He also spoke many European and local languages. He was praised both by Almásy and other travellers.⁵⁶

Almásy describes how the Russians felt at home in Vernyi. Climatic conditions were so pleasant – even wild trees provided fruit – that administrators wished to stay after retirement. He wanted to avoid too much attention from the colonial Russian authorities: General Ionov was aware of most of Almásy's plans but probably not of everything. He must have been aware that Almásy intended to travel to Kashgar but probably did not know that Almásy had arranged a border meeting with an English expedition headed by Colonel Lord Appleton and Major Hussey.⁵⁷ Ionov's support and trust gave Almásy powerful protection and prevented the lower rank administrators, the *chinovniks*, from hindering him.

Almásy had two goals when he got involved in the social life of Vernyi and made the acquaintance of General Ionov's family. First, he intended to obtain a special authorisation (*otkrytoe pis'mo, ukaz* in Russian) from the general on behalf of his expedition.⁵⁸ He aimed to use the Russian colonial infrastructure to

53 Almásy 1903: 102, 103.

54 Almásy 1903: 107.

55 Almásy 1903: 114.

56 On foreign travellers in Turkestan and the Kyrgyz territories of southern Semirechie, see Gorshenina 2002; Sántha 2002.

57 Prinz 1911: 39. This was a hunting expedition from the Himalayas to Central Asia that pretended to be a purely botanical, scientific project collecting plants.

58 Almásy 1903.

save energy, time and money as he developed his own. In order to avoid them making decisions from their own more limited points of view, Almásy was keen to avoid individual negotiations with every *chinovnik*. Second, he wanted to obtain state *jigits* (skilful people, often fearless equestrians) for his expedition.⁵⁹ This meant that he could be supplied with Kyrgyz servants with set colonial salaries who served the Russian Empire but who also had some independence of their own. His main task was to extend the expedition's authorisations (*otkrytoe pis'mo*) to Kyrgyz and other locals so that they could ride ahead and prepare sites before the expedition arrived and also to find more local *jigits*, horses and *iurtas* (yurts)⁶⁰ and have them ready to sell to the expedition.⁶¹ Every *jigit* had his own network with which he contributed to the activities and success of the expedition and he was able to maintain and further develop this network while working for it. The *jigits'* networks can be considered a kind of local, aboriginal infrastructure, running in parallel with the Russian one.

There were three more things Almásy did to achieve his aims. He was good at socialising. By addressing himself ingratiatingly to women, he could increase the benevolence of their men, which was necessary for the positive outcome of his expedition. He shared the finer details of his aims and the more interesting parts of his plans at social gatherings. Moreover, he intended to publish the results of his expedition in a way that could be considered beneficial to the Russian colonial administration. He was aware that he had to declare a certain level of loyalty to the Russians in order to be able to realise his own plans. In addition to all of this, he was able to use his own previous experience of working for the bureaucracy of Austrian-Hungarian imperial institutions to establish his own personal networks. There were similarities in the ways that the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian imperial administrations functioned and so he was able to establish the expedition's own infrastructure through a unique blend of colonial Russian and local Central Asian networks.

How was he able to attract the support and sympathy of the Russian administration? He discovered the importance of feedback and worked to create and edit texts that gave the non-Hungarian speaker a good read as well as his professional, mostly Russian, audience. He was aware of the importance of visual material and illustrations. He published his book⁶² in Hungarian, but seemed to have the

⁵⁹ Almásy 1903.

⁶⁰ *Boz kiyiz üy*: the grey felt house of Kyrgyz.

⁶¹ Almásy 1903.

⁶² The book (Almásy 1903) was written in German and translated into Hungarian by Jenő (Eugen) Cholnoky (1870–1950), a professor of geography and Hungarian traveller in north-east China in 1896–1898.

underlying intention to translate it into a kind of “project report” for the colonial Russian administration and so attract further support for later expeditions.

There is another important element which helps us to understand Almásy’s attitude to the Russians: his family network. Almásy’s aristocratic family included Russians. One of his ancestors had been a councillor of the consulate in St Petersburg and moved back home after his marriage and the 1917 Russian Revolution. Almásy’s second wife was from the Russian aristocratic Apraxin family,⁶³ who had close connections to the castle of Almásy’s sister in Radkersburg in South Carinthia. Having lost most of his money after the First World War, Almásy spent a significant amount of time at this sister’s castle. Vera Apraxin helped Almásy considerably with his Russian correspondence, for example contributing to the letter to Governor Ionov in which Almásy asked Ionov for support for the second expedition.

After his first exploratory journey, Almásy included numerous recommendations in his report for Hungarian businessmen, intended to create closer economic ties, for example importing sweets, tobacco, tinned vegetable food, and so forth.⁶⁴ He brought attention to the potential for beneficial modernisations, for example developing ship traffic on the lake Issyk-Kul.⁶⁵ Although the expedition was organised around the idea of searching for faraway ancestors and kin, he was also careful to provide relevant economic information and suggest ways in which money could be made.

The photographs in two Almásy albums: What is invisible, what can be seen?

The invisible

General Ionov and his family are nowhere to be seen among Almásy’s photographs. One of the reasons for this could be that in 1906 Almásy, contrary to his original plans, did not spend the winter in Vernyi. This does not mean he was not in contact with General Ionov; they may have met in 1906. The lack of photographs suggests that it may have been difficult for Almásy to let the Russian tsarist system see them. Receiving a “general order” (*ukaz, otkrytoe pis'mo*) in 1900 was the result

⁶³ The writing of the Russian surname “Apraksin” as “Apraxin” reflects the usage in Austria at that time.

⁶⁴ Almásy 1903: 105.

⁶⁵ Almásy 1903: 278.

of a huge outlay of effort and time by Almásy. From a letter addressed to the governor, it seems he had also managed to obtain a similar document before starting out on his 1906 expedition.⁶⁶ Thus it was not necessary for him to pay endless visits to the offices and families of various functionaries. There is no photographic references to any such meetings. This may suggest that Almásy had no serious travel plans for the future, even though he failed to reach Ladakh (in India) during this trip as he had originally planned. The fact that he brought a man from Ladakh back to his castle is the only clue to his possible future plans.

This man was called “Ladaki” (a “man from Ladakh” in Hungarian). Apart from his existence, no specific information is known about him, where he came from, when and how or for what purpose Almásy brought him to Europe. Apart from this, there is just one reference to plans to visit Kashgar in a letter written to governor Ionov.

What is seen (1): Turgan

We took a compilation of the two Almásy photo albums⁶⁷ with us to Kyrgyzstan in 2017 when we were searching for traces of Turgan Berdike-uulu. Talaantaly Bakchiev, a *Manas* epic singer from Karakol supported us and organised the trip. Our continuous discussions with Talaantaly form the basis of the following photo analysis.

The significance of the pictures of Turgan is that hardly any written notes are available about him. However, there are exceptions; for example, he is mentioned in Hubert von Archer’s letter to the ornithologist András Keve.⁶⁸ Three photos of Turgan have been preserved (one from Przhevalsk and two taken in Hungary). Two more scenes from Almásy’s 1906 expedition photographs may be related to Turgan and his family.

The first picture of Turgan was made by local photographer I. G. Ryzhkov in Przhevalsk before his departure to Europe. This photograph was printed on a business card. On the back of the picture is written: “The negatives are preserved”. Where could they be? The photographer’s contact details are also printed on the back along with Turgan’s name handwritten in three different ways: with Arabic and Chagatai-Turkic letters: “Turgan Berdike-uulu”; in

⁶⁶ Gorshenina 2003: 83–84.

⁶⁷ The two Almásy photo albums contain 683 images all together.

⁶⁸ Vig 1999.

Cyrillic: “Turgan Berdikinov”; and later, Aunt Zita, Almásy’s granddaughter, added “Turgan” in Hungarian.

In the picture he is wearing an oversized rough Russian school uniform, a Russian military belt around his waist and Turkic narrow curled-toed boots. He is leaning on a Greek-style column. The landscape of a small Russian town (Karakol?) can be seen in the background. A staircase leads up from the street to a Russian log house, which looks like a merchant building in the central square. On the other side is a native-style building with young trees. Turgan’s eyebrows were retouched to look European. His hands are dainty, his physique fragile.

In the second picture, which was composed by a Graz photographer Wilhelm Helfer, Turgan and two of his three students can be seen. Among other topics Turgan taught them Russian. On the left is the older boy, the heir, János; on the right, László, the later-to-be “English Patient”. The boys are in school holiday dress, while Turgan wears a Kyrgyz national costume. The third student, Georgina, Almásy’s third child, is not in the picture. In contrast to the previous image, Turgan is wearing waxed boots, a silk belt, an oriental linen cap (*topu*), a dark cloak and a white collarless shirt. János stands casually with his hands in his pockets, while Turgan has his right hand next to him, László embraces him from the left. On the back, as in the previous image, there is a Chagatai-Turkish handwritten inscription with the name Turgan, in the middle the name Turgan in Cyrillic and at the bottom the photographic studio’s stamp (name and address).

The third photo of Turgan was taken at Borostyánkő, in the castle’s courtyard, surrounded by buildings (it is by the Viennese photographer Karl Sturz). At first we thought Turgan was sitting on a large cane basket. It was only later we recognised that it was a chair because it had arm rests. Turgan seems to be sitting comfortably. Several differences are perceptible compared to the other pictures; an ornate watch chain hangs from his pocket, and his hat is also different, a winter fur head-gear (*tebetejka*). His boots are glossy. He looks at the camera with a sharp expression. The picture must have been taken during a cold season (as indicated by Turgan’s thick trousers). After gifting us the two photo albums, Aunt Zita insisted on keeping this photograph. She liked Turgan’s image immensely, just as her grandfather had. Here Turgan looked like the oriental aristocrat, or *manap* (tribal leader in Kyrgyz), that he was. She told us that this gentlemanly and conservative image gave her a good feeling (Figure 5.2).

Two additional images relating to Turgan need to be mentioned here, both from 1906 during the Almásy expedition. The first came to our attention when we were looking at photographs relating to the native school and Akim Kutsenko. In this picture, the main gate of the school can be seen. In the front of the picture, Kutsenko’s daughter appears in a white dress, on either side are



Figure 5.2: “Turgan Berdikeuulu in Bernstein/Borostyánkő in 1907”. Karl Sturz – Vienna, private collection (István Sántha) – Csákberény/Hungary.

two young Kyrgyz men, Gyula Prinz is leaning against a column on the left, while on the right, in the foreground above the stairs next to an open doorway, a man can be seen. From the notes made by Almásy, we know that Jumabek, one of the *jigits* of the expedition, is the figure in the back. No information is known about the Kyrgyz boy; he could have been in the picture by accident. In the foreground is a horse-drawn carriage with luggage. In front of Kutsenko’s daughter is a pack on the ground. The older boy on the right is probably connected to the carriage. He is dressed in a shirt and could be there to help carry the luggage. The younger boy on the left is dressed in a school uniform, with a hat and tunic (similar to the other boy, except without the tunic). The boy on the left looks contemplative and is moving something up to his mouth; perhaps he is eating roasted sunflower seeds. His clothes are slightly messy, and his boots are dirty and dusty. In this person, we recognised Turgan. This was confirmed later by our Kyrgyz companions. It is possible that this was the moment of the expedition’s arrival.

Another series of photographs that may be related to Turgan are of a tiger hunt in Narynkol, Kazakhstan, on the Chinese border. By the time Almásy arrived at the location (a sedge reed area), the animal had already been killed by uniformed soldiers from the local border guard unit (he had heard the shot). We see several soldiers in the same uniform, white Russian shirts and Russian

military caps with guns. We know from Almásy's description of the picture that one of them was called Berdike (the "Berdike-uulu Turgan" name implies that Berdike had a son Turgan, i.e., Turgan's father was called Berdike). We cannot be sure whether the man in the picture is similar to Turgan; however, in our Kyrgyz companions' view, comparing the photographs, the relation is possible.

One of the photos shows the border guards posing with the killed animal at their feet pretending it is still alive. Two of the frontier guards look serious and shocked in the background (one of them is Berdike) and another holds the corpse by its tail. Almásy bought the dead animal. The skeleton was donated to the Hungarian Museum of Natural History in Budapest, while the fur decorated the living room of the Almásy family home. Almásy's granddaughter remembered disliking this hunting trophy, feeling sorry for the animal. When we presented a selection of images of Almásy's 1906 expedition in Astana (today, Nur-Sultan) in December 2017, some comments by Narynkol residents (where the tiger was killed) and visiting biologists revealed that it might have been one of the last tigers in the region.

To summarise, Turgan was a simple but talented schoolboy in Karakol. He did not spend the holidays with his parents but stayed in the school for the summer. His teacher (Kutsenko) made him the offer of going to see the world with his friend (Almásy). His new lord ordered a *carte de visite* and a new Kyrgyz dress for him. Turgan spent some years in Almásy's castle in Europe where he helped him translate Kyrgyz epics. He also taught Almásy's children Russian. He became a well-known local personality there; the people admired him. One or two years later, Turgan decided to return to Kyrgyz territories. His subsequent destiny is unknown.

What is seen (2): Native school (*tuzemnaia shkola*) and Akim Kutsenko in Przhevalsk

In Kyrgyzstan one of our tasks was to find traces of Akim Kutsenko. In Bishkek we had already contacted one of the leading Karakol local archivists and we found copies of several official letters sent to St Petersburg and signed by Akim Kutsenko.

Later we visited a local church famous for being the site of Orthodox Christianity closest to China. Coming out of the church the building in front looked familiar. We took out the tableaus of the photo exhibition of Almásy's 1906 expedition from the boot of our car and realised that it looked exactly like the base of Almásy's expedition. We began to compare the silhouettes of the pictures and the actual building. Final confirmation was given by the stairs at the

front of the house. They were constructed with the same stones in the pictures and in the building in front of us. So, with the help of the photo, we identified the base of Almásy's expedition in Karakol. The building is now home to a local *Kolij* (and is a former pedagogical institute).

On meeting with schoolteachers, we were informed that in Almásy's time a native school (*tuzemnaia shkola*) operated there. On a further appointment with the school director, it turned out that Akim Kutsenko had taught there as a headmaster. Having examined the photograph, it was probably Almásy's companion Archer who took it as Almásy himself is in the photo (this was quite rare). In one of the pictures, Almásy is in the foreground dressed as a European gentleman in correct yet casual clothing and wearing a hat. His position is casual and natural. Next to Almásy, his close friend Akim Kutsenko sits with him, dressed as a Russian man, yet their figures are not significantly different; maybe because they both are behaving quite naturally. They sit on the front stairs. Almásy is smoking a cigarette. In his hand there is a paper (maybe an extract from the epic collected by Kutsenko). Kutsenko seems to be moving something up to his mouth, it could be a cigarette (or a cigar). He is also eating roasted sunflower seeds (Figure 5.3a–3b).



Figure 5.3a: “Native school in Przhevalsk”. Néprajzi Múzeum (Museum of Ethnography), Budapest.



Figure 5.3b: “Native school in Przhevalsk”. Néprajzi Múzeum (Museum of Ethnography), Budapest.

The friendly connection between the two can be seen in another photo. In this one they lean towards each other standing on the stairs, both turning towards the centre of the photo; meanwhile Kutsenko’s daughter (or his young wife) stands behind them. The central position in the pictures is often taken by women, possibly Akim Kutsenko’s daughter with another Russian woman, who was probably a teacher at the school or maybe a relative.

In several pictures, Almásy’s other companion Prinz appears with a more guarded expression. He either leans against a column in a serious manner or stands in front of a column with his cloak in his hand. Kyrgyz individuals are seen at the sides or in the background.

Almásy was of medium build and height but was supposed to be the centre of attention and therefore of the composition. Because of this his companions often take positions sitting a step lower on stairs or leaning against columns and bending their bodies (the smaller Kyrgyz people did not need to take such positions; they could stand next to Almásy or in line with him).

We found another series of images taken not from the native school building’s majestic facade but from another place, which was connected to the school through the school director Akim Kutsenko. In these pictures a “Russian world” of a dacha (summer house) comes to life with three ladies and an older

man posing by a samovar. Kutsenko's figure appears in these photos and gives meaning to them. Presumably Almásy was invited as a guest to his friend's dacha somewhere around Przhevalsk. He does not appear in the pictures; so he probably went alone as a guest and took the pictures himself.

Additional images also form part of the series taken at the same location around the dacha. One of the photos shows the entrance to the dacha, another shows a table set with a samovar in the inner courtyard. On one, there is a lady on horseback; on another, two ladies are walking in a park. A closer look at the last picture reveals small gardens on the right side of the picture. These were recorded in detail in Almásy's diary and referred to as the famous Karakol (then Przhevalsk) strawberry beds, also mentioned by Kutsenko's great-grandson.⁶⁹ On careful examination, what at first looks like a park were really gardens with vegetable beds on both sides and not as small as they seem.

What is seen (3): Hungarian expedition, Hungarian perspective?

In this group of photos, the expedition members or their objects brought from Europe can be observed. We assumed that, by closely examining these pictures as parts of a catalogue, we would better understand what happened when Europeans photographed Asians (natives) in their own spheres of activity.

It is not certain who took the photos but other sources suggested that Almásy was unwilling to allow anyone else to photograph him, especially Prinz. Therefore, we assume that Almásy took all the photographs unless we know from other sources (his diary or Prinz's book) that he was absent.

Which of the three of them (Almásy, Prinz, Archer) is visible in the photos is a determining factor. If Prinz is not in the photo it does not automatically mean that the photo was taken by him unless Archer is also seen in the same photo next to Almásy. If only Prinz is in the picture, then it probably means that Almásy is the photographer.

In the photos showing the Kyrgyz people's traditional way of life, the figures of Almásy or Archer appear from time to time. The expedition's European figures are also seen with other members resting in front of a felt house (yurt) or after crossing a pass, at a temporary campsite during the journey or on the *tör* (this is the highest part of the mountain and is grazing land with rich grass).

⁶⁹ Kyrgyzstan is still famous for its strawberries, though these days they are often cultivated by Chechens.

The silhouettes of the European tents also appear beside the Kyrgyz tents. There is a reference to Almásy's *jigits* (eight in number, each individually named) who slept in a European tent. Half hidden in the high grass, hunting trophies can be seen: the antlers of *tekes*⁷⁰ or *arkars*.

Sometimes we find European compositions, for example a one-person tent with an empty camp chair or a figure dressed in alpinist clothes observing glaciers. The expedition leader (Almásy) is shown as a serious researcher who also romantically admires nature's beauty.

In another photo Almásy and Archer are seen inspecting a stone man (*kamennaya baba* in Russian, *balbal tash* in Kyrgyz) with an older Kyrgyz man in the background. The same Kyrgyz man can be recognised in another picture with Archer; they are all behaving in a relaxed, friendly manner.

We want to highlight two photographs, which may be interrelated. In one of them, Almásy and Archer search for invisible and unknown objects among the stones. In another, several people, almost the expedition's full staff, are seen conferring together, possibly to resolve a situation. At first we thought an accident may have happened – possibly the one Prinz also reported.⁷¹ An invaluable research instrument was destroyed when the transporting horse slipped and crushed it. It was a turning point in the expedition because it was the moment Almásy lost interest in being its leader. In Prinz's interpretation that meant the end of the expedition (as an idea or intention). Later, we revised our interpretation of the picture, as we could not be sure that it recorded this particular accident. It was unusual to see a picture where a horse is standing in the foreground – but it did not seem to be hurt (Figure 5.4).

One more picture is of particular interest for us. In this photograph, a male Kyrgyz figure is seen with his horse, there is a felt yurt in the background and four shadows in the foreground surrounding a figure and a horse. The shapes of the shadows suggest that the picture was made by the figure in the middle holding the camera at chest height. It can also be concluded that the creator of the image was not the tallest among them (possibly the shadow could belong to Almásy). This picture helps us to get an impression of what the shooting situation was like during the expedition.

⁷⁰ *Teke* or *tau-teke* (Kyrgyz).

⁷¹ Prinz 1911: 41–43.

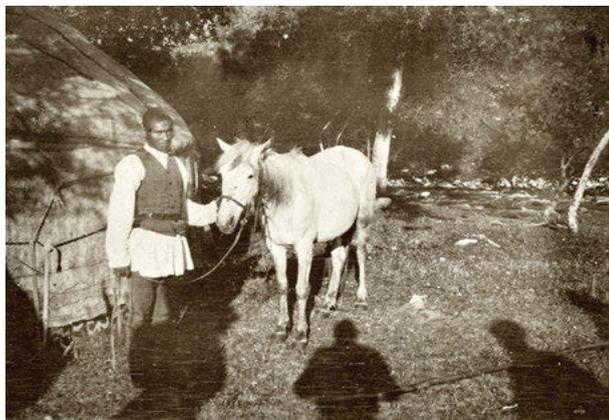


Figure 5.4: “Shooting photo: a Kyrgyz male figure with his horse in front of his felt yurt”. Néprajzi Múzeum (Museum of Ethnography), Budapest.

What is seen (4): A Russian “microcosmic world”

The Issyk-Kul region had only become part of the Russian Empire approximately thirty years prior to this expedition (in 1876). It is interesting to see what thirty years can do to convert some pieces (or “islands”) of this Kazakh and Kyrgyz territory into places where Russian soldiers, bureaucrats and ordinary people arriving at the periphery could be comfortable.

Do these “Russian enclaves” appear in Almásy’s photographs? What is seen of this colonial world at the far edges of the Russian Empire? In the expedition photographs we have been able to explore elements of the Russian colonial project in Kazakh and Kyrgyz territories even though the members of the expedition were of course mainly focused on their own work.

Some aspects of this theme have already been analysed in other sections, for example the church in Przhevalsk, a symbol of Russian culture in close proximity to the Chinese Empire; the “native” boarding schools where Russian teachers taught the values of the Russian world to native (and Russian) children; the dacha where the director of the “native” school showed Almásy the recreation of Russian rural life as characterised by orchards and strawberries (Figure 5.5).

Beyond these, we can see elements of the same infrastructure described in the *Turkestanskii al’bom*.⁷² There are the rock-cut roads on which Russian

⁷² Kun 1871–1872; Gorshenina 2007; Abashin 2015. The head of this photo project was Aleksander Ludvigovich Kuhn, a tsarist officer under Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufman, the



Figure 5.5: “Strawberry beds in the neighbourhood of Przhevalsk”. Néprajzi Múzeum (Museum of Ethnography), Budapest.

horse-drawn carriages (*troika*) carry passengers (exactly like the ones seen in the square in front of the native school). These roads go on bridges over the rivers; next to villages and towns; to forts and barracks (with street lamps and enclosing walls) and to the harbour of the lake Issyk-Kul, where a long wooden boat appears in the background. In these pictures there are also soldiers in white clothes with sheep. A characteristic image in the expedition photographs is of Russians accompanying the Kyrgyz people wearing the Russian moustache and round beards, with Russian army caps and carrying sticks in their hands. Everything seems peacefully arranged in these photos as if the Russians felt at home and comfortable here, in one of the furthestmost outposts of the empire.

What is seen (5): Killed animals and native assistants

A number of pictures deal with one of the crucial aspects of the expedition: hunting. Three hunting themes can be seen. The killing of the tiger at the border has already been described. There are similar images without border guards and with other dead game (*tau-teke* and *arkar*). They do not capture scenes of active hunting but were taken immediately after the animal’s death. It seems they reconstruct

governor-general of Turkestan. Morrison mentioned that Kuhn was of Hungarian origin: “He was a Catholic, the son of a Hungarian immigrant” (Morrison 2008: 60). However, it seems that Morrison was mistaken in his assertion, Olga Yastrebova and Azad Arezou assert that Kuhn was the son of a German father and an Armenian mother (Yastrebova & Azad 2015).

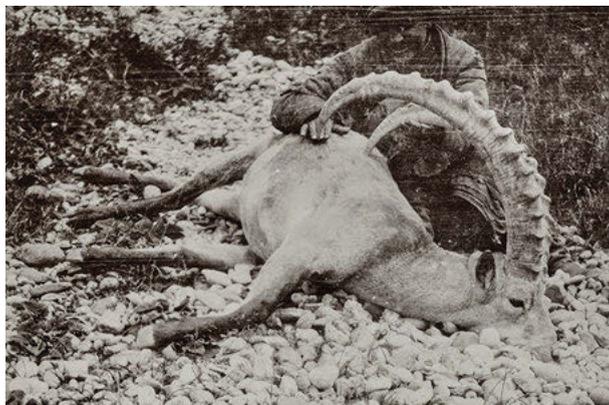


Figure 5.6a, 6b: “Dead game and a *jigit*”. Néprajzi Múzeum (Museum of Ethnography), Budapest.

post facto the moment just before the killing. In the pictures, as in the tiger hunt, they straddle the thin border between life and death. In most of the images of the hunt, the dead animal and the Kyrgyz *jigit* appear together, the latter kneeling and leaning over the animal, touching and stroking it (Figure 5.6a–6b).

One of the reasons for this characteristic set-up could be that the *jigit* is the person who carries the carcass of the dead animal to the hunter. The camera replaced the gun in the hunter’s hand to capture this moment (the animal and the *jigit*). The images were taken from the side.

Another type of hunt shows huge dead birds. These pictures were close-up shots. The *jigits*’ job was to show the beauty of the dead wild animals. Almásy would capture the moment when a living animal became a hunting trophy.

What is seen (6): At the borderland of empires, in emergency situations

What happens when the members of the expedition lose the feeling of safety provided by the imperial state? For example, when they cross the border out of the Russian Empire or when they experience an unexpected accident? What can be seen in photos taken in these more unusual situations? What happens in the borderland between two empires? Will the border guards accept their passports (the validity of their local passport – *otkrytoe pis'mo*)? What awaits them on the other side of the border?

We found two pictures that seem to give an insight into the event of crossing the border. In one, most probably nomadic people are seen: a woman with her child in her arms, dressed in clothes decorated with cowrie shells. There is also a picture with a man on horseback in the foreground. These are nomadic Kalmaks (probably Jungars of Oirat-Mongols) looking after their livestock along the Chinese border (Tekes valley) on the peripheries of two empires.

The second picture shows a man wearing a feathered cap (*jingse*) and elaborate clothes sitting on a small horse. We also see other people in hats, several of them on horseback or on foot, including young people (children on horseback). All of them have feathers in their caps. Probably these are Chinese border guard officials who might belong to other ethnic groups (e.g. Manchu) (Figure 5.7).



Figure 5.7: “Chinese border guard officials”. Néprajzi Múzeum (Museum of Ethnography), Budapest.

After examining Almásy's diary we find a two-week hiatus in the pictures. We do not know where Almásy (and Archer) travelled or what they did during this time. This was most likely the period when they visited the Chinese Empire (Tekes valley). Maybe this lack of pictures was not accidental but a conscious decision so that the Russian functionaries and General Ionov would have no information about the route of the expedition and their whereabouts. This fact reminds us of the colonial context of the expedition project.

Only a few pictures on the theme of the unexpected or accidental are available. There are two certain and several unclarified ones. The two cases have already been discussed; the expedition members found something on the ground between stones and observed it. It could be a grave. This picture could be related to the one of the "stone man" statues (*balbal tash*), where the two expedition leaders (Almásy and Archer) were photographed next to an ancient Turkic monument.

Sometimes, the expedition members found themselves in extreme or unknown situations. For example, they would climb a pass without knowing what kind of severe weather conditions were waiting for them there or on the other side of the mountain.

Another type of image captures the moment before and after crossing a pass. In this situation, the expedition members are both excited and exhausted, waiting for each other in a tense state of mind caused by the unknown and uncertain nature of the conditions.⁷³

Conclusion: Visual perspective of Hungarian orientalism

How do the photographs of Almásy's second expedition to the Kyrgyz and the Kazakh show that it was a colonial expedition to the furthest periphery of the border zone of the Russian Empire? What relationships can be seen? What are the attitudes to the local people?

In these photos one can see that most of the infrastructure necessary for the Russian military and colonial empire had already been established and was functional – although the overall imperial mechanism still lay under the guardianship of the Russian army. The Russian state developed its own "Little Russia" where army officers, imperial bureaucrats and their families felt safe and comfortable. Colonial and imperial phenomena were interwoven. Seasonal

⁷³ Similarly to Barth 1961.

foodstuffs (meat, cereals, strawberry, hay) were provided. Locals were also able to use this infrastructure belonging to the establishment for their own benefit. Foreign expeditions, like Almásy's, brought extra income to the nomads and these travels through vast areas also strengthened local extended networks, in particular for the *jigit* and the horse owners.

At this time, the period of military expeditions was over: Ionov's 1891 North Pamir expedition was more than fifteen years in the past. Previous scientific research expeditions led by Valikhanov,⁷⁴ Przhevalsky⁷⁵ and Radloff⁷⁶ were regarded by the locals as Russian "spy tours", as they were supported by the Russian imperium and served its interests.⁷⁷ It is noteworthy that Almásy's expedition was the first not to be regarded by the Kyrgyz as such an enterprise. By this time, expeditions were mainly scientific, and many were led by foreigners. The foreigners also led many hunting expeditions.⁷⁸ Nearer to the border of the empire colonial traits became intensified (e.g. Almásy's tiger hunt on the Kazakh side of the Russian-Chinese border). The Pamir and the Tien-shan mountains were barred for foreigners and they could only enter on an exceptional basis. The Almásy expedition was issued with a special permit to enter, which shows its colonial nature in this context. Approaching the Chinese border, the Almásy expedition also came close to the Russian-British border and came across some British colonial activity. As noted, no photographs were shot once they crossed that border and the period is also missing from Almásy's diary.⁷⁹

Almásy himself felt confident at the periphery of the Russian Empire probably partly because of his former experience with Austro-Hungarian imperial institutions. He had worked in the Austro-Hungarian joint foreign ministry and was a member of a ruling aristocracy. The excitement of discovering something new (unknown, a grave?) to his imperial experience can be seen in only one group of photographs.

All cases of orientalism are heterogeneous and this applies to the activity of György Almásy. He was an aristocrat, which could have a cosmopolitan connotation as aristocrats often regard themselves as above nations, nation states and ethnicities. He was a Hungarian, a member of the imperial monarchy of

74 Chokan Chingisovich Valikhanov (1835–1865), a Kazakh scholar in Russian military service, visited Ysyk-Köl region in 1855–1856.

75 Nikolai Mikhailovich Przhevalskii (Przheval'skii) (1839–1888), a Polish geographer in Russian military service, travelled in the Ysyk-Köl region in 1879–1880.

76 Friedrich Wilhelm Radloff (1837–1918), a professor and academic, moved to Barnaul in Altai, from where he conducted several expeditions in the 1850s and 1860s, including one to Kyrgyzland. Later he moved to St Petersburg.

77 Musaev 1968.

78 Prinz 1911.

79 Sántha/Somfai 2021.

Austro-Hungary and a European. Within the monarchy of Austro-Hungary he is from the border area of Hungary (Vas county in West Hungary) and East Austria (Burgenland). Before the First World War, he lived in West Hungary under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in a mainly German-speaking area. After the war he lived in the eastern part of Austria. He published his monograph of the 1900 expedition in Hungarian (actually, it was originally written in German and translated by Cholnoky into Hungarian). He wrote his diary and his letters to his Italian wife in German. He also spoke French and used this to communicate, via the elder daughter as interpreter, with the governor. His first wife was of Italian and his second of Russian origin. His surname sounds aristocratic and ethnically Hungarian (the literal translation could roughly be “the one from the apple orchard”) but once communism took over in Hungary his aristocratic family was forced to move to Austria. His son, who bore a common Hungarian name (László), became an Africanist and a romanticised feature film was made about his life with the title *The English Patient*. Almásy’s friendship with Archer can be seen as an orientalist Austro-Hungarian relationship. Meanwhile he was on bad terms with “commoner” Hungarian geographer Gyula Prinz.

Almásy joined the Turanist movement, which embraced Hungarian nationalism. The core of its ideology is extremely orientalist, looking eastward to find kinship in support of a national identity and an improved status in the abundant diversity of Central Europe.

Yet, by projecting Hungarianness onto the Kyrgyz he might also have unearthed aspects of the Kyrgyzness of the Hungarians. This projection at that time was based only on legends related to the Cumans – an assimilated group remembered as originally Turkic by the Hungarians. These ideations could also serve to partially dissolve some critiques of Western orientalist traits and even Western supremacy. Such perspectives may partially soften a potential Said-inflected criticism of Almásy’s underlying orientalism.

The question of to what extent bringing a Kyrgyz boy to Hungary with the aim of translating a Kyrgyz epic could be regarded as an orientalist adventure remains open. Almásy may have just been following the genres of expedition culture of his time without looking for specific interrelatedness.

The contrast in Almásy’s attitudes to the Russian and British empires may require further analysis in the future. Almásy seemed able to use Russian imperial advantages without being absorbed by them. He was able to keep his contacts with them to the minimum necessary. On the other hand, he felt quite uneasy with the British and was critical of the emerging British competition in the area.

Just as was noted by Said, the Hungarian explorers showed signs of ambiguity like other European, German and Austrian travellers. On the other hand, Almásy’s expedition also represented a common enterprise between foreigners

and locals. The hierarchical relationships among the Hungarians can be clearly detected. Almásy and Archer were in an easy friendship, whereas tension was palpable between Almásy and Prinz. Prinz only appears on the periphery of photographs and the two are never seen together. In contrast, the friendly ties between Almásy and Kutsenko are obvious. The latter represented the Russian Empire, though not at the high level of governor Ionov. Kutsenko was important for Almásy for a number of reasons; he provided lodgings in Przhevalsk, directed Turgan and managed the *Manas* transcriptions.

The photographs show no sign that Almásy was highlighting the possible relatedness of the Hungarian (and Cuman) and Kyrgyz people. He does not romanticise the Kyrgyz nor portray them as exotic. It can be noted that he was also interested in the Russians living in the area. The Kyrgyz appear in the hunting photos where they might at first seem anachronistic and would merit criticism from Said. However, Almásy might have just been following the accepted style of hunting photographs of the time.

It does not appear that either Almásy or any other members of the expedition made significant efforts to familiarise themselves with the life of the Kyrgyz or Kazakh in great depth. Nonetheless, Almásy was in close contact with the *jigits*, who would have been able to offer a rich source of knowledge about the life of the locals as they had the broadest knowledge of the life of the Kyrgyz. The photos provide objective documentation of the activities of the expedition, including the work of the Kyrgyz *jigits*.

Many Hungarians, including travellers and explorers, have identified themselves as intermediaries between East and West. They have regarded themselves as Westerners since they joined the West by converting to Christianity more than a thousand year ago. However, they have not regarded themselves as fully Western but rather as the most Western-living Eastern people, or even as representing other Eastern people in the West (self-orientalism).

Criticism of Said's formulations⁸⁰ are exemplified in moments of community between Hungarians and Kyrgyz on the expedition, for example when the researchers and the *jigits* both got excited about something new or when Turgan decided to come to Europe with Almásy to help him with the *Manas* translation. This joint research project between Almásy and Turgan could be interpreted as an example of "true" or "clean" orientalism.⁸¹ However, according to the custom of publications at the time, they could not publish the work under both of their names. Joint publications between Hungarian and

80 See, among others, Daneshgar 2020.

81 Daneshgar 2020.

Central Asian (Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Kazakh, Karakalpak, Bashkirian, etc.) researchers still await their time even today.

The Hungarian foreign ministry was the main supporter of our Central Asian journey in 2017. Its goal may have been to create a positive atmosphere for Hungarian political and economic projects through presenting and displaying the Hungarian orientalist tradition, mainly through photo exhibitions. It has been characteristic that it was the Hungarian embassies who have been the main organisers of our projects in their area; thus cultural, political and economic spheres have been reconnected. During our journeys we also used the presentation of the Hungarian orientalist research tradition to carry out new research. Our hope was that, by emphasising the common elements of our past history, we could form a strong basis for setting out new common research with local researchers and other intellectuals. These intentions met with acceptance and support not only in Central Asia but also within the current Hungarian governing administration.

Photographic and other visual aspects become of greater importance when written sources – the usual field of analysis for Said⁸² – are either not available or difficult to access (as was the case here since they were only published in Hungarian).⁸³ Orientalism, here Hungarian orientalism, may not always seem obvious to people who examine these photos today. Expertise is often needed to see the orientalist nature of those times, which can be partly obscured by underlying layers, sometimes in a palimpsest. The photographic material helped to accredit our mission with the local people; meanwhile, they also aided our anthropological analysis.

Today there are few signs of anything “oriental” where Almásy’s practised his “European orientalism”. His grandchild was able to keep family photographs and some furniture in an apartment in central Vienna. Only some items of Eastern jewellery remain; the fur of the Tien-shan tiger in front of the sofa and the suitcase full of remnants of birds are all gone. Once his granddaughter died, nobody who had ever seen these artefacts was left. The gems in the old jewellery have been taken out of their original Eastern context and now decorate modern Western ones. Almásy’s castle is no longer in the possession of the family as his sons, János and László Almásy, died without offspring. The current proprietor has not given permission to conduct research in the castle. Almásy’s sister’s cap collection contains just a few pieces of Eastern origin and his brother has a decorative wooden saddle that the expedition brought back.

⁸² Said 1978.

⁸³ Navaro 2020.

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Tatiana Saburova

6 From Siberia to Turkestan: Semirechie in writings and photographs of Vasilii V. Sapozhnikov

Abstract: This research is a part of my larger project about photography, Siberian exploration, and the visual history of the late Russian empire. It examines visual representations of Semirechie in the works of botanist, glaciologist, geographer, and Tomsk University professor Vasilii V. Sapozhnikov (1861–1924). In this article I focus on how Sapozhnikov’s professional interests as a scholar of the flora and glaciers of the Altai influenced his view of Semirechie, how much the “Siberian perspective” blended with research originating at the empire’s centre, and how his geographic, botanical, and glacial study of Semirechie directly or indirectly made its way into the Russian Empire’s colonisation project. We must examine the images he created not solely in the context of a Russian narrative of empire, but also in the context of the history of science, of photography, and of empire globally. This article does not cover all of these topics, but is the first stab in a larger research project addressing the use of expeditionary photographs and the combination of the verbal and the visual in spatial representations of Semirechie.

Keywords: space, landscape, photography, Semirechie, science, empire

The Mystery of the Missing Photographs

The album *Siberian Alpinist: the expedition photographs of V.V. Sapozhnikov* appeared in print in Barnaul in 2014. In the book’s introduction, Alfred Pozniakov, who assembled the photographs for publication, told of how in the 1970s someone from Tomsk University called him out of the blue with the news that a suitcase full of photographic plates taken by the explorer Vasilii V. Sapozhnikov had been found in a dumpster. Shortly thereafter he departed for Tomsk. In the photographic laboratory of Tomsk University, he made about 200 prints from the original plates.¹ In 2019, Mikhail Dronov, an organizer of an exhibit of

¹ *Sibirskii Alpinist* 2014: 8.

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Sapozhnikov's photographs, mentioned that in the 1990s the Tomsk University Library threw away more than 5,000 of his priceless glass plate negatives. According to Dronov, 4,000 of the 10,000 original photographic plates remained in Tomsk.² Sergei Merkulov, who published a biography of Sapozhnikov in 2012, confirms that number: "V.V Sapozhnikov is considered one of the best among Russian expedition photographers (his scholarly legacy includes ten thousand photographs and about one thousand lantern slides)."³ He notes that, after his death, his archive of photographs and his library were donated to Tomsk University.

In order to preserve his legacy, the photographs collected during expeditions, his manuscripts, diary, negatives and slides were all turned over to the university's Botanical Laboratory. However, despite this action virtually nothing of Sapozhnikov's archive survived. His travel diary, his manuscripts and other materials have vanished without a trace. To this date we have no idea what became of them, and those photographs that did survive are scattered about rather than preserved at one site.⁴

So, when it comes Sapozhnikov's legacy, for all practical purposes we have his publications and a detective story about his photographs. Like treasures that vanish and are found, they have given birth to all manner of rumours and legends. His photographs are kept in various places: at the archive of the Russian Geographic Society, the Museum of Tomsk State University,⁵ the Altai State Local History Museum, and in other state and private collections. It is obvious that what is needed now is a systematisation and cataloguing of his legacy.

Vasilii Vasil'evich Sapozhnikov: Life, Academic Interests, and Turkestan Research

Biographical material on Sapozhnikov is readily available in the biographical dictionaries of professors and rectors at Tomsk University. Sapozhnikov's daughters, Nina and Ekaterina, wrote a biographical memoir, and Gennadii Berdyshev and Vladimir Siplivinskii published one of the first scientific biographies of

² <https://tv2.today/News/Fotografii-so-stekol-vystavka-rabot-vasiliya-sapozhnikova-otkroetsya-v-tomske>.

³ Merkulov 2012: 30.

⁴ Merkulov 2012: 118.

⁵ I want to thank the Museum of Tomsk State University and its director Kristina A. Kuzoro for providing Sapozhnikov's photographs for this publication.

Sapozhnikov. Sergei Merkulov wrote a dissertation on Sapozhnikov's academic biography that was published later as a book. And Anton Uzhakin contributed biographical introductions on Sapozhnikov to *Siberian Alpinist* and *Travels around the Altai*.⁶

Sapozhnikov was born in Perm', Russia. His father was a retired soldier and taught at the Perm' Military School; his mother was a seamstress from an impoverished merchant family. After he completed his studies at a gymnasium, Sapozhnikov enrolled in the department of physics and mathematics at Moscow University and wrote his thesis under the renowned scholar Kliment Timiriachev. He defended his master's degree and left to study in Germany where he spent two years, one at Tübingen. While there, he worked on a doctoral dissertation in the field of botany (later, in 1896, he defended that dissertation in Kazan). After returning to Moscow in 1893 he was offered the post of professor of botany at Tomsk University, where he remained until his last years. He was chair of the department of physics and mathematics (established largely due to his efforts) and served twice as rector. His many renowned expeditions brought accolades for his contributions to geography, the study of glaciers, and botany. Most noteworthy among his long list of expeditions were those to the Altai region (1895, 1897, 1898, and 1899) in which the main glaciers of the region were mapped.⁷ Sapozhnikov continued his expeditions to the Altai region between 1905 and 1911, where he established the integrated continuity of the Russian and Mongolian Altai mountain system.⁸ In 1912 he published a guidebook, *Travels Through Russia's Altai*. His expeditions to the Narym Region and to the north of Tomsk province in the 1920s should be added to his lifelong list of research-related travels.

Sapozhnikov was among the most prominent of the Altai explorers, but no less significant was his contribution to research on Semirechie (literally: Seven Rivers), where he carried out his first expeditions in 1902 and 1904, and then joined further expeditions between 1912 and 1915. The latter expeditions were carried out by the Land Resettlement Administration of the Ministry of Agriculture, which had developed a multi-faceted programme to study the region and its potential for colonisation. Sapozhnikov contributed botanical studies and geographic discoveries related especially to glacial fields and mountain ranges, but also to river basins and steppe regions. This work established his reputation as an explorer and researcher. In one of his biographies he was identified as "the Last of the Mohicans of the

⁶ Berdyshev/Siplivinskii 1964; Sapozhnikova/Sapozhnikova 1982; *Professora Tomskogo Universiteta* 1996: 227–234; *Rektory Tomskogo Universiteta* 2003: 59–69; Merkulov 2012; *Sibirskii Al'pinist* 2014: 9–44; Sapozhnikov 2018: 14–50.

⁷ Sapozhnikov 1897; Sapozhnikov 1901.

⁸ Sapozhnikov 1911.

brilliant pleiad of Russian explorer-researchers of Central Asia, Mongolia, and the Altai region.”⁹

The research Sapozhnikov carried out is an integral part of the history of studies of Semirechie. The region was gradually incorporated into the Russian Empire from 1847 to become Semirechie province in 1867, it was included in the Steppe General-Governorship in 1891, and in 1897 became part of the Turkestan General-Governorship.¹⁰ According to R. Abolin, the interval between 1890 and 1918 saw an intense period of study of Semirechie that followed an earlier surge of research in the second half of the nineteenth century by Przheval’skii, Middendorf, and others. Abolin includes Sapozhnikov in a list of scholars who famously contributed to the region’s exploration such as Lipskii, Merzbacher, Obruchev, Fedchenko, and Berg.¹¹ Sapozhnikov’s belief that his research was a continuation of geographical studies of Siberia made his work distinctive, adding depth to what was understood of this newly mapped territory. As well as incorporating botany into this work (prioritised by Sapozhnikov in light of his scientific interests), he applied geology, zoology, soil studies, and (something dear to his heart) the history of glaciers, which linked his research to work on the glaciers of Altai and of the Tien-Shan as well as the Ala-Tau.

Research Agenda

Sapozhnikov’s expeditions in Semirechie were the first to be launched from Siberia (even if with the support of the Imperial Russian Geographic Society in St Petersburg, as were most expeditions at that time). But in this case what is most important is not the institutional patronage (Tomsk University) or the participation of Tomsk faculty, but the research orientation. The Siberian perspective on Semirechie allowed the expeditions to join and compare the two regions, using a store of knowledge about the Altai to draw different boundaries and to include Semirechie in a broader spatial panorama. How did the view from Siberia differ from other perspectives? What enabled a perspective on Semirechie framed by studies of Siberia and by life in a border region? Was there a distinctively Siberian “gaze”, and, if so, could it include within it an imperial perspective as well? After all, the expeditions were organised with the direct support of the Imperial Russian Geographic Society. They were integral parts of the ongoing exploration

⁹ Berdyshev/Siplivinskii 1964: 90.

¹⁰ See the history of Semirechie in Bartold 1943 and Morrison 2020: 168–215.

¹¹ Abolin 1930: 16–35.

and colonisation of Central Asia and were at the centre of scholarly research of the empire as a whole. They not only served as symbols of education and enlightenment, but brought together scholars from many places and elevated research agendas from a regional to an empire-wide level. It is noteworthy that the financing and, more importantly, the administrative support for the expeditions was often provided by official sources, which could shape the research agenda. This process was especially salient when it came to the Resettlement Administration.

Through what lens, then, did Sapozhnikov view and portray Semirechie? How did his professional interests as a scholar of the flora and glaciers of the Altai influence his view of that region? How much did the “Siberian perspective” blend with research originating at the empire’s centre? Was it defined administratively or by the country’s imperial scientific institutes? How far did this geographic, botanical, and glacial study of Semirechie directly or indirectly make its way into the Russian Empire’s colonisation project? What overall image did the descriptions and photographic visualisations created by Sapozhnikov produce, and how was the language of landscape “read” and interpreted by the researcher? Are we correct in regarding Sapozhnikov’s corpus of work, including his photographs, as part of a scientific, but also imperial and colonial discourse, and can we clarify how the various components of that corpus combine in his descriptions? In this article I will examine the images he created not solely in the context of a Russian narrative of empire, but also within the history of science, photography, and empires globally. This essay, however, does not aspire to provide answers to all the questions raised here. Rather, it is my first attempt at a larger research project using expeditionary photographs to combine the verbal and the visual in spatial representations of Semirechie.

Scientists, the State, and Intermediaries in the Expeditions to Semirechie

Dr. Max Friederichsen, a German geographer and author of works on the morphology of the Tien-Shan, was included in Sapozhnikov’s first expedition at the recommendation of Vladimir Obruchev, a renowned explorer and scientist.¹² Friederichsen studied the topography of the region, and his maps and photographs appear in Sapozhnikov’s *Studies of Semirechie*. Sapozhnikov noted

¹² Friederichsen published *Forschungsreise in den Zentralen Tiän-schan und Dsungarischen Ala’tau (Russisch Zentral-Asien) im Sommer 1902*. Hamburg: L. Friederichsen & Co., 1904.

Friederichsen's "remarkable indefatigability and his unfailingly positive outlook".¹³ Others on the expedition were Viktor F. Semenov,¹⁴ who looked after the entomological collection and contributed photographs, and several students from Tomsk University including Andrei Velizhanin, later a renowned ornithologist and director of the Altai branch of the Imperial Russian Geographic Society.

The expedition team was accompanied by Kazakh or Kyrgyz guides (Sapozhnikov used the archaic ethnonym 'Kirgiz'; according to Sapozhnikov, the number of guides fluctuated according to the location and the expedition's needs, at times reaching twenty). Also "always present in the caravan were security guards or *jigits*' sent in advance by the administration".¹⁵ These *jigits* fulfilled multiple functions. They protected the expedition – especially its highly valued horses, which could otherwise be easily stolen – they demanded horses from the indigenous population at various points (often provoking protests), and they signalled the expedition's official status and therefore its protection by the authorities. *Jigits* also served as translators with the local population and as guides, and they were vital in purchasing provisions. All in all, they were intermediaries in the communicative space. Guides and *jigits* can be seen in Sapozhnikov's photographs incorporated into the expedition's work force or serving as indicators of scale; the inclusion of human figures in a photograph was the simplest way to convey the dimensions of a photographed object (Figure 6.1).

In his writings, Sapozhnikov often mentioned the local officials who provided support for the expeditions, supplied horses, or obtained necessary information. For example, by prior arrangement the official in charge of the district capital Kopal made horses and camels available to Sapozhnikov for a trip to Lake Balkhash. In his report of that trip, which involved five camels and six horses, Sapozhnikov mentioned that, along with six guides and *jigits*, two county [*volost'*] officials were present, which "guaranteed that the trip's needs would be looked after as well as possible".¹⁶ Sapozhnikov's acquaintance with the region's top official, Military Governor Mikhail E. Ionov was of no small importance. A photograph shows members of the group together with Ionov at his summer cabin (*dacha*). Sapozhnikov also records in his diary Ionov's involvement in an expedition to

13 Sapozhnikov 1904: IV. [All quotes from Sapozhnikov's works are originally in Russian and translated by T.S.].

14 Viktor F. Semenov (1871–1947) was born in Ust-Kamenogorsk, worked as a schoolteacher in Lepsinsk, Vernyi, Tomsk, then taught at the Siberian academy of agriculture in Omsk. He was a chair of the Western-Siberian branch of the Russian Geographic Society and took part in the scientific expeditions in Akmolinsk and Semirechie provinces, Altai and Amur.

15 Sapozhnikov 1904: V.

16 Sapozhnikov 1904: 15.

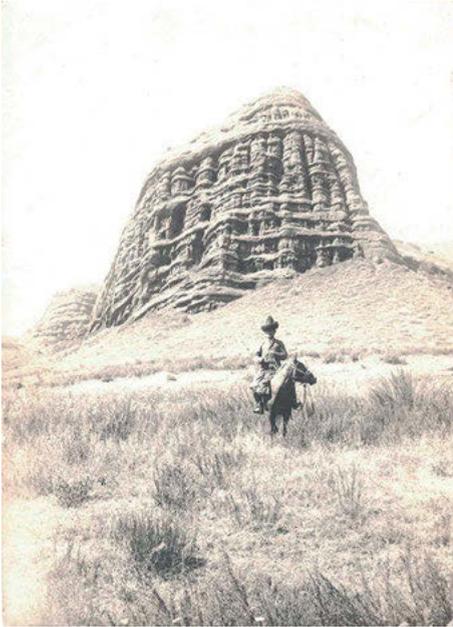


Figure 6.1: “Dzhety-Oguz”. Photo by V. Sapozhnikov. Date unknown. The Museum of Tomsk State University.

collect plant specimens in the Malaia Almatinka Valley.¹⁷ Elsewhere, Sapozhnikov underscores Ionov’s full and enthusiastic support for the expedition and expresses his deep gratitude to him and other members of the regional administration. For example, departing from Vernyi on May 23, 1902, Sapozhnikov wrote in his diary that the morning was spent selecting horses provided by the local population thanks to the prior careful diligence of the regional administration.¹⁸

Photographic Equipment in Scientific Expeditions

Making use of the camera in expeditions was no novelty for Sapozhnikov. In the 1890s, on his travels in the Altai, he took pictures constantly and included them in his travel diary. Afterwards they illustrated his books and lectures. But the pictures were more than simple illustrations accompanying texts. He noted that photographs served to fix in place scholarly observations, to preserve information and enter it into scholarly discourse, or even sometimes to better

¹⁷ Sapozhnikov 1904: 37; *Sibirskii Al’pinist* 2014: 133–134.

¹⁸ Sapozhnikov 1904: 39.

grasp what had been seen in haste during an expedition. The camera served as a vital instrument for scientific research. After his first expedition to the Altai region in 1895, Sapozhnikov wrote,

Throughout our travels I made ample use of the camera – for the traveller it is an indispensable tool. Not only is it true that through photography the features of the landscape are communicated much more forcefully; for the author himself the process of conveying what has been seen is made much easier. Sometimes it is the case that later on one might observe in a photograph a detail overlooked during the often-hurried process of direct observation.¹⁹

Sapozhnikov carried on a tradition of the researcher taking the photographs rather than inviting a photographer on the expedition.²⁰ He decided what to photograph, the scope of his photos, and what to exclude or include in the frame. Understanding which photos Sapozhnikov selected to publish and why is a distinct line of enquiry. After examining the corpus of published and unpublished photos – apart from visualising the entire body of work – can we draw conclusions about how Sapozhnikov selected photographs and sequenced them to create a specific narrative in *Studies of Semirechie*? If we were to conduct an experiment and look at just the photos accompanying a given text, that is, a strictly photographic history without any textual explication, would our reception of that selection of photos change?

In his *Studies of Semirechie* Sapozhnikov added photographs to his report of the results of the expedition. He notes that on his first expedition he took more than five hundred pictures and that Friederichsen took almost the same number, so that almost a thousand photos were taken by the two men during that single expedition. Semenov also used his camera on the expedition. In his publications, Sapozhnikov always notes whose photographs he chose to incorporate in the text (there were fifty-three photographs in the first volume of *Studies*, and forty four in the second). Sapozhnikov explains that the selection process was governed by certain criteria, namely the typicality or importance of the image for describing a given place or site, and that priority was given to views of little known or even previously “unvisited” locations.²¹ Friederichsen also included and duly acknowledged Sapozhnikov’s photos in his own book.²²

On numerous occasions, when he felt he had taken some high-quality pictures, Sapozhnikov noted this in his diary, especially when he was in the mountains where the changing weather and light made photography especially tricky.

¹⁹ Sapozhnikov 1897: V–VI.

²⁰ See for example, Saburova 2020: 60–63.

²¹ Sapozhnikov 1897: VI.

²² Friederichsen 1904.

For example, while in the Kueliu River Valley he wrote, “I took some especially good photos while in the saddle to the west where the gorge cut through”. On the same day he mentioned that “moving away about a *versta* [approx. a kilometre] from the Kueliu glaciers I took some more successful photos of the headwaters where the river meets the glaciers”.²³ The photographic equipment was usually hauled around by the *jigits*. For example, Sapozhnikov noted that one *jigits* encountered some bad luck in the process of a river crossing when his horse stumbled and fell on its side: “he not only got soaked but gave a good washing to my camera with some rather valuable photographs in it”.²⁴

So, what kind of a camera and what plates did Sapozhnikov use in his travels? We can answer those questions by examining his recommendations in the Altai travel guide, along with the recollections contained in his writings about the practice of photography. Sapozhnikov preferred to have two cameras with him: one hand-held (9 x 12 cm), and the other with a tripod (13 x 18 cm). Instead of film, which he considered fragile, he preferred dry plates. He recommended that aspiring travellers carry their plates in a box; that after photographing they should replace the plates in their boxes in the exact order in which they came from the factory; and that they should glue strips of paper to each box as labels. He instructed his readers to use a black bag when changing plates in a camera, making sure of the absence of dust or dirt, as otherwise the plates could get scratched.²⁵

Studies of Semirechie was published in two volumes and divided by chronological order (trips taken in 1902 and 1904) and geographic location. In the first volume Sapozhnikov describes most of the distance travelled, including the steppes near Lake Balkhash, Lake Issyk-Kul’, the Sarydzhas river system in the Central Tian-Shan region, and his arrival in Dzharkent. The description of Dzungarian Ala-Tau went into the second volume, fulfilling Sapozhnikov’s desire to create an integrated picture of the mountain range. In terms of genre, Sapozhnikov’s writing still resembles diary entries, a form he had used when writing of his travels in the Altai region. If we compare the writings on Semirechie and Altai, what stands out is the vibrancy of the language that paints a picture of the Altai, and the restrained documentary tone of the Semirechie entries. As Sapozhnikov acknowledged, diaries are more amenable to individual observations and for that reason he would only occasionally attempt generalisations.²⁶

A combined analysis of Sapozhnikov’s writings and photographs from 1902 and 1904 makes evident the essential structural components and the interplay of

²³ Sapozhnikov 1904: 104–105.

²⁴ Sapozhnikov 1904: 30.

²⁵ Sapozhnikov 1926: 157.

²⁶ Sapozhnikov 1904: VII.

the two “texts” – pictorial and verbal – in his representation of the region. It also yields the semantic meanings of the images and folds them into the contexts of research traditions connected with Siberia and Central Asia, photographic conventions of that time, and imperial colonising practices and languages of depiction.

Obviously, the stated mission of the expedition – to illuminate the geographic and botanical specificities of the region, to photograph and gather topographic data, to explore the glaciers, and to assess the soil – influenced the selection of objects to be photographed and the photographs themselves. Yet we should not omit the incidentals: photographs of members of the expedition, river crossings, climbs over mountain passes, and settlements and people encountered along the way. Photographs of this sort were not intended for scientific purposes, but were most likely manifestations of emotion, of curiosity, or simply of the desire to preserve a moment in the group’s travels. In such cases the camera was momentarily transformed from an instrument of research into a tourist device. Several questions arise from this. How do we connect expedition photos taken for scientific research with those taken by “travellers”? What interpretive possibilities are offered by categorising a given photo as one of the two? What makes a given landscape scientific or artistic, classified as belonging to an explorer or to a tourist? How does the purpose or use of a photographic image affect its interpretation?

In *Studies of Semirechie* Sapozhnikov’s visualisation of the landscape of Semirechie is carried out through a series of photographic views. Black and white photographs are accompanied by verbal descriptions of the region’s colour schemes and palette, in other words, the photos are verbally “colourised”. In Sapozhnikov’s publications, the photos are embedded in the text, which allows the reader to view them through a colour filter. For that reason, we must not view this collection as individual photographs, but as pictures interwoven with a text in which the verbal and visual images interact. For example, describing the Ili steppe and river valley on the approaches to Vernyi, Sapozhnikov creates a colour portrait of the flowering valley: “Flower after flower, extending over an enormous and unbroken expanse, poppies carpet the soil in bright red colours. Red soil, red foothills and red gullies extend uninterrupted, to the horizon one might say if it were not for the fact that to the south the steppe runs directly into the Zailiiskii Ala-Tau.”²⁷ On another occasion, describing the sunset while in the Ala-Tau Mountains, Sapozhnikov records the interplay of various brilliant tonalities of light and shade on the summits.²⁸ He also used a paintbrush to colorise and retouch his photographs, a widespread practice in the early twentieth century.

27 Sapozhnikov 1904: 35.

28 Sapozhnikov 1904: 44.

Unfortunately, technical limitations significantly reduced the quality of the black and white photos themselves in his publications.²⁹

The portrait drawn by Sapozhnikov's words includes sounds as well as colours, creating both soundscape and landscape. The expanse of Semirechie is filled with birdsong, howling wind, and the ripple and burble of water. Photography tends toward "still images" and is "silent"; we don't ordinarily think of the sound backdrop intrinsic to it. But in the case of Sapozhnikov, the accompanying text allows us to imagine the sound, adding an aural dimension alongside a palette of colour.

Both in his photography and in his texts, Sapozhnikov attempts to give a sense of perspective to the spatial expanses he captured, providing volume (depth, distance, and breadth). He specifies the point of observation: what vistas open up from that point and how far away and how high up the objects described are situated. The accompanying text generates a stereographic effect, positioning the reader/viewer in the seat of the traveller.

Semirechie: A Vast Region

We begin by identifying the essential features of Semirechie as a region in the writings of Sapozhnikov, keeping in mind that the word *krai* (which Sapozhnikov used to describe the region) in Russian signifies both an administrative-territorial unit distinguished from other administrative units, and the state of being situated on a border, the far edge of a territory. Alexander Morrison in his recently published book about the Russian conquest of Central Asia begins a chapter about Semirechie,

The annexation of the region known historically as *Jeti-su*, or in Russian Semirechie – the Land of the Seven Rivers – is often overlooked in histories of the conquest of Central Asia. Its name refers to the relatively well-watered nature of the region, lying in what is now south-eastern Kazakhstan and northern Kyrgyzstan, where the steppe grasslands merge into the fertile and forested foothills of the snowy Ala-Tau Mountains, the original homeland of the humble and ubiquitous apple, where today some of the finest apricots in Central Asia are also cultivated.³⁰

²⁹ Photographs could not be included in his later work about Semirechie because the Resettlement Administration's press had a limited technical capacity and published his book without illustrations.

³⁰ Morrison 2020: 168.

Sapozhnikov calls our attention to the size and scale of the region above all, labelling it “expansive”: a vast stretch from north to south. Vast territory diminishes land hunger, a problem encountered in European Russia. Sapozhnikov comments favourably on the more generous allotments given to peasants officially resettled in Semirechie. For example, he notes that in the Sarkan river valley the average farmland holding stood at 18 *desiatin* (19.6 hectares), not including the farmstead, household plot, meadows, or gardens. The possibility of extending such land arrangements was one of the key points of the government’s massive land resettlement programme at the turn of the century and Semirechie occupied a special place in the autocracy’s colonisation project. According to Daniel Brower:

From the earliest years of Russian colonial rule, the eastern province of Semirechie appeared the prime site for colonization. Its northern territory was the domain of Kazakh tribes. But Russian officials and settlers considered the southern lands the best, in the foothills and mountain valleys along the northern flank of the great Tian-Shan mountain range. It was the home of the Kyrgyz people, who for hundreds of years had adapted their nomadic economy to the mountainous terrain and the uneven rainfall of the region. Their way of life had little value in the eyes of colonial rulers accustomed to respect farming and disparage nomadism as savagery. Reports out of Semirechie from its new administrators spoke of its “enormous spaces” and “insignificant native population”.³¹

The scale of a given territory often figures as a cardinal element of the Russian empire’s colonial discourse, confirming its status and validating its expansion. Vast stretches of borderlands serve as a “natural” resource, whether economic, strategic, or symbolic. The extent of Semirechie, only a part of Turkestan which is itself just one region of the Russian empire, indicates the vast scale of the empire as a whole. The magnitude of the territory is unfailingly brought up whenever Asiatic Russia is mentioned, be it Siberia or Central Asia.

But that magnitude is also linked with diversity – both in terms of relief and of “paintings of nature”. Sapozhnikov used the phrase “*kartiny prirody*” (paintings of nature) to describe what he sought to achieve in his photography and written texts, using colourful analogies and pursuing in his photographic work the goals of traditional landscape painting as much as scientific documentation.

³¹ Brower 2003: 128.

An “Empty” Space

The term “vastness” used geographically (in maps or textbooks) can be supplemented by “length” or “reach”. The term implies the absence of “density” (of population), economic incorporation, urban space, and infrastructure. That is, expansiveness coincides with a rarefied, thinned out quality, an extended, elongated space.

The reader of *Studies* travels with Sapozhnikov as he makes his way by train from Tomsk to Omsk, but we learn only that travelling that way is quick and comfortable, for the traveller “sees” nothing from the window of the train and arrives at the destination almost instantly. The real journey begins in Omsk, in overcoming the difficulties posed by the roads (or more likely, the lack thereof) amidst travel sketches of the “hungry steppe”. The route to Semirechie passed through Semipalatinsk *oblast’* (region) to the town of Sergiopol’, which was already situated in Semirechie. Sapozhnikov’s depictions of the steppe presage those of Semirechie itself, and help foster an image of the wide expanse of the territory and of the artificiality of the administrative boundaries. Sapozhnikov devotes only a few lines to the journey between Semipalatinsk and Sergiopol’. He mentions the lonely postal stations and post pickets scattered across 280 *verst* (about 300 kilometres) of an endless steppe that lacks even a single human settlement.³² The impression is one of unoccupied and unincorporated space that is relatively “empty”, though this is only implied, not stated outright as it often is in descriptions of the conquest of Siberia. The absence of infrastructure – except for telegraph stations or postal stations, which provided horses for travellers – was often an indicator of spatial “emptiness”. A postal station would have a supervisor and a number of ‘Kirgiz’ (Kazakh or Kyzgyz) *iamshchiki* or drivers. Where they existed, such stations defined a line of passage through the region, indicating where horses could be obtained and telegrams received or sent, integrating what had been borderless space into the empire and rendering orderly lines of communication (Figure 6.2).

The absence of location markers or signposts was another sign of the unincorporated state of Semirechie within the Russian empire. Where they existed in the empire (indicating distance from St Petersburg), they served both practical and symbolic functions. In Sapozhnikov’s words, “you won’t see distance posts along the route, but it can be identified by high mounds of dirt”.³³ Also serving as markers were the ‘Kirgiz’ graves scattered along the route,

³² Sapozhnikov 1904: 6.

³³ Sapozhnikov 1904: 8.

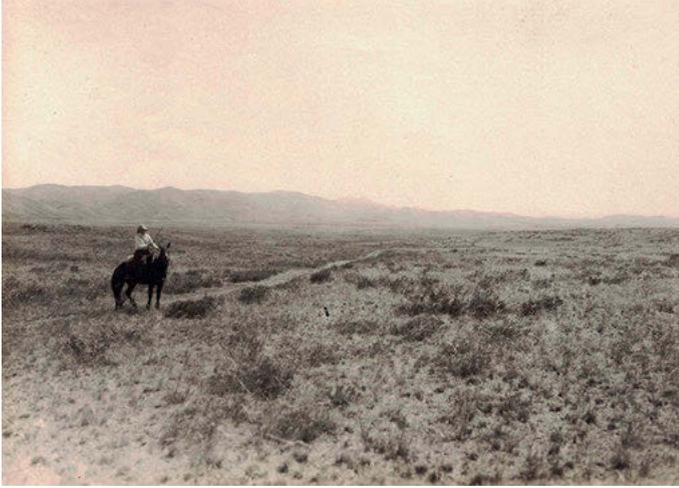


Figure 6.2: “Steppe near Sergiopol”. Photo by V. Sapozhnikov. Date unknown. The Museum of Tomsk State University.

[...] some of which had four corners, each with a small tower on it; others were like rounded cones with a lamp and half-moon on their pinnacle, but some were simple mounds of dirt. All *mullas* were made of alkali clay, proof of which were the potholes surrounding such memorial sites. These, along with so-called *urochishche* [depression] met along the route are the only definitive way to mark the locality since the entire length of the Karatal River from the foothills of the Ala-Tau to Balkhash is devoid of any settlements or natural markers of landscape.³⁴

Another feature confirming “unfilled” space was its difficulty of access, both in terms of topographical relief and undeveloped communication infrastructure. Even so, infrastructure occupies considerable space in Sapozhnikov’s descriptions, fostering the impression that he is writing with future travellers, researchers, and colonisers of Semirechie in mind. He signifies which road or path to use, which mountain passes to take; he specifies distances, the difficulty of passage, and the time spent en route. Space is filled with imaginary routes linking different locations that join the periphery with the centre.

The sense of emptiness of a space is reinforced if it is also untouched by scientific research. An expansive, elongated, difficult to access, distant, and relatively “empty” space in terms of infrastructure and population is furthered in its vacuity by any vagueness on maps, or blank features and unexamined regions. A space’s difficulty of access and unincorporated nature are conveyed if it is “untouched” by

³⁴ Sapozhnikov 1904: 18–19.

explorers. As soon as a territory is mapped, its elevation defined, its geographic features named (whether by researchers or by indigenous populations), its flora and fauna identified, and its evidence collected, catalogued, and classified, it begins to fill up, first symbolically and then physically. Cartographical “conquest” and the incorporation of a territory are linked to its photographic appropriation. Sapozhnikov and Friederichsen systematically photograph the region’s topography, give names to the objects they viewed, and capture on camera locations along the expedition route.

At the same time, the absence of documentation on the region made possible the discovery of new rivers and mountains and gave travellers the opportunity to be “first discoverers” of distant lands on the far reaches of the Russian Empire. Indeed, Sapozhnikov repeatedly notes the contributions of his predecessors who explored the region. He was well-informed about prior geographical and botanical writings. At the beginning of his book he wrote that “the region has seen many distinguished Russian and foreign scholars”. Note that his inverted phrasing makes the region the subject and not the object of the sentence: it sees rather than is seen by these researchers. But the region was so enormous, and so many of its places were difficult to access; despite all the recorded and detailed descriptions available to him, Sapozhnikov wrote that much remained unknown and “many areas of Semirechie to this date have remained completely untouched by scholarly travellers”.³⁵

Semirechie as a Borderland and a Connecting Link

One of the most salient features of Semirechie is its transitional status as a “connecting link” between Siberia and Turkestan where, as Sapozhnikov put it,

[...] the characteristics of Siberia fade and those of Turkestan emerge. The result is a conflict of forms; on the one hand North and on the other South Asia, which one can observe moving from north to south: from Altai through the Irtysh river valley, the Saur and Targabatai, Dzungarian steppes and lakes Balkhash and Ala-Kul’, Dzungarian Ala-Tau, the Ili river valley, Iliisky Ala-Tau to Tien-Shan.³⁶

The presence or change in vegetative forms (flora) were defining features for Sapozhnikov. The pages of his diary are replete with the Latin names of plants he

³⁵ Sapozhnikov 1904: I.

³⁶ Sapozhnikov 1904: II.

found, identified, and collected during his expeditions. Sapozhnikov's botanical eye determined how he perceived and depicted a territory, and the manner in which he mapped it and catalogued it. He used a scholarly "instrumentation" adopted universally by the academic world according to which the territory of Semirechie is "filled up" by plants known to science and integrated into existing systems of classification, and its nature begins to speak in Latin. Sapozhnikov's botanical research also determined the schedule and route of the expedition, which were planned to coincide with the flowering of plant life (not to mention the impassibility of mountain passes in the winter). One can only imagine what the expedition would have looked like if they had travelled in a different season or with the presence of transportation infrastructure. It goes without saying that most of the material the expedition brought back was collected during the summer season. For that reason, it is important to keep in mind how much seasonality defined the brush strokes that captured the landscape and altered the reception of the landscape and its portrayal.

In Sapozhnikov's description, the landscape is "filled up" with vegetation, soil types, geological features, rivers, lakes, mountain ranges, and glaciers. But the process of depiction is carried out not solely to catalogue and collect scientific observations and integrate Semirechie into the global map of the world. It is also intended to assess the potential for further colonisation of the region. Accordingly, one of the key features to be determined was Semirechie's colonising potential. From a "colonising" point of view, Semirechie emerges as a transitional territory. Colonisation is already underway, but the process has only just begun. The presence of Russians is noted precisely through the description of points of settlement that serve economically, socially, and symbolically as fore-posts of civilisational penetration.

The boundaries of populated places are precisely identified in the descriptions and signify the shifting nature of that space: a transition from boundless, unlimited steppe to enclosed, structured, incorporated space filled with Russian settlements. For Sapozhnikov, markers of civilisation included buildings (the architecture or type of construction in borderlands often serves as a visual symbol of empire) and the existence of vegetation, such as trees along streets and planted gardens, all of which transformed the steppe, in his words, into something "cultured".

In his descriptions of settlements, he often uses the terms "inviting" and "uninviting" to refer specifically to settings, not people, with a strong dose of subjectivity. For example, arriving in Sergiopol' on April 17, 1902, Sapozhnikov marked his entry into Semirechie oblast' as follows:

On the surface the *stanitsa* [Cossack village] is the least inviting point in all of Semirechie because of the complete absence of gardens or wooded growth. The dusty streets are lined with squat cottages of crooked planks or clay, and one might find no more than ten respectable homes in the entire *stanitsa*. The single church to be found was surrounded by barracks-like buildings, and in the centre of the *stanitsa* was the market with rows of wooden shops, the proprietors of which were mostly Tatars. The public frequenting the market and walking the streets are overwhelmingly Kirgiz; their saddled horses and bulls with a string drawn through their nostrils provide variety to the otherwise monotonous appearance of the village. The primary occupation of the Russian population (Cossacks) is agriculture, but in this capacity the village is very poorly situated, since both arable land and pastures are at a considerable distance from it. Timber can only be found seventy to eighty kilometres away. The *stanitsa* itself was founded through compulsory resettlement of Cossacks primarily from Biysk district [*uezd*] to meet strategic considerations. Now that the need for it has passed, Sergiopol' remains something like a misunderstanding and it's no wonder that there are only 1387 residents there, even if we include the Kirgiz in that number.³⁷

In the depiction above we find a visual picture – dusty, impoverished, squat cottages, no vegetation – of a conquered border territory (or more accurately what had once been a border territory, reflecting the onward march of empire). The word “misunderstanding” reflects the artificial nature of the settlement, the absence of nearby essential resources for agricultural pursuits and even life itself (forests, pastures, arable soil). This settlement would not have existed were it not for the militaristic nature of the colonisation of the steppe. This era of settlement lay in the past, since it was no longer a Cossack border village signifying the existence of the empire and marking its boundary. The presence of a church and barracks symbolised the presence of the Russian state, which was now only present as an internal administrative entity.³⁸

The indigenous population was also artificial in Sapozhnikov's eyes, serving merely to “diversify” the otherwise monotonous environment, an exoticism within the space of a Cossack settlement. Such a categorisation – rendering the ‘Kirgiz’ exotic – reflects an imperial colonial gaze in which they, rather than the Altai Cossacks, are outsiders on what is now “Russian” territory. In reality, neither of these groups can be described as local to this space, just as the *stanitsa* itself only existed due to the efforts of the state. Likewise, the built environment was an unfortunate reproduction of a different landscape, an unsuccessful transplant of a typical Russian settlement. Thus, a monotone and “endless” space was sliced up by the *stanitsa*'s constructions, which altered the landscape but did not quite

³⁷ Sapozhnikov 1904: 7.

³⁸ “As did colonizers in other places, the Russian state worked to create spaces recognizable to settlers in the Siberian wilderness. They built churches with bell towers to punctuate the landscape with Orthodoxy and create familiar sounds.” Monahan 2016: 127.

create an “incorporated” territory. It is ironic that Sapozhnikov visualises this space from an imperial and colonial perspective but at the same time observes its artificiality; his visual map fragments into isolated, unconnected elements, all of which produce the sensation that it is “uninviting”.

For Sapozhnikov, the presence or absence of vegetation triggers the perception of the people occupying a space as “inviting” or “uninviting”. Upon arrival at Sarkan *stanitsa* he observed the presence of trees in the settlement. His overall impression is the opposite of that of Sergiopol’: here the church looks “sweet” [*khoroshen’kaia*] since it is surrounded by young apple trees in full bloom.³⁹ The village of Abakumovskii “looks very inviting thanks to the abundance of trees adorned by green leafing”.⁴⁰ Describing another location, Karabulak, Sapozhnikov takes note of a Russian population engaged in farming, an expansive square with a church and school (typical symbols of organised space), and wide streets fringed by tall poplars and elm trees, all of which produce a “very pleasant impression”.⁴¹ Arriving finally in Vernyi, his first and ecstatic response is to the abundance of greenery:

at the centre of the town is situated a dense park; all the streets have been planted with pyramidal poplars [...] and to add to this virtually every home boasts of orchards with apples, white acacias, apricot trees and lilacs [...]. A town rather large in scale and with a population of twenty-five thousand is enveloped in the greenery of the orchards.⁴²

Sapozhnikov’s view of the steppe region of Semirechie is largely defined by his botanical interests – the identification and collection of plants – and for that reason his eye turns naturally to soil type and fertility. But his scientific observations are also coloured by estimations of the “utility” of a territory in terms of future colonisation. What are the prospects for agriculture? Soil and vegetation are regarded in terms of their prospects for invigorating a “lifeless” steppe and bringing “culture” to it. In “vitalising” the steppe the peasant plough emerges in these writing as a symbol of civilisation. In the words of Anatoly Remnev, “In imperial policy, the prevailing stereotype held that one could only consider those lands truly Russian where the plough of the Russian ploughman had passed. Peasant colonization became an important component of imperial policy and peasants the most effective conveyors of imperial policy.”⁴³

³⁹ Sapozhnikov 1904: 12.

⁴⁰ Sapozhnikov 1904: 13.

⁴¹ Sapozhnikov 1904: 31.

⁴² Sapozhnikov 1904: 35–36.

⁴³ Remnev 2007: 440.

Characterising the steppe as lifeless combines in Sapozhnikov's work with a persistent discourse of the "vacuity" of a colonised territory, while the micro-optic of botany – which examines plants up close in order to define, classify, and properly collect them for an herbarium – joins with the macro-optic of a future steppe transformed into a space carpeted by fields and orchards. According to Ian Campbell,

Common ground formed on the basis of a shared premise among Kazakhs⁴⁴ intermediaries and "civilizing" tsarist administrators that a civilizing mission was desirable and feasible, that the steppe and its population both required improvement and could be improved through the action of imperial institutions. [...] Among the civilizers, it seemed likely that the steppe's future would involve Kazakhs settling on the land. The appearance of colonization on the political agenda, the actual appearance of colonists on the steppe, and the continuing association of pastoralism and backwardness all pointed in this direction.⁴⁵

From Steppe to Mountains

Sapozhnikov and his companions Semenov and Friederichsen also resorted to photography to identify and describe mountain ranges, especially those that had not been previously explored (by Europeans). They ascribed names and estimated or measured the height of individual peaks. For example, the photograph taken on the crest of the ridge of Iishigart, described as opening up an expansive and informative view, is supplemented by a list of mountain ridges, summits, and contours – offering a comprehensive picture of that range. Taking photographs at the height of four thousand meters was no easy matter, especially considering that, as Sapozhnikov commented, they had to cope with gusts of wind "so strong that they had to hold firmly on to the tripod to prevent the camera from being swept away".⁴⁶

Similar depictions of mountain peaks, ridges, passes, and plateaus were accompanied by panoramic photographs in an attempt to convey the true majesty of the unfolding views (Figure 6.3). For example, after climbing up the Kongul'chu Pass, Sapozhnikov revelled in the vistas before him and wrote, "To the

⁴⁴ The steppe people were often improperly and generally described in the Russian official documents and travelogues as 'Kirgiz' where they should have been Kazakhs. For that reason, Campbell speaks of "Kazakhs". Sapozhnikov encountered Kazakhs and Kyrgyz in his travels but referred to 'Kirgiz'.

⁴⁵ Campbell 2017: 92.

⁴⁶ Sapozhnikov 1904: 104.

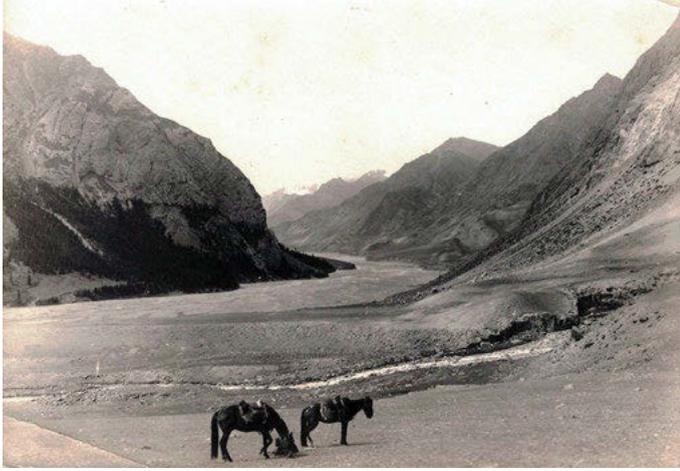


Figure 6.3: “Kueliu river”. Photo by V. Sapozhnikov. Date unknown. The Museum of Tomsk State University.

south one can see a powerful view of the Terskei-Tau range, its slopes carpeted by forests and adorned by a chain of snowy peaks”.⁴⁷ But the most dramatic views could be found on the higher passes. Climbing to a height of 4,200 meters on the Kueliu Pass, Sapozhnikov took a photo to which he added these words:

What a grandiose and even fantastic panorama opened up before us on the far side of that pass! Striated by crevasses a glacier wound its way down a steep incline among the gigantic precipices of the clustered summits. The setting sun broke through a thick cloud cover, casting a beam of light which tinted the cliffs and snow in bright violet, rose and orange tones even as the valley bottom was already enveloped in deep twilight. But this marvellous scene lasted but a moment as dark clouds rolled in and darkness descended.⁴⁸

Sapozhnikov related his struggle to take a photograph of Khan-Tengri Mountain. He wanted to capture a panoramic view and had to adjust for the considerable distance. Considering the rapid changes of weather as well as the appearance of clouds warning of the possibility of blizzard conditions enveloping the summit, the window for completing such a photograph was brief. Sapozhnikov noted that initially he took four photos of Khan-Tengri and one of the mountain range:

⁴⁷ Sapozhnikov 1904: 62.

⁴⁸ Sapozhnikov 1904: 89.



Figure 6.4: “View from the Kueliu Pass”. Photo by Sapozhnikov. 1902.
Published in Sapozhnikov 1904.

[...] moreover I took two of Khan-Tengri with one lens in order to magnify the image, given that the distance to the summit was more than twenty five kilometres and using two lenses the image of the mountain was too small. All of the photos were taken in haste and turned out rather satisfactorily. Two were taken side by side from a single point by turning the camera and by doing so I managed to capture a full panorama of the range.⁴⁹

Concluding Thoughts

Regardless of location, Sapozhnikov’s descriptions always came from the vantage point of a botanist. Whether the steppe, an alpine zone, or a river valley, the space was filled with lists of the plant varieties found there, always with their Latin nomenclatures. With this practice, he entered them into the European scientific catalogue. At the same time, he often provided local names and preserved samples of the plants he photographed. But Sapozhnikov’s complex research agenda extended well beyond botany. He gathered topographical and geographical information, sought out glaciers, and noted their traces, impact, and imprints on the landscape. His depictions and photographs were intended

⁴⁹ Sapozhnikov 1904: 123.

to create a scientific record, and to map the territory he viewed as “to be further explored and surveyed” for its potential for colonisation and the introduction of civilisation via agricultural and infrastructural development. Sapozhnikov looked at the region as a scientist (botanist, geographer, and glaciologist) as well as a coloniser. He represented the perspectives of a scientist, of Western civilisation, and of the Russian empire. Indeed, Russian colonisation serves as a symbol of civilisation in his writing. His scientific records, such as the catalogue of Latin botanical names, also include practical guidelines and a vision of future transformations of the region through science and colonisation. He sees the landscape of Semirechie as a vast space of endless possibilities for exploration and further economic and cultural transformation. The Enlightenment paradigm dominates. Sapozhnikov’s urge to fill “blank spaces” in maps and in science as a whole place his depictions within a Humboldtian domain. His curiosity and his search for new knowledge were strong driving forces that called for further exploration of the region. In Sapozhnikov’s work, Siberian glaciers and the plant life of the Altai Mountains are seen from the same perspective as the glaciers, mountains, and plants of Semirechie: they are objects of research to be catalogued and mapped in the purview of both science and the state. Finally, his strong aesthetic and emotional appreciation of what he saw and experienced adds another dimension to examining his works as a whole. This reveals a sense of the individual behind the scientist, the photographer, and the typical colonial gaze.

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Tatiana Kotiukova

7 “Another Turkestan” of senator Konstantin von der Pahlen (1908–1909) and engineer Nikolai M. Shchapov (1911–1913)

Abstract: This chapter describes two practically unknown collections of photographs of Turkestan made early in the twentieth century. The first collection (four photo albums) was assembled during the Commission of Inspection of Turkestan by the senator Count K. K. Pahlen in 1908–1909, and is now kept in the Russian State Historical Archives. The second collection of 1911–1913 is part of the large and diverse personal collection of the hydrologist N. M. Shchapov, now with the Centre for Storage of Audiovisual Documents of the Central State Archive of Moscow. Analysis of the two collections allows us to trace how the process of modernisation in the region was visualised and how the image of *another* Turkestan, modernised in the industrial and political sense, was formed.

Keywords: Russian Empire, Turkestan, orientalism, modernity, photo collections, K. K. Pahlen, N. M. Shchapov

Introduction

The research community and general public today seem to have a specific impression of Turkestan, which more accurately describes the period of conquest and first decades of the Russian presence in the region.¹ The basis of this is an exoticism and emphasis on the civilising mission of the Russian Empire in relation to the “backward Muslim periphery”. On the one hand, a significant contribution to this impression was made by well-known paintings by the artists

¹ I would like to express my profound gratitude to Svetlana Gorshenina for her valuable advice and comments made during preparation of this article.

Note: Translated by Liudmila M. Kalintseva

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Vasilii V. Vereshchagin (1842–1904) and Nikolai N. Karazin (1842–1908), the widely distributed photos of the *Turkestan Album* (1872), the numerous publications by and about direct participants in the Turkestan campaigns and, more rare but no less important, works of creative literature. On the other, are recent publications on the history of imperial photography. Yet, despite all the advantages of research (in particular, the recognition of the colonial nature of the Russian presence in Turkestan, the use of theories of orientalism and cultural transfer, the introduction of new iconographic material, etc.²), these authors have almost never focused on the analysis of photographs of the pre-revolutionary decade.

In reality, Turkestan early in the twentieth century, by now modernised and partly industrialised, politically active and integrated to a certain extent into the Russian imperial space, differed radically from its early exoticised and orientalist image. In fact, it was already *another* Turkestan. By *another* I do not mean non-ethnic, as the oriental culture was interpreted during the era of conquest. Rather, I use the term to highlight the novelty and strangeness of a *new* image of a Russified Turkestan and to (partially) erase the earlier, stereotypically orientalist image of Central Asia. In other words, I use *another* (*chuzhoi*) not in the sense of *other* (*chuzhdyi*) but in the sense of *unexpected* (*otlichnyi, drugoi, neozhidannyi*), from the point of view of modern research.

As we can judge from the memoirs of Tashkent's visitors and residents, contemporary scholars believed there were two different Turkestans in the early twentieth century, 'one's own' (*svoi*) and one 'other' (*chuzhoi*). The Turkestan that was 'one's own' was the world of Russian colonisation; the 'other' Turkestan was the world of Central Asian culture, poorly known and poorly studied. In 1910 an official of the Ministry of Agriculture, A. A. Tatishchev (1885–1947), described his first impressions of Tashkent in this way:

It has to be said that the native city did not seem to exist for us. The tram line ended almost at the very beginning of its maze of narrow, crooked streets without a single window on the street, while in Saratov all houses are built with windows on the courtyard, the streets stretch along the endless land walls surrounding the courtyards of Saratov estates [...]. This city lived its own insulated life [...].³

Saratov, then, lives "its own insulated life" that can be reached by tram. Some tried to find familiar features in this *other* life. Prince I. S. Vasil'chikov (1881–1969), who came to Turkestan as a member of the Commission of Inspection

² Dluzhnevskaja 2006; Prishchepova 2011; Dzhani-zade 2013; Gorshenina/Sonntag 2018.

³ Tatishchev 2001: 157. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by me or the translator of this article.

of Count K. K. Pahlen (1861–1923) in 1908, had a very ambivalent impression of Tashkent.

It could be taken for a beautiful southern Russian provincial town [Vasil’chikov recollected many years later in emigration] if it weren’t for the natives walking around in colourful robes and their women dressed in one colour, mostly black, garbs resembling covers completely enclosing them, so that you can’t even see their eyes screened with a thick net of horsehair.⁴

Moreover, this *other* life was consistently modified in accordance with Russian understanding of its so-called “Civilising mission”. Early in the twentieth century, how Turkestan was to modernise was the subject of many discussions in the Russian metropole, with participants arguing that the *other* could and even must change and become *another*, i.e. start to look more like one’s *own*.

Along with these deep considerations of the Turkestan issue among politicians and writers we see a distinct visualisation of *another* Turkestan in photographs of the late imperial period. In the autumn of 1899 the First Turkestan Photography Exhibition was organised with the involvement of both professional and amateur photographers. Several thousands works demonstrated an evolution from exoticised, ethnographic and genre photography to landscape and documentary photography. If we consult the exhibition catalogue,⁵ we find a change in the subjects of interest even in the headings of catalogue sections.

It was a starting point for the appearance of *another* Turkestan in the Russian imperial imagination, shifting from exotic *other* (*chuzhoi*) to one’s *own* (*svoi*) modernised space. Fragments of *another* industrial Turkestan – dams, irrigation canals, the experimental cotton fields of the Murghab tsar estate,⁶ workshops of cotton gins, the railway, etc. – were clearly captured in photographs by S. M. Prokudin-Gorskii,⁷ who arrived in Turkestan for the first time in 1906.

Margaret Dikovitskaya analyses the Turkestan part of the Prokudin-Gorskii collection without noticing *another* Turkestan. She comes to the conclusion that photography in Russia “played a special role in restraining the response to the demands of the growing national movements in Central Asia in the early years of the twentieth century”.⁸ Such a conclusion about the role of photography in Turkestan seems inadequate given that the target audience – and indeed actual

⁴ Vasil’chikov 2002: 61.

⁵ NA RUz. F. P-2231. Op. 1. D. 288.

⁶ The Murghab Imperial demesne (*Gosudarevo imenie*) was never visited by any member of the ruling dynasty but hosted K. K. Pahlen and N. M. Shchapov. It was regarded as a showcase of the achievements of empire in Turkestan.

⁷ Garanina 2006.

⁸ Dikovitskaya 2007: 118.

consumers – of these intellectual and artistic products were not the native population of Turkestan (at least, not more than an extreme minority), but the population of the Russian metropolis (and again, a fairly limited circle of people).

In her analysis of the *Turkestan Album* and the Prokudin-Gorskii collection, Inessa Kouteinikova does see *another* Turkestan, unlike Dikovitskaya, though she does not specifically focus on it. Emphasising the importance of Central Asia as a new colony for the empire, she argues that these collections provided the colonial regime with a better understanding of the border areas, as well as legitimising the Russian administrative presence in new territories. She notes that, among many reasons to capture the architecture, traditions and everyday life of Central Asia in photographic form, the priority was to show a new and ideal society under Russian rule.⁹ Kouteinikova writes that General Kaufman thought potential strategic victories in Turkestan could be implemented by industrialising and integrating (albeit slowly) the region into the common imperial space.¹⁰ This thesis was indeed the essence of the imperial strategy in the region. From the *other*, Turkestan had to become both one's *own*, in relation to the empire, and *another*, in relation to its former itself. At the same time, the imperial aim to achieve *another* Turkestan in 1905–1907 went beyond industrial modernisation and towards the modernisation of the entire political system by the end of the twentieth century, which would become routine in the form of meetings and demonstrations. This point is overlooked by Kouteinikova.

Filling the existing gap in scholarship on Turkestan photography, what follows focuses on how a visual image of the modernisation of late imperial Turkestan was created. My analysis is based on two photo collections, one belonging to a high-ranking imperial official, the other to an ordinary engineer, whose distinct social positions allow us to reconstruct a stereoscopic image of *another* Turkestan. I discuss first the collection assembled during the senate inspection tour headed by Count Konstantin Konstantinovich von der Pahlen (1861–1923) in 1908–1909¹¹ and second the collection of a hydrologist named Nikolai Mikhailovich Shchapov (1881–1960),¹² who worked in Turkestan in 1911–1913. Pahlen and Shchapov took photographs at almost the same time, and sometimes in the same places. However, they were very different people and influenced by very different circumstances and motives. Yet both collections present the quality of *another* Turkestan and demonstrate changes in the objects of

⁹ Kouteinikova 2015: 86.

¹⁰ Kouteinikova 2015: 99.

¹¹ RGIA. F. 1396. Op. 1. D. 488a, 488b, 488v, 488g. Originally some of these photographs were published in the book: Kotiukova 2016.

¹² GBU “TsGAM”. N. M. Shchapov’s archival collection.

interest and a desire to capture a modern Turkestan distinct from its former orientalist image. Accordingly, my analysis of the two collections requires a different lens to the one used in recent publications on photography in Turkestan, in which ethnographic “types”, genre scenes, historical ruins and views of picturesque nature are foregrounded.¹³ By a happy coincidence, both Pahlen and Shchapov wrote memoirs,¹⁴ and left behind archives. The memoirs are the key to understanding the visual images contained in these collections.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, a so-called “visual turn” has taken place, thanks to which visual sources – which for a long time in academic research were given only an auxiliary, illustrative function – came to be studied as a self-sufficient phenomenon. Perhaps as a result, the richest photo collections of Pahlen and Shchapov have not yet received proper attention by historians. For example, an interest has only recently emerged (and that only superficial) in the Turkestan part (345 photos) of Shchapov’s comprehensive collection.¹⁵ As for the inspection carried out by Count Pahlen, the situation is paradoxical.

Many scientific works on Turkestan refer to the results of Pahlen’s Commission of Inspection. Pahlen’s report is in fact one of the major sources for all research in the social history of early-twentieth-century Central Asia and is therefore widely used. But only a few papers deal directly with the history of the Commission of Inspection itself and not with the history of region in general.¹⁶ At the same time its photographs have remained largely unknown: when reading these works, as well as the numerous reports compiled during the inspection, the accompanying photographs are never mentioned. The photo albums prepared during and/or after the completion of Pahlen’s senate Commission of Inspection remain terra incognita for the historical community. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that regular and purposeful work, for example in the Russian State Historical Archive in St Petersburg, remains impossible (mainly for financial reasons) for our colleagues in the Central Asian states, even though the photographs concerned are of great interest to precisely this community of scholars if they are to study and better understand their national histories. The lack of interest among Russian researchers may be even simpler to explain: the content of these photographs of modernity does not correspond to the dominant narrative over recent decades that reduces interest in Central Asia to a crude formula of “imperial power and Muslims”. On the part of “Western science”, the exoticised image of the region as part of the Russian Empire coheres with the

¹³ Dikovitskaya 2007; Kouteinikova 2015.

¹⁴ Pahlen 1964; Shchapov 1998.

¹⁵ Kharitonova 2014: 82–88.

¹⁶ Morrison 2012, 2013; Liubichankovskii 2015; Makhmudova 2015; Vasil’ev 2018.

dominant discourse of the “Turkestan colony”; conventional “types” (*tipy*) and “views” (*vidy*), rather than *another* Turkestan, visually support such a discourse.

Looking at these photos by Pahlen and Shchapov, you ask yourself a question: what is visualised by them? Is it the construction of a new image or the deconstruction of an old familiar image? Did the authors try to introduce themselves through these pictures or to present to the empire and the world a new, changed, *another* Turkestan? In my opinion, Pahlen and Shchapov saw the hybridity of the new and traditional in the region and, consciously or intuitively, this attracted them to it. Pahlen writes in his memoirs:

Russia’s entry into Central Asia [...], accompanied by [the] introduction of European order and civilization, brought a breath of fresh air to the land robbed and reduced to poverty by centuries of Asian despotic rule. The reader, accustomed to seeing the differences between what he was taught to consider Western civilization and Russian conditions, may not be able to appreciate the significance and consequences of [the] changes that tsarist autocratic Russia brought to Central Asia.¹⁷

In Shchapov’s memoirs just a few paragraphs contain his estimate of the empire’s activities in the region. And if Pahlen’s perspective is at a macro level, then Shchapov gives his at a micro level. For example:

Our coachman [...], a fine, red-bearded Russian. [...] Hardly speaking the Sart language: “Kaida yule?” (Where’s the road?), he called to people he met, depending on their age: *ota* (father), *oka* (older brother), *uka* (younger brother). Is this possible between the English and the locals in the colonies? Of course not, and this is the dignity of the Russian people, and the pledge of friendship with other nations.¹⁸

Or:

I think the Russians managed the region well. They introduced justice (after the khans), bourgeois respect for the property of all, and especially of the landowners. [...] Cotton gins, oil mills and other factories multiplied [...]. The native bourgeoisie grew [...]. I have not heard much about the administration’s bribes; they are probably taken by the district chiefs.¹⁹

How should we interpret these perspectives? Do they help us understand for what purpose Pahlen and Shchapov took their photographs? I believe they contain what can be called orientalism, cultural transfer and acculturation. These collections might reflect *how the imperial elites of various social levels would like to look in their own eyes, or how they imagined the results of their presence*

¹⁷ Pahlen 1964: 12.

¹⁸ Shchapov 1998: 245.

¹⁹ Shchapov 1998: 247–248.

in the region, or how they saw Russia’s own Turkestan. Finding out whether any of these scenarios holds is the subject of the rest of this article.

Konstantin Konstantinovich von der Pahlen

The count Konstantin Konstantinovich von der Pahlen (1861–1923) belonged to the old German Courland family. His great-grandfather Pëtr Alekseevich (1745–1826) led the conspiracy against Paul I (1754–1801). His father Konstantin Ivanovich (1833–1912) served as minister of justice between 1867 and 1878, and in 1885 even temporarily chaired the Committee of Ministers of the Russian Empire.

Konstantin Konstantinovich was born in St Petersburg and had an extremely successful career in the civil service. From 1897 to 1905, he was vice-governor of Warsaw and then Pskov and then governor of the Vilnius area. In 1906 he was granted the court title of chamberlain. After 1917 he played a prominent role in the anti-Bolshevik movement and in 1919 served as chairman of the board of administration of Western Russia in the territory of present-day Latvia.

The inspection of Turkestan began in July 1908 and was mostly completed by 1909 (Figure 7.1). According to the manager of the Office of the Turkestan governor-general, P. I. Mishchenko (1853–1918), and colonel V. A. Mustafin (1867–1933), the auditors focused exclusively on searching for spies and identifying agents of influence of all stripes, thereby encouraging denunciation in



Figure 7.1: “K. Pahlen during the inspection with the local population”.
RGIA. F. 1396. Op. 1. D. 488b. L. 251.

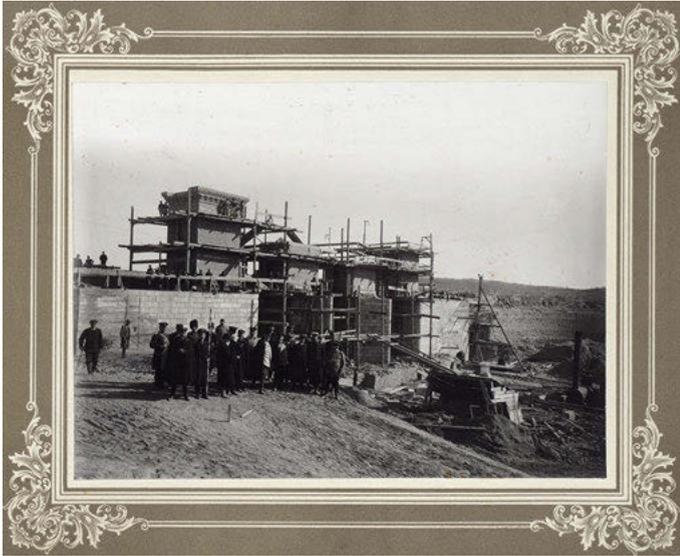


Figure 7.2: “The Murghab Imperial demesne. Inspection of work on the construction of the Sultan Bey Dam”. 1908. RGIA. F. 1396. Op. 1. D. 488v. L. 26.

the region. Mustafin gave Pahlen a negative assessment, accusing the senator of professional incompetence and stating that he was only familiar with Turkestan as a mere geographical term (Pahlen had never been to Asian Russia before).²⁰ At first sight, Mustafin’s harsh assessment might seem true. But an analysis of the documents that Pahlen and the members of his commission collected and processed confirms that, in fact, the Commission of Inspection’s team worked painstakingly and professionally. It is also obvious that the Turkestan administration was dissatisfied with the inspection and mounted all possible opposition to the work of the commission.²¹

The inspection touched upon almost all aspects of life in Turkestan. For greater efficiency, Pahlen divided his team into five groups, according to the number of Turkestan regions, so that each group in each region could work in parallel. Pahlen himself travelled to all five regions, and visited Bukhara and Khiva. The count also visited the Murghab imperial demesne (*Gosudarevo imenie*) (Figure 7.2), though it was not included in the list of audited places. Here

²⁰ Mustafin 1916: 391.

²¹ Vasil’chikov 2002: 81.

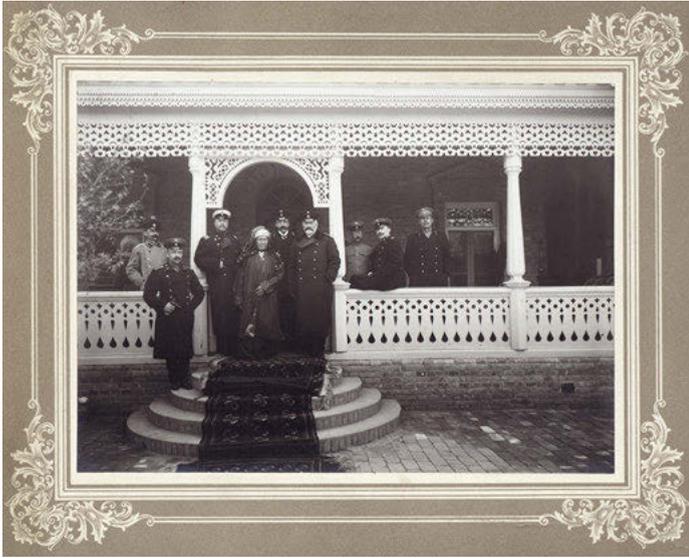


Figure 7.3: “The Murghab Imperial demesne. A visit to Teke khan-women (*khansha*) Guljamal”. October 11, 1908. RGIA. F. 1396. Op. 1. D. 488v. L. 27.

he met two key figures in the social and political life of the Transcaspian area: the Teke khan Nikolai Nikolaevich Iomudskii (1868–1928) and the Teke khan-women (*khansha*) Guljamal (dates unknown). The camera fixed this meeting in posterity, and Guljamal made such a strong impression on the senator that her portrait was taken separately (Figure 7.3). Claims that Khan Iomudskii “brought to light” the corruption of Transcaspian officials were not groundless; he paid a heavy price for them a few years later.²²

During these trips, the count acquainted himself with Turkestan in detail, reading the documents of local offices and the reports of superiors as well as receiving numerous visitors. His scrutiny paid off, as he was able understand some of the conflicts that took place long before the arrival of the inspection and which caused public outcry in the region. For example, he established the true cause of the conflict in 1894 between V. P. Nalivkin (1852–1918), the inspector of public schools of the Ferghana area, and F. M. Kerenskii (1838–1913), the chief inspector of schools of the Turkestan region.²³

²² Kotiukova 2016: 307–312.

²³ Kotiukova 2015: 64–83.

The year-long work of the commission resulted in several dozens of reports. Pahlen's contemporaries noted that "the inspection proceedings drew little attention to them".²⁴ Nevertheless, its results served as the basis for further improvements in the management of the region. As an example, a question was raised about the unsuitability of the old bureaucratic apparatus in the provinces and blatant violations of administrative rules.

After the October Revolution of 1917, the count and his family took refuge in Finland. But his personal archive had to be left in Russia. Konstantin Konstantinovich died in 1923 in Germany, having managed to finish his memoirs of the trip to Turkestan. The trip to Central Asia was probably one of, if not the, brightest events in his life and he was very sorry for the loss of the photographs and documents connected with the Commission of Inspection. Fortunately, the archive was not lost but arrived at the Russian State Historical Archive, where it remains today.

Nikolai Mikhailovich Shchapov

Nikolai Mikhailovich Shchapov (1881–1960) was born in Moscow to the family of a Rostov merchant of the second guild, a trade employee and a hereditary honorary citizen. He graduated from the Imperial Moscow Technical School (currently the Bauman Moscow State Technical University). In 1906–1908 he took internships at higher technical schools in Germany and Switzerland.

In 1909–1914 Shchapov was engaged in engineering and design activities, working in the Moscow Irrigation Company developing a project for the irrigation of Ferghana valley. The company planned to irrigate (from the Naryn river) up to 1,100,540,000 sq. km of land in the Ferghana region. However, due to lack of money, the plans had to be cut tenfold.²⁵

Before starting his work in Turkestan, N. M. Shchapov and his friend and partner A. I. Kuznetsov, director of the Pereiaslav Manufactory Partnership, visited Egypt to study the local irrigation system. It was generally believed that the nature and climate of Egypt were close to those of Turkestan. The companions first came to Turkestan in 1911 (Figure 7.4).

According to Shchapov's memoirs, the route looked like this: Tashkent, Khujand (Khodzhen), Skobelev (now Ferghana), Andijan, the upper reaches of the Naryn river, the village of Uch-Kurgan.²⁶ The survey party was first located on

²⁴ Vasil'chikov 2002: 93.

²⁵ Shchapov 1998: 223–224.

²⁶ Shchapov 1998: 222–223.



Figure 7.4: “Portrait of N. Shchapov”. GBU “TsGAM”. N. M. Shchapov’s archival collection. 2–2261.

the bank of Naryn and then moved to the Kara-Darya river. Shchapov rushed between Moscow and Turkestan; upon his return he mainly lived in Andijan. During their second long stay in Turkestan in 1912, Shchapov and Kuznetsov toured the vicinity of Skobelev and visited the Murghab tsar estate. Their route ran by rail from Tashkent to Samarkand, then by car through Bukhara to Termez. From Termez, they rowed down the Amu-Darya river to Kerki, then to Charjui (Chardzhou), then continued by rail to Bayram-Ali.²⁷ Shchapov liked to take pictures and was never parted from his camera.²⁸ Preparatory works dragged on until the beginning of the First World War.

What else do we know about Shchapov? He was a member of the Cadet party and for several years (1913–1916) had a vote in the Moscow City Duma. After 1917 he remained in Soviet Russia and up until the 1950s was engaged in research on hydraulic engineering. He also took a doctorate in the technical sciences and won the Stalin Prize (third degree). Shchapov wrote the chapter covering his trip to Turkestan from memory, it records the events of just one day: 7 August 1953.

Another Turkestan as seen by Pahlen and Shchapov

Pahlen’s perspective

Pahlen treasured his photo archive. The photos were supposed to help the preparation of future reports. However, there is no data confirming that he took the

²⁷ Shchapov 1998: 244–245.

²⁸ Shchapov 1998: 157.

photographs himself. Most are amateur shots. They are poorly attributed, of varying quality, and were probably made by different people. The photographers could have been Pahlen himself, members of the Commission of inspection, professional photographers and possibly local officials. Pahlen also received photos along with anonymous letters and complaints from the public.²⁹ We may assume they also form part of his collection. The authors of the photos or the photo studios where they were made are not known, except for a small series of photos attributed to the studio of V. Lentovskii in Samarkand.

We cannot be sure that Pahlen himself collated all four albums of 454 photos. The photos are glued. This could be the work of the archive staff who processed the documents in Moscow, an assumption supported by the fact that the photos are not quite systematically arranged and are for the most part grouped in series either on a thematic or geographical basis. Most photos have no inscriptions: it would not have been easy for archivists to write these. Series were grouped together if the photos were signed or if it was obvious that the same place was photographed at the same time. Thus, each album has geographical or thematic repetitions; for example, the Transcaspian area is represented in all albums. The albums have a differing quantity of photos. The first album is the most voluminous (162 photos),³⁰ while the third album is smallest (thirty-two photos).³¹

The first album is the least systematic; it has pictures of almost everything: group portraits of Russian officials and local workers, industrial premises, postcards, the so-called “open letters” (Universal Postal Union of Russia), photos of the ruins of ancient Marv (or Merv) and the Sultan Sanjar Mosque. The second album contains genre and ethnographic photographs, a series entitled “From the trip along Amu-Darya”, and several photos taken in the Transcaspian area. The third album differs from the others because it only contains photos by professional photographers. I believe that the rationale behind the composition of this album, or the archivist’s solution, was the principle of putting all the professional photographs together. The album contains three picture series. One series comprises photos of the Samarkand silkworm cocoon and grain station (made in V. Lentovskii’s studio in Samarkand, without a date) (Figures 7.5 and 7.6). Another includes photos of German immigrants, dated 15 November 1908. The third is dedicated to the Murghab tsar estate, dated 11 October 1908. The fourth album has several of the photos from the first three albums, but there

²⁹ Pahlen 1964: 133, 137.

³⁰ RGIA. F. 1396. Op. 1. D. 488a.

³¹ RGIA. F. 1396. Op. 1. D. 488v.



Figure 7.5: “Silkworm cocoon and grain station of K. X. Evtikhidi. Samarkand”.
RGIA. F. 1396. Op. 1. D. 488. L. 392.



Figure 7.6: “New devices for collecting butterflies”. 1908. RGIA. F. 1396. Op. 1.
D. 488v. L. 9.

are also original collections: including photos of saxauls and of the Russian-Persian border.³²

The collection captures the whole of Turkestan, from Semirechie (“the Land of the Seven Rivers”, Kazakh: Jetyssu / Zhetysu) to the shores of the Caspian Sea. It reflects the geographical scope of the inspection and depicts life in distant outskirts as well as a wide variety of natural landscapes, morals, manners, ethnographic “types” and economic situations. The different areas of Turkestan, however, are represented unevenly. Among the photos, images of the Semirechie and Syr-Darya areas feature least. A possible explanation for this could be that the prince Illarion Vasil’chikov – head of the inspection team working in this area, and engaged in the issue of peasant resettlement to Turkestan – did not like and was not good at taking photographs. Pictures of Fergana valley are diverse: from coal pits and copper mines (into which Pahlen personally descended) to the architectural sights of Kokand.³³

The photos are indicative of the difference between Pahlen’s professional and personal preferences. The work in the Transcaspian area was the most difficult and, as a result, it was visualised most (the Caspian Sea, oil extraction and industrial production on the Cheleken island (Figures 7.7 and 7.8), the dam on the Murgab river, the cities of Krasnovodsk and Bayram-Ali, the Merv oasis, etc.). Alternatively, Pahlen prepared a separate report³⁴ on the resettlement



Figure 7.7: “Cheleken Island. Drilling”. 1908. RGIA. F. 1396. Op. 1. D. 488a. L. 118.

³² RGIA. F. 1396. Op. 1. D. 488g.

³³ Pahlen 1964: 122.

³⁴ Pahlen 1964; 1910.



Figure 7.8: “Cheleken Island craftsmen. General view of the mechanical workshop”. 1908. RGIA. F. 1396. Op. 1. D. 488a. L. 42.

problem in Turkestan, but photographs of Russian resettlement villages (except for a few taken on the Mirzacho’l (a.k.a “Hungry Steppe”) and collected in the first album), are distinctly lacking in his collection.³⁵

However in the third and fourth albums³⁶ we see a series of photographs of a settlement (or settlements) of Germans or Mennonite Germans (all men in distinctive wide-brimmed hats), with captions in German and the dates (in the third album only) (Figure 7.9). This may be an example of the personal (and understandable) interests of the Baltic German Pahlen; or it may go deeper. The German Russian subjects (natives of the Baltic provinces) appeared in Central Asia as early as the 1860s. A decade later Germans from Western Europe began to arrive.³⁷ The Mennonite Germans also moved to Central Asia. Military service introduced in Russia in 1874 extended to them as well. Wanting to avoid it, the Mennonites began to move to Turkestan and the Khanate of Khiva.

But there was another reason. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the idea spread among some Mennonites that the end of the world was near, that the “sinful” West would be punished and that therefore the only way to achieve salvation would be migration to the East. The imminent coming of Christ to earth and the establishment of his millennial kingdom was to take place in Turkestan (by no means were all the German peasants who moved to Turkestan

³⁵ RGIA. F. 1396. Op. 1. D. 488a.

³⁶ RGIA. F. 1396. Op. 1. D. 488v, 488g.

³⁷ NA RUz. F. I-36. Op. 1. D. 5366. L. 140, 158–159.



Figure 7.9: “A. A. von Gaber (Germans or Mennonite Germans?)”. 1908. RGIA. F. 1396. Op. 1. D. 488v. L. 29.

sectarians).³⁸ Most peasant settlers received or leased land in Syr-Darya and the Transcaspian areas of the Turkestan region. Due to the resettlement of German peasant families, entire German villages appeared. The Mennonites organised strong model households engaged in agriculture, meat and dairy farming, horse breeding, cheesemaking and crafts. They paid attention to innovations in agriculture and breeding practices. Photos from the four Pahlen albums fixed the moment when a small local irrigation system was established by the German colonists. German peasants, unlike Russian ones, were in active contact with the natives and quickly mastered their language. The local administration even had to send people who knew either German or Turkic to collect information about German immigrants. The success of the German colonists, of which both the regional administration and the imperial authorities were well aware, could not but make Pahlen want to get to know them better, especially against the background of serious problems in Russian resettlement villages (despite the support provided by their government, of which, by contrast, German immigrants received very little).

As we have already noted, the photo collections of Pahlen (and Shchapov) are a symbiosis of the *old* and *new* Turkestan. There was room in the inspection albums for a visualisation of the everyday life of the natives: genre scenes (occupations and crafts typical among the local population), the cities of Turkestan (Ferghana, Samarkand, Bayram-Ali, Khojent, Kokand, etc.), ethnographic “types”

³⁸ Knauer/Proskurin 1999: 68.

of people, pictures of *kurash* fighters, and so on.³⁹ I believe that such photos were taken primarily to supplement Pahlen’s private/family collection, even if they were interspersed with photos that suggest professional curiosity, like the collection on saxauls.⁴⁰ The planting of saxauls along the railway line to stop the movement of sand was a Russian practice, and specialists came from abroad to learn it. This technique was used especially in the Transcaspian area.⁴¹

We can conclude, then, that Pahlen collected photographic documents primarily for his work. Judging by the quality of the majority of these photos, Pahlen did not plan to publish them or make them public. Officially, the inspection was tasked with producing a second *Turkestan Album* to update the 1872 collection, and thus the senator did not, at least officially, plan to represent the changed, *another*, Turkestan to the empire and the wider world. Rather, his task was a factfinding mission investigating the current situation and providing an assessment not so much of the extent of imperial achievements but on the mistakes and errors made by both the regional powers and the central authorities. It is not possible to talk about imperial self-esteem here.

Shchapov’s perspective

Coming to Turkestan in 1911–1913, Shchapov photographed everything that attracted his attention. Like Pahlen, he took pictures both for himself and for his work. But, unlike Pahlen, he primarily took photos for himself. His lens captured the bustle of bazaars and views of dilapidated mausoleums (*mazars*). However, he was much more interested in dams, irrigation canals, railway bridges, stations, and so on than in Eastern exoticism. Shchapov was an amateur photographer and his collection is a fairly typical example of amateur photos.

Shchapov’s photographs confirm the routes of his trips to Turkestan given in his memoirs. Unlike the Pahlen collection, the photo documents are all attributed and well structured, most likely by Shchapov himself. In total, there are nine sections dedicated to Turkestan, most of them with exact geographical names. The largest section, however, is given a common term: “Central Asia” (211 photos). It includes many panoramic photos from different corners of the region: the fortress wall of Margelan, the Surkhan river, Gorchakovo station, views of the Naryn river, the Hungry Steppe, the hydroelectric power station on

³⁹ RGIA. F. 1396. Op. 1. D. 488b.

⁴⁰ RGIA. F. 1396. Op. 1. D. 488g.

⁴¹ For example, see Lipsinskii 1902: 171.



Figure 7.10: “A *desiatnik* (centre) and sub-contractors at the construction of a new bridge over the Naryn, in the Uch-Kurgan”. October 29, 1913. GBU “TsGAM”. N. M. Shchapov’s archival collection. 2-2501.

the Hindu Kush mountain range, the Stan dam, surroundings of Tishik-Tash, Tashkent, Shakhristan station, and so on.

The next largest section (fifty-six photos) is titled “Andijan” and features pictures of the Russian part of the city (new administrative and residential buildings), views of “old” Andijan, genre scenes and photos of an experimental cotton field, a mosque, a mausoleum, a locomobile and celebrations in the Russian part of the city. All twenty-three photos in the “Uch-Kurgan” section show preparation works for the construction of a new bridge over the Naryn, dated October 1913 (Figure 7.10).

In the same period, October 1913, the series of twenty-eight photos titled “Ferghana” was taken. All these photos were made during an agricultural exhibition in the city of Skobelev (now Ferghana). In the “Termez” section we find nine shots, featuring kayak boats on the Amu-Darya river, ruins of old Termez and the walls of a new military fortification. In the “Kelif” (new or “Russian” Termez) section there are six photos depicting views of a flying bridge over Amu-Darya from Afghanistan to Kelif (Figure 7.11).

In the “Kizil” section there are three photos of irrigation ditches. Only four photos are included in the “Samarkand” section. Here Shchapov, like any other tourist, photographed architecture. A section dedicated to “Tashkent”, the capital of Turkestan, is represented by five photos. All were taken at the station for the purpose of checking water velocimeters (Figure 7.12).



Figure 7.11: “A customs official in Kelif”. September 19, 1912. GBU “TsGAM”. N. M. Shchapov’s archival collection. 2-2389.



Figure 7.12: “A station for checking water velocimeters. Tashkent”. September 7, 1912. GBU “TsGAM”. N. M. Shchapov’s archival collection. 2-2380.



Figure 7.13: “Expedition member A.V. Khludov while drilling a well on the bank of the Chara”. August 1912. GBU “TsGAM”. N. M. Shchapov’s archival collection. 2-3284.

In contrast to Pahlen’s collection, Shchapov’s photographs are of excellent quality (materially, but also from an artistic and aesthetic perspective). They were evidently made using good equipment. The photographer/author is Shchapov himself, with some possible exceptions. Staged photography – that is, when the subject openly poses in front the camera – makes up only an insignificant part of collection, contrary to Pahlen. Most photos are group shots (Figures 7.13 and 7.14).

In my opinion, the photographic visualisation of everyday life produced by Shchapov (and, indeed, by Pahlen) is documentary in nature – from a source study point of view – as it exhibits specific events in detail. For example, on 26 March 1912, as part of his trip to Turkestan, A.V. Krivoshein (1857–1921), chief administrator of land management and agriculture for the Russian Empire, visited Andijan, and the Shchapov collection contains several photos in connection with this event: the visit of a big boss from the imperial capital. This meeting was apparently memorable for Shchapov, as forty years later he recalled:

We were waiting for the arrival of the minister of agriculture Krivoshein. The bureaucrats were preparing: an officer of high rank from St Petersburg was visiting the head of the local hydrometry service. He recommended that the stenographic reports of the State Duma be removed from the cabinet and that the portrait of the tsar be hung. The Andijan



Figure 7.14: “Refueling the car with water at the Bagrin station, Uch-Kurgan steppe”. September 13, 1912. GBU “TsGAM”. N. M. Shchapov’s archival collection. 2-2313.

district chief ordered the rich Sarts to dress up their sons in beautiful white suits and accompany Krivoshein’s carriage on horseback.⁴²

Krivoshein came to Turkestan with one, as he wrote, “pre-planned goal”, to personally get to know the conditions for expanding cotton production in Turkestan. According to Krivoshein, this issue was central for the region. It is likely that the local authorities knew Krivoshein’s attitude to cotton as a strategic crop. One of Shchapov’s photos features a group of people meeting the minister, and one can see an official holding a bouquet high above his head: a big cotton bush (Figure 7.15). On 26 August 1912, the hundredth anniversary of victory in the Patriotic War of 1812 was solemnly celebrated in Andijan, as well as throughout the empire (Figure 7.16).

Shchapov’s photo lens captured the event from the bell tower of the Orthodox church. This picture conveys the atmosphere of general excitement: all the secular public of this remote city, troops of the local garrison and high school students (boys and girls) gathered in the main square.

The way Shchapov captured Krivoshein’s visit and the Patriotic War celebrations on photographic film should be considered in the tradition of journalistic photography. To assert whether it was a reflection of imperialism or not,

⁴² Shchapov 1998: 248.



Figure 7.15: “During a meeting of A. V. Krivoshein, chief administrator of land management and agriculture of the Russian Empire. Andijan”. March 26, 1912. GBU “TsGAM”. N. M. Shchapov’s archival collection. 2-2198.



Figure 7.16: “The hundredth anniversary of victory in the Patriotic War of 1812 celebrated in Andijan”. August 26, 1912. GBU “TsGAM”. N. M. Shchapov’s archival collection. 2-2374.



Figure 7.17: “Elders of the city of Andijan. Rakhmet Badalbaev is in the center”. November 22, 1913 GBU “TsGAM”. N. M. Shchapov’s archival collection. 2-2574.

one needs to study Shchapov’s entire collection, including photographs of other regions of Russia and the world. However, we may state that this collection is on the one hand a fairly typical example of amateur photography and, on the other, demonstrates a “visualisation of the achievements of empire”. Finally, like Pahlen, Shchapov eschews an exoticising approach. A series of photographs taken at an agricultural exhibition in Skobelev deserves special attention. According to the orientalist approach adopted at that time these are typical exotic objects. But on closer analysis, it is obvious that these images, through Shchapov’s lens, are examples of visualisation, and moreover, examples of beautiful *live* portrait photography (Figure 7.17). Shchapov’s photos convey the character of people and the atmosphere of holiday rather than the exoticism of a non-ethnic community.

Conclusion

Whereas the *Turkestan Album* and the photos of Prokudin-Gorskii were to be published and demonstrated to the public, the motives behind Pahlen’s and Shchapov’s photo collections were completely different. They were intended to help solve practical tasks (specifically, the preparation of inspection reports and the irrigation plan for the Uch-Kurgan valley) and to supplement private/family archives.

Both Pahlen and Shchapov visualise *another* Turkestan, but the similarities and differences behind their approaches can be enumerated. Geographically and thematically, Pahlen and Shchapov took pictures in Turkestan of the same things. In both collections there are photos depicting the ethnography of the region, but they lack a deliberate ethnography. Oddly enough, neither Pahlen nor Shchapov were particularly attracted by Tashkent, the capital of Turkestan, but Pahlen includes a whole section of memories about Tashkent and arguably the first impressions he formed of Turkestan were made in this city.⁴³ Unlike Pahlen's collection, which we tend to consider a product of teamwork, Shchapov photographed Turkestan himself, though perhaps with a few exceptions. His photos give the sense of an integrity of visual corpus, which is not the case for Pahlen's archive.

My article offers some initial observations about how two relatively unknown photographic collections depict *another*, modernised Turkestan. A full study of Pahlen's and Shchapov's collections, however, should be made through the prism of complementary sources: memoirs, archival documents and, for the Pahlen collection, inter alia, the reports on the inspection. Special attention should be paid to Pahlen's memoirs, which can be treated as a key to the majority of his pictures, which lack captions. In Shchapov's visualisations, a personal attitude towards his photographic subjects is clear. In Pahlen's, by contrast, the human subject remains in the background, in almost all cases a supporting or even fragmentary feature, part of something larger: a colossal enterprise. Pahlen's photos of the senate inspection are thus a *state* visualisation of another Turkestan. Shchapov's photos are also a visualisation, but a *personal* one. However, for both, one thing is clear: Turkestan under the rule of the Russian Empire had become radically *different* and, without any doubt, *better* in comparison with the past.

Abbreviations

NA RUZ	Natsional'nyi arkhiv Respubliki Uzbekistan (National Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan)
RGIA	Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (Russian State Historical Archive)
GBU "TsGAM"	Gosudarstvennoe biudzhethnoe uchrezhdenie goroda Moskvyy "Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv goroda Moskvyy" (State budgetary institution of the city of Moscow "Central State Archive of the City of Moscow")

⁴³ Pahlen 1964: 1–21.

Archives

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Part II: Using and reusing photographs

Natalia A. Mozokhina

8 Pre-revolutionary postcards with views of Turkestan

Abstract: Postcards with views of Turkestan were issued by Russian regional and metropolitan publishers as well as outside Russia. The main challenge faced by regional publishers was finding a print shop suitable for producing postcards, while metropolitan and foreign publishers found it hard to obtain suitable photographs. The Community of Saint Eugenia was a publishing company with a scholarly approach to postcards. In 1906 the Community's storage depot in Tashkent was scheduled to open, so the organisation started looking for a depot manager and a photographer who could capture local views. As a result of these efforts, postcards based on hand-coloured photographs by Hugues Krafft emerged. Russian imperial society's interest in Turkestanian culture is also reflected in the picture postcards based on Vasilii V. Vereshchagin's Turkestan series and Nikolai N. Karazin's paintings.

Keywords: Turkestan, postcard, photography, print shop, collecting, Community of Saint Eugenia

Introduction

Circulation of the illustrated postcard was permitted in the Russian Empire as late as the second half of the 1890s. In Western Europe, however, it appeared in the early 1870s and saw its heyday in the 1880s. By the 1890s, there was already a whole network of Western European printing companies specialising in illustrated postcards. Meanwhile, the state of the printing industry in Russia still left much to be desired, especially outside St Petersburg and Moscow. For this reason, the golden age of postcards in the Russian Empire lasted from the late 1900s until the early 1910s. That short era is bounded on one side by the underdevelopment of the printing business in Russia and on the other by the First World War and the consequent loss of trade relations with foreign manufacturers of paper, paint and printing equipment.

Note: Translated by Anastasiia V. Daur

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In the provinces and on the outskirts of the empire, postcard publishing was largely restrained by a printing industry geared towards the modest needs of local governments and publishers rather than artistic reproduction. However, photography in provincial areas often kept pace with St Petersburg, Moscow and Western Europe, since photographic devices – already quite mobile at that time – were usually ordered from abroad and delivered to all parts of the Russian Empire. Thus, by the beginning of the twentieth century, publishing companies all over Russia had no problem obtaining postcard images. However, they faced difficulties with printing these images on special quality postcard-sized cardboard sheets. Especially challenging was the reproduction of artistic drawings in colour; only Moscow, St Petersburg and foreign print shops were able to perform this job to a high level.

Therefore, during the first decade of the postcard in the Russian Empire, regional publishers only acted as initiators and orchestrators of publications. They picked shots by local photographers or commissioned drawings from local artists, but the cards showing those pictures were printed in Moscow, St Petersburg or foreign print shops that distributed their promotional materials across large urban stores and posted advertisements in periodicals. Since the publication of postcards was largely motivated by a surge in tourism, the first illustrated postcards featured city views and landmarks. They were printed from photographs or artistic drawings in both Russian and foreign print shops.

There are not many publications on postcards with views of Turkestan, and few researchers have focused on photographs of this region. About the only publication on the subject is Boris Golender's album book *Window to the Past: Turkestan on Antique Postcards (1898–1917)* (in Russian).¹ Golender briefly covers the emergence of Turkestan postcards and describes their publishers. However, the Turkestan postcard as a phenomenon has not yet been placed in the general context of the postcard publishing business in the Russian Empire.

In her book *Open Letters: Russian Popular Culture and the Picture Postcard, 1880–1922*,² Alison Rowley examines the issue of postcard publishing in many regions of the Russian Empire. While Rowley neither mentions the region of Turkestan nor describes its unique situation, her general conclusions, it is implied, apply to Turkestan as well. However, my extensive study of illustrations on postcards of Turkestan and their publishers directly contradicts her findings, as does my comprehensive analysis of the situation of postcard publishing in St Petersburg, Moscow and the provinces. First, Rowley selectively describes images on

1 Golender 2002.

2 Rowley 2013.

the cards, ensuring that all her examples correspond with her conclusions. Second, she does not characterise the postcards themselves, but the landscapes captured on them. Third, she ignores the fact that the vast majority of postcards were not published by government order but on the initiative of private individuals. All these arguments are supported by the facts and conclusions laid out below.

The first postcards of Turkestan: Postcards of local publishers

The illustrated postcard as an independent branch of the publishing industry emerged and developed in Turkestan in the same fashion as in other Russian provinces. In this context, the gap between Turkestan and the European part of Russia was quite significant. The pioneering city in postcard publishing was St Petersburg, its (one of a kind) “first view” postcard came out as early as 1886. The first postcards with views of Odessa, Sevastopol and Riga appeared in 1893, with views of Reval and Yuryev in 1894 and of Moscow and the cities of Crimea in 1895.³ According to Golender – a writer, journalist, deltiologist and expert in the history of Tashkent – the first “Greetings from Turkestan” series, containing four postcards, was published as late as 1898–1899.⁴ Judging by the history of the drawings, their date can be pinpointed to 1899. The German artist O. Jahnke (1818–1887) was hired by Kunstanstalt Friedewald und Frick, an artistic print enterprise in Berlin, to make drawings of Turkestan for chromolithography (Figure 8.1). The corresponding printing plates were possibly used at the Tashkent lithographic typography of the trade house “Brothers F. K. and G. K. Kamenskii” to produce low-quality, nearly monochrome postcards with misaligned drawing contours and colour boundaries (Figure 8.2). The owners of the trade house, the brothers Fedor Kuzmich (1809–1883) and Grigory Kuzmich (1814–1893) Kamenskii, were merchants of peasant origin from Perm who engaged in cargo and passenger transportation along the rivers of Siberia and in the Volga-Kama basin. They owned rope factories in Tashkent and cotton plantations on the outskirts of the city.⁵ Most likely, the brothers purchased the print shop by accident, they sold it in 1899 after printing a series of postcards to promote their Tashkent enterprises.

³ “Pervye otkrytki gorodov”.

⁴ Golender 2002: 14–16.

⁵ Dinastiia Kamenskikh.

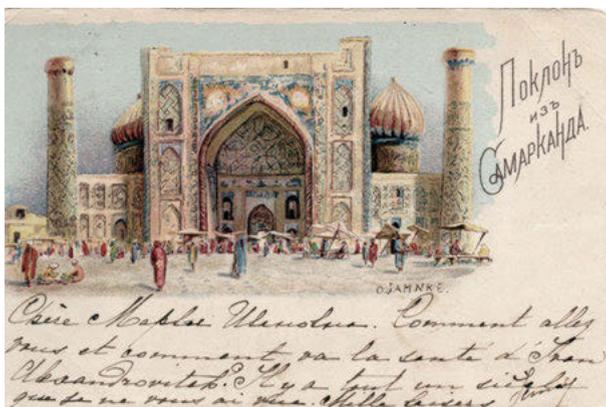


Figure 8.1: O. Jahnke. “Regards from Samarkand”. Postcard published by Kunstanstalt Friedewald und Frick, Berlin. Author’s property.

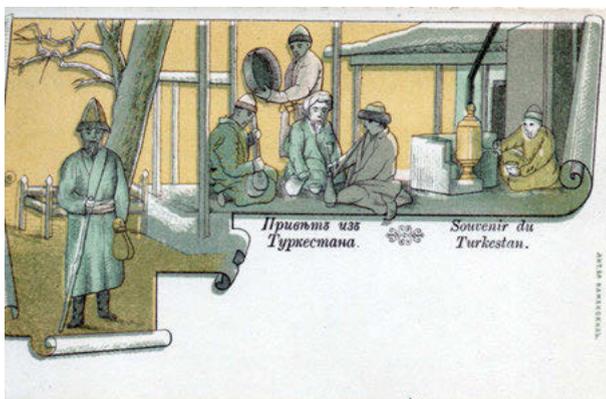


Figure 8.2: O. Jahnke. “Greetings from Turkestan”. Postcard published by the lithographic typography of brothers F. K. and G. K. Kamenskii, Tashkent. Author’s property.

Thus, unlike the first postcards of most Russian cities, the first postcards of Turkestan were issued by local publishers. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century are characterised by so-called multi-view postcards that combine several photographs or sketches on a single card (Figure 8.3). Only the early 1900s saw the mass publication of single-view Russian-printed postcards of Turkestan. In fact, these postcards were printed in Moscow or Odessa, as these cities were closer to the region than St Petersburg. Postcards from Turkestanian print shops began to be widely published only in the second half of the 1900s.

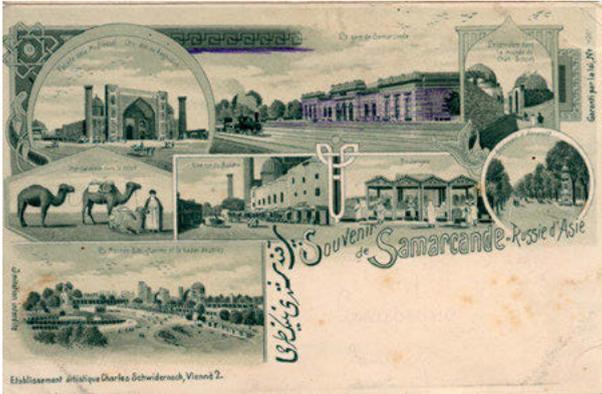


Figure 8.3: “Souvenir from Samarkand”. Postcard published by S. Schwidernoch, Vienna. Author’s property.

The variety of cards showing a particular area directly depended not only on the flow of travellers but also on how interested the Russian Empire’s entire population was in the region. According to Golender, there are about 3,000 varieties of pre-revolutionary postcards of Turkestan.⁶ Compare this figure with the modern estimate of about 11,000 varieties of postcards of St Petersburg (proper, without environs) printed prior to 1917 and about 1,200 varieties for provincial cities like Tula and Astrakhan. For each of the largest Turkestanian cities – Samarkand, Bukhara, Khorezm, Tashkent, Khiva and Merv – that number is much smaller, unlikely to exceed 400 varieties, most of which were printed locally.

Local postcard publishers predominantly targeted permanent residents or tourists who wanted to send local views to their relatives or take them home as a souvenir. Some of the publishers were owners of retail stores in the cities of Turkestan, such as book and stationery stores (“Bukinist” in Kokand (Figure 8.4), A. N. Mishina’s store in Novyi Margelan/Skobelev, “Znanie” in Samarkand (Figure 8.5)) or pharmacies (E. A. Vil’de’s in Kokand, S. A. Gordon’s in Novyi Margelan/Skobelev (Figure 8.6)). In other cases, postcards were personally published by the photographers who authored the pictures (Voishitskii with no city attribution, N. Litvintsev and V. Lentovskii in Samarkand (Figure 8.7), G. A. Pankratiev in Samarkand, Vvedenskii in Samarkand (Figure 8.8), A. A. Puzrakov in Termez). B. A. Schneider in Odessa published many postcards of the five hundredth series (as listed on them) under the common title “Views of Turkestan” (Figure 8.9).

⁶ Golender 2002: 18.

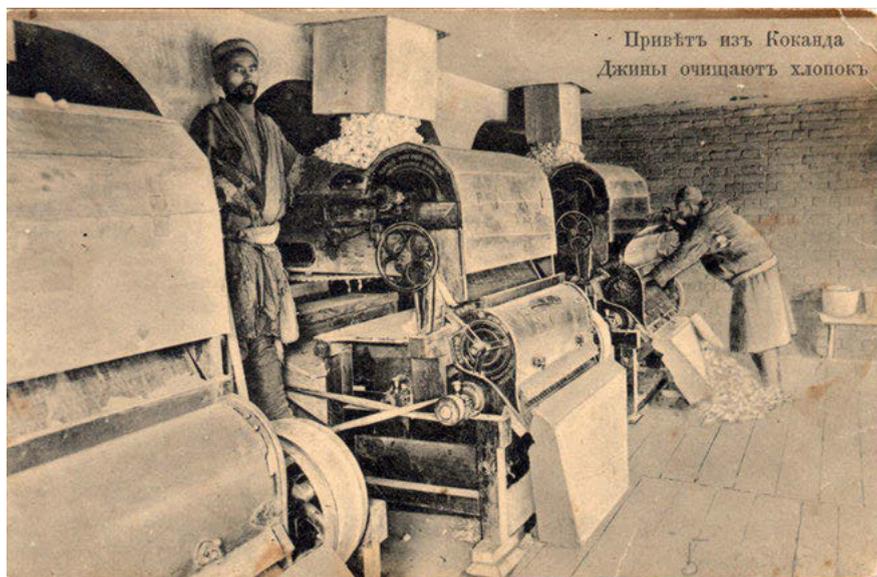


Figure 8.4: “Greetings from Kokand. Ginning machines cleaning cotton”. Postcard published by the store Bukinist in Kokand. Author’s property.



Figure 8.5: “Poliakov. Ulugh Beg’s observatory”. Postcard published by the store ‘Znanie’ in Samarkand. Author’s property.



Figure 8.6: “Skobelev. Women’s gymnasium”. Postcard published by S. A. Gordon’s pharmacy in Skobelev. Author’s property.



Figure 8.7: “Samarkand. Women’s gymnasium”. Postcard published by photographers N. Litvintsev and V. Lentovskii, Samarkand. Author’s property.

Other publishers of postcards of Turkestan

Metropolitan publishers (and their wide audience) also showed an interest in Turkestan. However, this was only true for specific companies that either specialised in the publication of view cards or had a scholarly approach to them. In any event, postcards by these publishers could not compete in numbers with those produced by Turkestanian firms. The further away a region was from the



Figure 8.8: “Samarkand. On the right of the Shir Dor mosque”. Postcard published by Vvedenskii’s photography parlour. Author’s property.



Figure 8.9: “Views of Turkestan. In the sands of Kyzylkum in the Perovskii district”. Postcard published by B. A. Schnaider, Odessa. Author’s property.

two imperial capitals, the more difficult it was for metropolitan publishers to obtain original material for postcards.

One metropolitan publisher specialising in view postcards was the photo print shop Scherer, Nabholz and Co. (in Russian: *Sherer, Nabgolts & Co.*). The firm actively advertised its services in local periodicals, which allowed it to get orders from different regions, including Turkestan. These postcards have the mark of the photo print shop on them, with or without reference to the publisher. Since the firm's archive was not preserved, we cannot find out how exactly each of the orders was fulfilled – whether the publisher used existing photos by local photographers or hired a photographer to take pictures of places of interest. Unfortunately, the names of the photographers who collaborated with Scherer, Nabholz and Co. are unknown (Figures 8.10 and 8.11).

The Partnership for Retail of Printed Goods at Railway Stations “Contract Printing Agency” (*Kontragentstvo pechaty*) was established in April 1907. This joint enterprise united three postcard publishers – A. S. Suvorin (1834–1912), I. D. Sytin (1851–1934) and D. P. Efimov (1866–1930). In April 1911 the company was reorganised as a trust partnership under the firm “A. S. Suvorin and Co.’s Contract Agency” (*Kontragentstvo A. S. Suvorina i K^o*). The company kept this name even after Suvorin’s death in August 1912. Efimov, who was responsible for

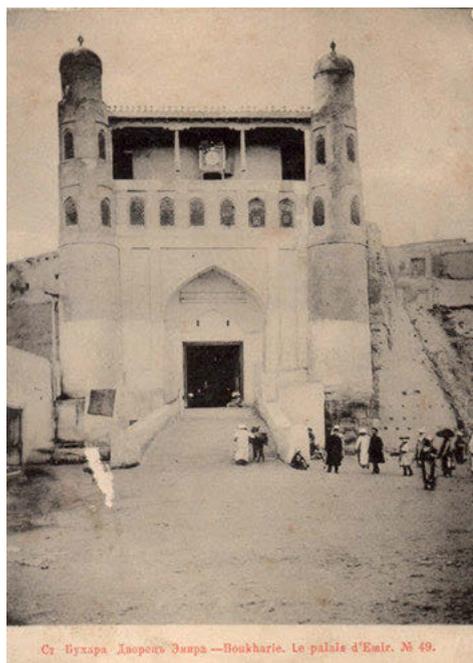


Figure 8.10: “Old Bukhara. The emir’s palace”. Postcard published by the photo print shop Scherer, Nabholz and Co., Moscow. Author’s property.

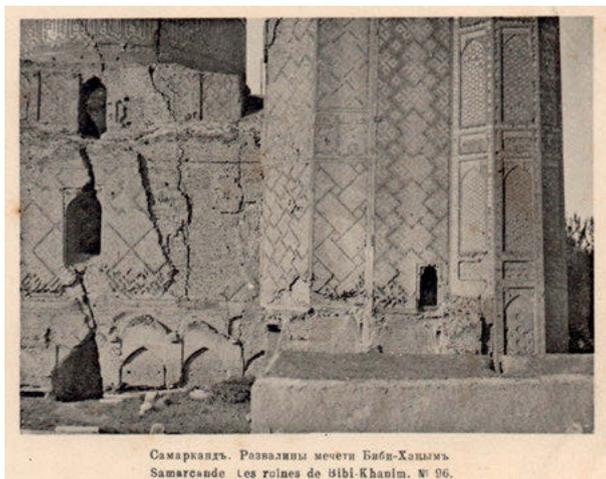


Figure 8.11: “Samarkand. Ruins of the Bibi-Khanym mosque”. Postcard published by the photo print shop Scherer, Nabholz and Co., Moscow. Author’s property.

postcard publishing, almost immediately turned his attention to Turkestan.⁷ The partnership had the right to put kiosks on some of the empire’s railways, so apparently the decision to publish Turkestan postcards was associated with the opening of new points of retail for printed goods in Central Asia (Figures 8.12 and 8.13).

The Contract Printing Agency’s postcards, sold in railway station kiosks, were collectible items. One of their collectors was F. F. Fiedler (1859–1917), a well-known specialist in German philology, teacher of German language and literature, and friend of the poet A. A. Blok (1880–1921). Fiedler travelled to the south of Russia together with the writer D. N. Mamin-Sibiriak (1852–1912), who recalled how Fiedler “rushed out to the platform, looked for a newspaper kiosk and began frantically picking out postcards [...]. He was obsessed with collecting, and he had in his St Petersburg archive thousands of postcards that he brought from various journeys. He [often] didn’t hear the bell [announcing the departure of the train], so I had to fetch him on the platform and drag him into the carriage.”⁸

The photographs on the postcards by the Contract Printing Agency were taken by the now forgotten photographer Dmitrii Ivanovich Ermakov (1845/1846–1916), who took business trips around the entire Russian Empire. Unfortunately, his

⁷ Khilkovskii 2009: 15–16.

⁸ Mamin-Sibiriak 1909: 198–199. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine or the translator of this article’s.



Figure 8.12: “Samarkand. Yagach Bazaar and Tamerlane’s Palace”. Postcard published by the Contract Printing Agency partnership, Moscow. Author’s property.



Figure 8.13: “Turkestan. Entrance to the city”. Postcard published by A. S. Suvorin and Co.’s Contract Agency, Moscow. Author’s property.



Figure 8.14: “Views of Turkestan. Samarkand. Ancient mosque”. Postcard published by the Granberg joint Stock Company, Stockholm. Author’s property.

pictures on the postcards of that edition were not signed with his name since he transferred his copyright to the agency under a contract.⁹

It should be emphasised that the St Petersburg and Moscow publishers of postcards of Turkestan often targeted not only the Turkestanian postcard market but also metropolitan customers. While metropolitan publishers had well-functioning points of retail in the provinces of Russia, they also kept a number of copies of their products to distribute in the capitals. Those copies were designed for a demanding audience, and they are distinguished by high-quality photographs and print – enough to allow considerable enlargement.

The foreign postcard publishers active in the Russian market were also interested in Turkestan. One of the largest Western European publishers specialising in postcards was the Stockholm-based joint stock company Granberg, which published several series of postcards with views of Turkestan from black-and-white photographs. Many of these photos were deliberately hand-coloured by the company’s artists in order to attract customer attention and make up for the lack of postcards based on original colour photographs of Turkestan (Figure 8.14). For a Europe-based publishing house, it was even more difficult to obtain suitable pictures than for any firm based in Moscow or St Petersburg. For this reason, Granberg often used the photographs it had available – taken in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

⁹ Khilkovskii 2009: 17.

Imagery of Turkestan postcards

The imagery of the illustrations on postcards of Turkestan is of particular interest to my research. In general, these scenes were not very different from those found on postcards of other Russian cities – major tourist attractions, administrative buildings, educational institutions, public places and street landscapes (Figures 8.15 and 8.16). However, Turkestan was one of the areas of the empire where local culture, traditions and lifestyle differed sharply



Figure 8.15: “Samarkand. Mausoleum above the tomb of Holy Khoja (Khwaja) Daniyar”. Postcard published by Ekkel and Kalakh, Moscow. Author’s property.



Figure 8.16: “Transcaspia, Ashkhabad. Kuropatkinskii Avenue”. Postcard published by F. I. Sorokin’s store and printed by the Granberg Joint Stock Company, Stockholm. Author’s property.



Figure 8.17: “Native boy with a dog”.
Postcard published by A. Kirsner. Author’s property.

from what was typical in the capitals. Therefore, a strong ethnographic accent accompanies the illustrated postcards of Turkestan. Various character “types”, reflecting the indigenous ethnicities of Turkestan, had something in common with the “Russian types” often found on postcards. However, the Turkestanian characters were depicted in more detail. Their “ethnic” facial features and clothing were deliberately emphasised, and the depicted ethnicity’s traditional items were often in the shot (Figures 8.17 and 8.18). The specifics of Turkestanian everyday life (Figures 8.19 and 8.20) also received significant attention. The editions of cards by local publishers are characterised by highly presentable “postcard” views, which look as if they aimed to confirm that the recently annexed lands were safe and to make Turkestan more attractive to tourists. Meanwhile, postcards published in the capitals were most often based on ethnographic sketches.

The biggest challenge for postcard photography was the Sharia ban on portraying living people. Unfortunately, we cannot evaluate that problem based on the evidence of its contemporaries; however, it presented an issue for photographers. V. A. Prishchepova, a senior researcher at the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (the *Kunstkamera*), suggests that it was “local prostitutes who acted as models demonstrating clothes, headdresses, jewellery,



Figure 8.18: “Merv. Turkmen woman (with a silver headdress)”. Postcard published by A. S. Suvorin and Co.’s Contract Agency, Moscow. Author’s property.

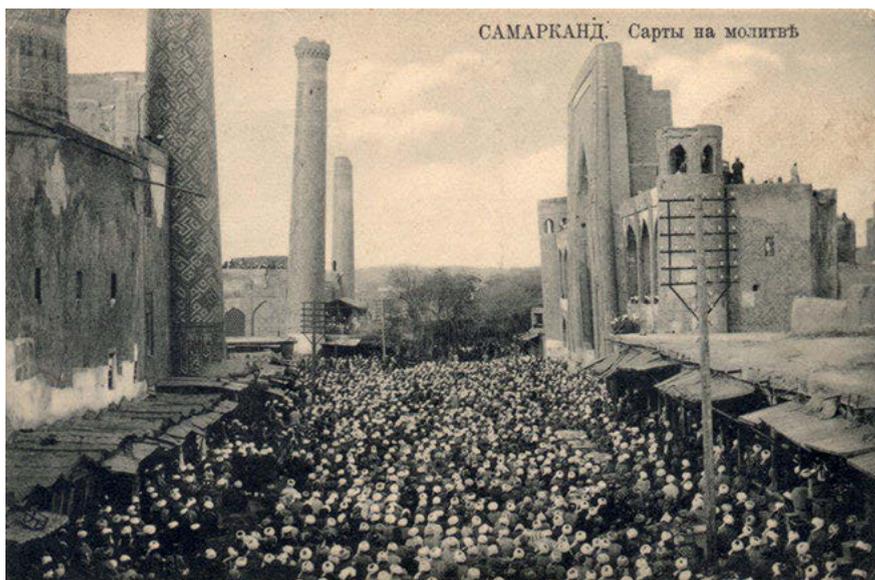


Figure 8.19: “Samarkand. Sarts in prayer”. Postcard published by I. P. Morozov. Author’s property.



Figure 8.20: “Views and types of Central Asia. Rope walking gymnast in the old city”. Postcard published by I. A. Bek-Nazarov, Tashkent. Author’s property.

hairstyles, etc., without covering their faces”.¹⁰ Apparently, the local population’s attitude to photography started to change at the beginning of the twentieth century. Paradoxically, the postcards most often depict quite crowded streets, and there are hardly any landscape views of Turkestan (Figure 8.21).

The photographer Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii (1863–1944) published a little-known piece in the magazine *Fotograf-liubitel’* (Amateur Photographer), issue No. 3, in 1907, which he wrote after his trip to Turkestan in late 1906 to early 1907. The article is valuable for its analysis of the subjects local publishers chose to put on postcards. Indeed, it is especially remarkable because in those years Prokudin-Gorskii published postcards from his own photos and the photos by his firm’s staff photographers.

Today I bought postcards of Samarkand. The salesman told me with some pride that the cards were printed abroad with the phototypic method, as though it is impossible to perform such a reproduction in Russia [...]. I have rarely seen such a bad print job even in lousy print shops [...].¹¹

Indeed, many postcards of Turkestan published locally are characterised by poor print quality. This might be due to several factors: the photographer’s poor skill, image retouching, printing a fragment of a picture unsuitable for

¹⁰ Prishchepova 2011: 205.

¹¹ Prokudin-Gorskii 1907: 67.



Figure 8.21: “Views of Turkestan. Walnuts forests in Ferghana”. Postcard published by B. A. Schnaider, Odessa. Author’s property.

enlargement, the quality of photographic material, technical errors in the photography or flaws in the printing equipment. Note that Prokudin-Gorskii’s words demonstrate his pride in his own print shop in St Petersburg, and is an advertisement of sorts.

He writes further:

Coming back to the postcards published by Mr Samarkand Photographer from his negatives, I must say that for a location like Samarkand, it is a shame to provide themes like “Women’s Gymnasium”, “Kaufman Avenue”, etc., in a postcard series. Even capturing a shopping street in the Asian part of the city, the photographer shot its least interesting fragment with plain, clean Russian-built houses on one side of the street. Was there really nothing more typical of the Asian part?¹²

Prokudin-Gorskii is talking about the “presentable” postcard views of Russified Turkestan. For local publishers, however, that kind of postcard was very important, since it helped make the area attractive to tourists. It seems as if those cards suggested to anyone who looked at them that it was possible to live in Turkestan, that Europeans lived there too and that it was safe to go on holiday there for a week or even a month.

¹² Prokudin-Gorskii 1907: 68.



Figure 8.22: "Samarkand. Types. Sart women". Unknown publisher. Author's property.



Figure 8.23: "Samarkand. Types of Sart women". Unknown publisher. Author's property.

The following remark by Prokudin-Gorskii is especially interesting, as I matched his description with the actual postcards he saw on sale (and perhaps even bought):

Other pictures by this photographer and publisher are either completely vulgar or so technically and artistically ignorant that I feel ashamed for Mr Photographer. For example, the “Sart women” types: several dressed-up girls are sitting with a hookah in front; another postcard depicts two “costumed” ladies, one of whom has a cigarette between her teeth and a glass of wine in her hand. Surprisingly, it is so typical of Sart women!¹³

Obviously Prokudin-Gorskii is being sarcastic, since these pictures could give the viewer a false impression of Sart women’s behaviour (Figures 8.22 and 8.23). He continues:

Beside the types (who are always posing), there are shots of ancient architecture, but the way they are photographed – the angles! [...] No professional photographer living in this area can be forgiven for the blatant lack of taste we encounter in the postcards of Mr Samarkand Photographer.

The technical aspect of the work leaves very, very much to be desired. Large patterns decorating mosque walls and minarets turn into doodles on the postcards published by Mr Photographer, not giving even the slightest idea of the beauty of these truly artistic buildings.¹⁴

Postcards with views of local mosques with an emphasis on wall ornaments were produced by local photographers in small numbers. In this case, the quality of the pictures, often hand-coloured, did truly leave a lot to be desired. However, for some reason, Prokudin-Gorskii’s critical gaze ignored the wonderful postcard shots of mausoleum and palace interiors (Figure 8.24). Moreover, he took no notice of the excellent photographs by other Turkestanian publishers, such as I. N. Glushkov (1873–1916) and Polianin, who were presumably book-sellers (Figure 8.25). According to V. A. Prishchepova,

I. N. Glushkov, who lived among the Turkmens for several years, was one of the collectors who contributed to the Turkmen object and photograph collection of the MAE [Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography]. He was well acquainted with the region’s history and the population’s cultural specifics. For this reason, the images on the postcards are authentic. They were not made in the studio but shot in a real-life setting, so they can be classified as scholarly photography.¹⁵

13 Prokudin-Gorskii 1907: 68.

14 Prokudin-Gorskii 1907: 67–68.

15 Prishchepova 2011: 25.

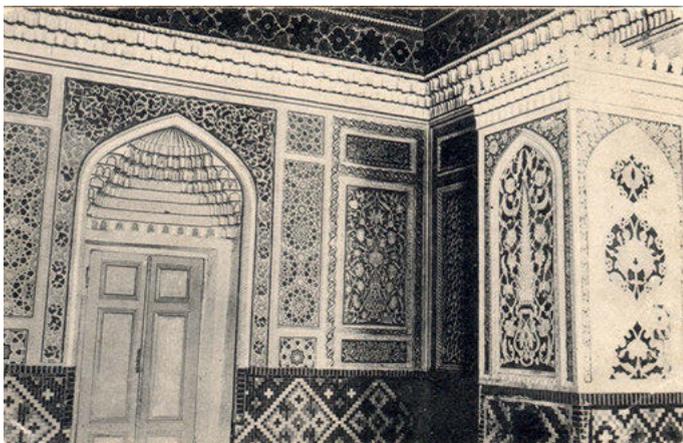


Figure 8.24: “Views of Turkestan. Interior of the palace of the khan of Kokand”. Postcard published by B. A. Schnaider, Odessa. Author’s property.

Turkestan on postcards by the Community of Saint Eugenia and other scholarly publishers

Meanwhile, the scholarly approach to postcard publishing was most often demonstrated by metropolitan publishers. The main reason for this was that some of these firms targeted their printed goods at the educated public. Among these publishers was the Community of Saint Eugenia, which started issuing postcards in 1898. The archive of the Community was almost completely preserved, which cannot be said of the archives of other postcard publishers. Therefore, we will evaluate the purposes and motives of publishers with a scholarly approach based on the example of the Community of Saint Eugenia.

Prokudin-Gorskii travelled on behalf of the Community across the Russian Empire in 1905, tasked with taking colour photographs specifically for postcards. However, neither the preliminary nor the final schedule of his photographic project makes any mention of Central Asia.¹⁶ Most likely, it was impossible at that time to plan a trip with photo stops that would only last from May to September yet span both the European and Asian parts of the empire. As is known from archival documents, the publishing house intended to send the professional photographer on another business trip across other regions of Russia the following year.

¹⁶ TsGIA SPb. F. 202. Op. 2. D. 1163. L. 9–10.



Figure 8.25: “Samarkand. Khoja (Khwaja) Khyzr”. Postcard published by Glushkov and Polianin, Samarkand. Author’s property.

However, at the end of 1905 Prokudin-Gorskii ceased working for the Community because he had not carried out his tasks in full. The Community, in turn, was in a deep financial crisis and could not pay the photographer for his work. Thus Prokudin-Gorskii’s contract with the Community was terminated. The publishing house then went searching for new markets and turned its attention to Turkestan.

In November 1905 F. V. Bogdanov-Berezovskii (1865–1907), head of publications at the Community, wrote to his friend in Tashkent and offered him a position as a manager at the organisation’s soon-to-be-open Tashkent storage facility for publications. In his reply, the resident of Tashkent recommended the owner of his house, I. N. Popov, and promised to find a photographer for the Community. The publishing house had quite remarkable requirements that precisely characterised metropolitan needs:

First of all, we need views of the city and its suburbs most renowned for their population levels, for example, summer villages. Also, [we need] typical beautiful views in general, as well as historic and prominent structures and monuments. We do not need local types for now. We have them printed already.¹⁷

In one of the letters that followed, F. V. Bogdanov-Berezovskii’s correspondent described the situation with photographers in Tashkent in the summer of 1906:

¹⁷ TsGIA SPb. F. 202. Op. 2. D. 1268. L. 9.

Among the photographers in these parts there are two who have local views. In fact, there is just one who has pictures of both Tashkent and the suburbs. The other has rather poor [...] [pictures] in this regard. I asked my acquaintances, [...] officers of the local department [Turkestan District Military Medical Administration]. They are on the road for six to eight months a year; they visit every place in the region and have a lot of pictures. They have agreed to do this.¹⁸

However, during the six months of negotiations with the residents of Turkestan, the depot and store opening stalled. Bogdanov-Berezovskii died in the summer of 1907, failing to recruit either a manager or a photographer to shoot local views. For that reason, the Community abandoned the idea of developing the Turkestan market. Still, in the 1910s, its postcard kiosks could be found at railway stations in Siberia and the Far East.

The Community always sought to publish postcards with exclusive photos that other publishers did not have. It issued postcards for charity, so they were more expensive than those published by private firms and individuals. Many customers did not want to purchase the same view for a higher price, deciding to buy cheaper postcards instead. Therefore, the Community began exploring the Turkestan market. It decided to issue several “test” postcards but could not find any original, exclusive photos that would be suitable. One employee suggested using photos from a book by the traveller Hugues Krafft (1853–1935) and hand-colouring some of them. The person who proposed that idea was presumably the art historian V. Ia. Kurbatov (1878–1957), who helped the Community during that period – once actually saving it from bankruptcy. Krafft’s book, *À travers le Turkestan russe* (Across Russian Turkestan), published in 1902, was then little known in Russia. There were already postcards by other publishers featuring perfectly printed photos from that album, so the Community tried to pick pictures that had not yet been used. In 1906–1907 they published a total of sixteen postcards with Krafft’s photos from the book (Figures 8.26–8.29). The postcards had Krafft’s name on them but did not indicate the original source. The edition was so excellent that many postcards based on hand-coloured photos by Krafft were in perfect accord with the original colour photos by Prokudin-Gorskii. They seemed to continue and complement the Russian photographer’s series, partially sold to benefit the Community as well. It is noteworthy that deltiologists and researchers of colour photography are still misled by Krafft’s postcards, believing that these prints were produced from colour photographs.

When speaking about postcard publishers with a scholarly approach, we also have to mention the Dashkov ethnographic collection – a series published by the Imperial Moscow and Rumiantsev Museum, dedicated to the various nations of the

18 TsGIA SPb. F. 202. Op. 2. D. 1268. L. 304.

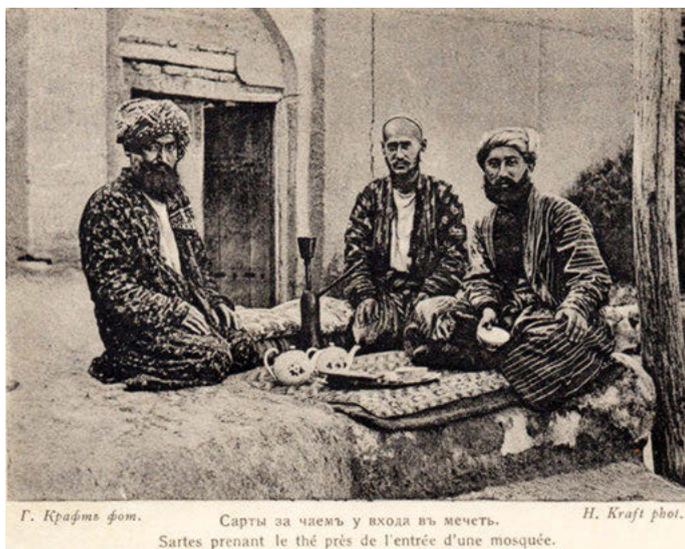


Figure 8.26: H. Krafft. “Sarts over tea at the mosque entrance”. Postcard published by the Community of Saint Eugenia, St Petersburg. Author’s property.

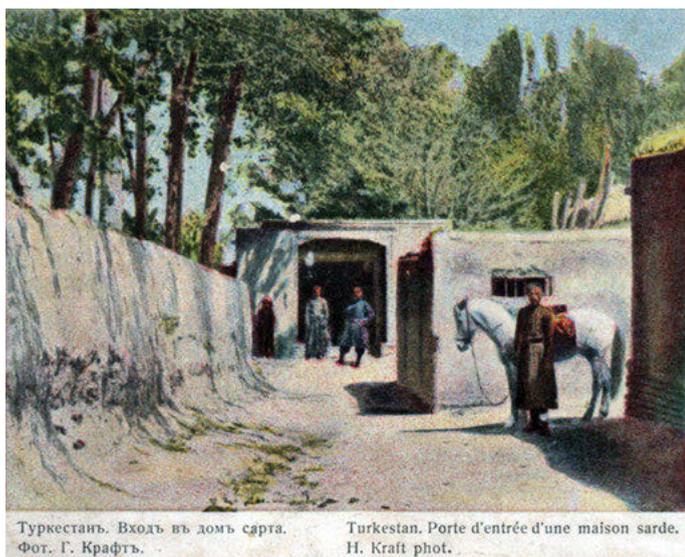


Figure 8.27: H. Krafft. “Turkestan. Entrance to a Sart’s house”. Postcard based on a hand-coloured photograph and published by the Community of Saint Eugenia, St Petersburg. Author’s property.

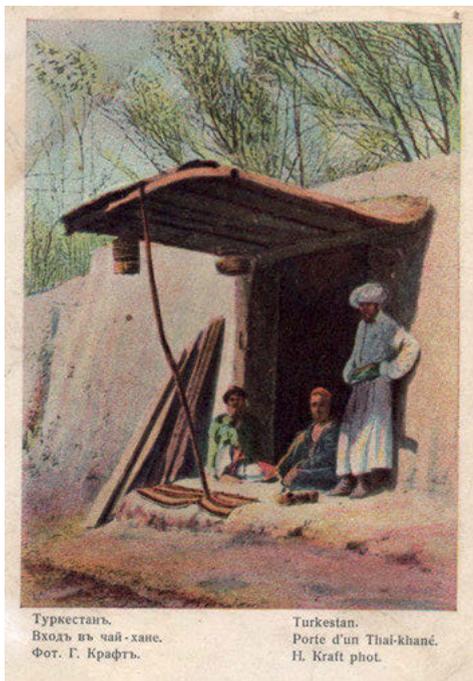


Figure 8.28: H. Krafft. “Turkestan. Teahouse entrance”. Postcard based on a hand-coloured photograph and published by the Community of Saint Eugenia, St Petersburg. Author’s property.

Russian Empire. The drawings on the postcards, performed by an unknown artist, feature exhibits from an ethnographic collection known as the Dashkov Museum. The artist combined these objects with human figures, which sometimes resemble mannequins, against a neutral background. In the early twentieth century, the museum’s staff compiled short characteristics for every nation and printed these texts on the address side of the postcards. To date, the series is not catalogued, and I only know of a single nation of Turkestan included in the series – the Sarts, more specifically a Sart of the “wealthy urban class” (Figure 8.30).

Picture postcards with views of Turkestan

The Russian imperial society’s interest in the culture of Turkestan is reflected in the publication of picture postcards based on the Turkestan series by V. V. Vereshchagin (1842–1904) and paintings by N. N. Karazin (1842–1909). Postcards reproducing V. V. Vereshchagin’s Turkestanian works were popular – most likely due to the artist’s fame, tragic death and large-scale posthumous exhibition. A huge number of postcards published in his memory in 1904–1905 (Figure 8.31) were inspired by that

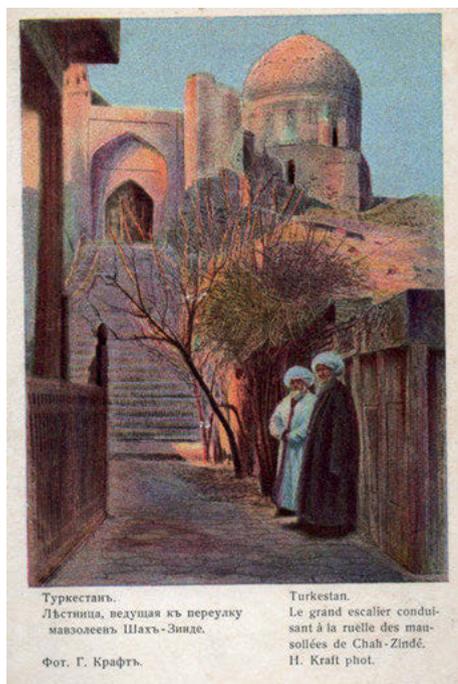


Figure 8.29: H. Krafft. “Turkestan. A staircase leading to the Shah-i Zinda mausoleum lane”. Postcard based on a hand-coloured photograph and published by the Community of Saint Eugenia, St Petersburg. Author’s property.

exhibition. On the contrary, the Turkestanian paintings of N. N. Karazin – who is also renowned for his numerous short stories and novels about Turkestan – were reproduced in small quantities as black-and-white postcards, often even photo postcards (Figure 8.32). As for other artists, their Turkestan-themed works were also reproduced on postcards but were most likely chosen at random as exhibition pieces or examples of their artwork. These are, for example, “Turkmen with a Falcon” by P. F. Zhilin (1886–1942), published by Granberg, and “Oriental City” by G. A. Kosia-kov (1872–1925), published by the Petrograd City Committee (Figure 8.33).

A separate case is the so-called “grusses” (from the German “Gruss aus”) – “greetings” or “regards” from Turkestan. Postcards of this type, mentioned at the beginning of the article, were lithographed from artistic drawings. They were usually printed in German print shops and commissioned by German publishers who attempted to conquer the Russian market in the early days of the postcard business in the Russian Empire. At first, these publishers also produced multi-view postcards based on photographs. However, since they did not possess any photos of Turkestan, almost all Turkestan grusses were printed from drawings. This tradition was adopted by Russian publishers who continued to issue Turkestan grusses as late as the 1910s (Figure 8.34).



Figure 8.30: “Imperial Moscow and Rumiantsev Museum. Dashkov ethnographic collection. Sarts”. Postcard published by the Imperial Moscow and Rumiantsev Museum, Moscow. Author’s property.

Conclusions

My analysis of the images on postcards of Turkestan contradicts Alison Rowley’s findings presented in her book *Open Letters*. According to Rowley, “most landscape postcards were devoid of people. Their absence negated the ethnic diversity of frontier regions and, instead, let Russians imagine peripheral regions as empty spaces, just primed for takeover and economic development.”¹⁹ Further: “It would have been particularly anachronistic to include indigenous people in the photographs since that would have indicated they have some kind of right to be there.”²⁰ However, there are quite a few Turkestan postcards that depict the indigenous people living in the region. Moreover, postcard publishers eagerly photographed bazaars and city streets full of locals. Rowley does not say a word about the vast number of postcards with an ethnographic focus that existed in Turkestan and other corners of the empire, including postcards with views of the historic mausoleums and

¹⁹ Rowley 2013: 45.

²⁰ Rowley 2013: 68.



Figure 8.31: V. V. Vereshchagin. “Uzbek centurion (*yuzbashi*)”. Postcard published by the photo print shop Scherer, Nabholz and Co., Moscow. Author’s property.



Figure 8.32: N. N. Karazin. “Timpanist”. Postcard published by V. Kauffeld, St Petersburg. Author’s property.

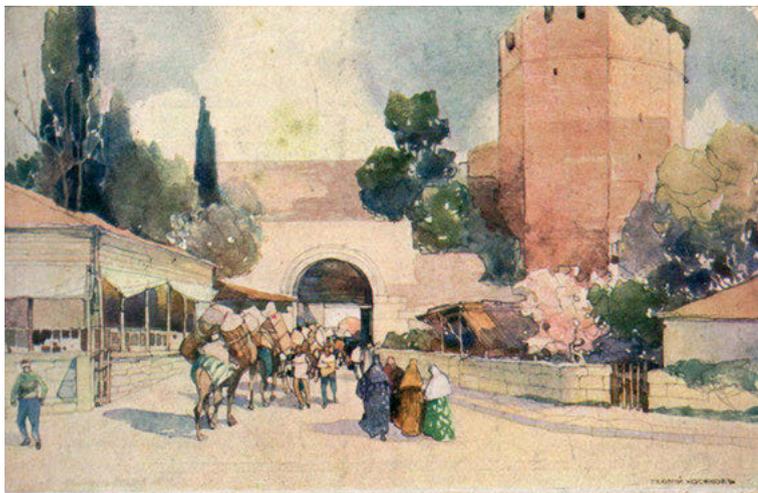


Figure 8.33: G. A. Kosiakov. “Oriental city”. Postcard published by the Petrograd City Committee of the All-Russian Union of Cities, Petrograd. Author’s property.

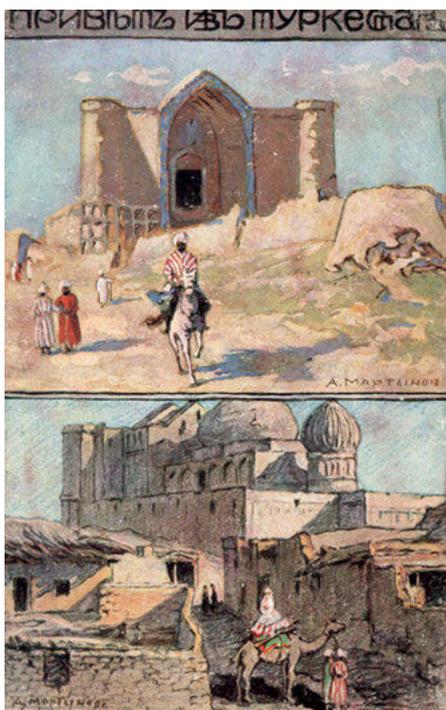


Figure 8.34: A. Martynov. “Greetings from Turkistan”. Postcard published by A. S. Suvorin and Co.’s Contract Agency, Moscow. Author’s property.

mosques of Samarkand and other large cities. Moreover, Rowley argues that publishing pictures of administrative buildings and monuments constructed on behalf of the Russian authorities was a way of imposing imperial culture and history on the controlled territories. I cannot agree with this idea, because, to date, not a single Turkestan postcard has been found that was issued on behalf of the central or local public authorities. All postcards were published by private companies or individuals with different levels of education, goals and approaches towards what images to select and publish. The Turkestan postcard is quite diverse.

Many historians and deltiologists have studied the regional archives of postcards of Turkestan and other remote areas of the Russian Empire. That body of research, however, has not revealed any documents that would testify, however indirectly, that the imperial government supported any local postcard publishers or controlled which local views were to be printed on postcards. My personal inquiry into the archives of imperial public institutions confirmed that the state had not controlled the visual images of its newly annexed territories or peripheral regions that were printed on picture postcards. An analysis of the archive inventories of public institutions has demonstrated that the visual image of the Russian periphery was solely shaped by a few isolated “luxury” publications, which were funded from the state budget and distributed cost-free across government institutions, libraries, and schools.

Clearly, there were postcards published at the government level. However, they were not printed systematically and never featured picture views. Issued by entities subordinate to the Ministry of the Imperial Court or the Ministry of Finance, they were associated with the royal family’s charitable work or advertised government loans. Of course, the state-controlled publishing activities through censorship. However, no single picture postcard was prohibited by the St Petersburg Censorship Commission (since 1906, the St Petersburg Printing Affairs Commission). The only postcards barred from publication were based on caricature art that depicted members of the royal family or scenes of violence. This is confirmed by my inquiry into the registries of censor-monitored publications and books of manuscripts in the Russian State Historical Archive – the documents reflecting the censorship process for each publication of every print shop in St Petersburg or the St Petersburg Governorate, as many publishers chose to print their postcards in the capital’s print shops. Local level inspectorates, subordinate to the city government, supervised print shops, overseeing the distributors of printed goods, including postcard and photograph sellers. However, the inspections mainly aimed to detect forbidden literature, not forbidden images. Poorly staffed and overly burdened, they rarely identified any postcards barred from publication or generally uncensored (a lot of postcards were sold without preliminary

ensorship consideration). Often, it was good faith publishers who discovered counterfeit postcards and notified the police.

If state surveillance over publishing activities could not be properly exercised, we cannot say that early twentieth century postcards with views of Turkestan were an outstanding visual representation of government control over the new territories. Private publishers ordered photographs or selected existing ones out of personal preference, based on what they considered most profitable, fitting, and necessary for printing on postcard blanks. This fact can specifically explain the wide diversity of images of Turkestan on picture postcards: purely ethnographic presentations, amazement at the ancient architecture, as well as pride in the transformation of the ancient lands by “Russian civilization”.

Pre-revolutionary postcards with views of Turkestan cannot be always treated as reliable historical and ethnographic sources on the region. The methods of obtaining pictures, the free interpretation of their colouring and the fact that sketches were often based on fantasy significantly reduces the scholarly value of the postcards. We see an improved Turkestan on them, not a true reflection of the region – it is regarded not by the meticulous eye of a scholar but by the eye of an entrepreneur seeking to present the region in the most favourable light. Meanwhile, most publishers obviously focused on certain highlights that would help them popularise their publications. In comparison to other regions of the empire, increased attention was paid to elements of everyday life; besides, publishers strove to overcome the black-and-white picture through bright colouring and convey the vibrant hues of Turkestan. Due to intense competition, publishers refrained from borrowing each other’s pictures and produced increasingly more new views. Thus, among all illustrated editions, postcards are perhaps the most valuable for research on the pictorial representations of Turkestan throughout the Russian Empire. Besides, in analysing the activities of St Petersburg and Moscow firms in publishing postcards of Turkestan, I discovered that these postcards were not very popular among Central Russian customers. The reason for their publication was the demand of individual local publishers, the search for new markets or the publishers’ scholarly approach to their publication repertoire.

Abbreviations

TsGIA SPb Tsentral’nyi Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga (Central State Historical Archive of St Petersburg)

Archives

TsGIA SPb. F. 202. St Petersburg (Petrograd) Fiduciary Committee of the Sisters of Mercy of the Red Cross. Op. 2. D. 1163. Dossier of the St Petersburg Fiduciary Committee of the Sisters of Mercy of the Red Cross on S. M. Prokudin-Gorsky; D. 1268. Dossier of the St Petersburg Fiduciary Committee of the Sisters of Mercy of the Red Cross on the Tashkent storage depot.

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Bruno De Cordier

9 The Aralsk and Kazalinsk regions in early twentieth-century postcard photography: How does it reflect the social history and modern transformation of the Aral Sea backwater?

Abstract: This chapter examines two series of picture postcards, one on Aralsk and the other on Kazalinsk, published by the Moscow-based agency of Aleksei Suvorin between 1913 and 1916. It discusses the purpose and use of the picture postcards for their publisher and as visual evidence for historians working on Central Asian social history. This article pays particular attention to the social-geographic environment of the Aral Sea littoral where the pictures were taken; the role of the Khiva Steamer Company for the Amu-Darya and the Aral Sea in the development of the town of Aralsk; and the historical function and societal character of the town of Kazalinsk.

Keywords: Russian Orient, Aral Sea, Aralsk, Kazalinsk, visual imagery, Aleksei Suvorin, Khiva Steamer Company

This chapter concisely examines the nature, messages and historical significance of the *Aral'skoe more* (Aral Sea) and Kazalinsk picture postcard series. The images that we examine here primarily show scenes from the site of present-day Aralsk (Aral'sk) and Kazalinsk – two still existing localities near the Aral Sea – in the early twentieth century.¹ The picture postcards in question were published in Moscow between 1913 and 1916, on a format of 13.6 x 8.6 cm (5.35 x 3.4 in), by a specially created “Counterpart Agency” (*Kontragenstvo*) of the publishing company of the influential Russian publicist, critic and self-made publishing and media magnate Aleksei Sergeevich Suvorin (1834–1912). As far as this author could gather through various channels, eight postcards were published in each of the two series.² They are listed and shown throughout. As far as we can tell, these

¹ They are now situated in Kazakhstan's Kyzyl-Orda province.

² The author wishes to thank Anatolii Otlivanchik and Erali Ospanulı for their kind help in completing both series with materials from their digital collections.

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postcards represent the complete series. During the first decade and a half of the twentieth century, the Suvorin's Counterpart Agency published a large number of postcard series with sights and everyday scenes of hundreds of large cities, provincial towns, villages, railway stations and ports all over the tsarist empire.

The localities and populations shown were thus visualised for a wide and diverse audience, which includes the cards' senders, recipients and collectors, all of whom would have had a range of interpretations about why certain locations were shot or perhaps even personal connections with the territories represented. The cards were sold alongside periodicals and other products by Suvorin's publishing company through a wide network of kiosks on street corners, in railway stations and at river and sea piers. A liberal reformist before he turned a vocal monarchist and right-wing conservative, Suvorin championed a Pan-Russian patriotism, through his publishing group, his newspaper *Novoe Vremia* and his involvement in the *Russkoe Sobranie* patriotic movement – which sought to revitalise the Greater Russian national consciousness by focusing on the uniqueness of the Russian Empire's societies and institutions and by narrowing the gap in education between the upper classes and the wider population, or at least its socially upwardly mobile segments.³ The pictures on the cards were taken by photo correspondents and travel photographers commissioned by the firm owned by Martin Scherer and Georg Nabholz. Founded in Moscow in 1863 by two photography entrepreneurs originally from Wiesbaden and Zurich, it specialised in photographic portraits, photo journalism and photo reproduction.⁴

Central Asia's peculiar littoral?

What was the social-geographic space in which the picture cards were taken and of which they show certain aspects? Both Aralsk and Kazalinsk are situated along or close to the Aral Sea. The Aral Sea's surface up to 1960 was 68,000 square kilometres (26,250 square miles), including its numerous islands.⁵ It has

³ Mukhina 2016: 15–16; Hoffmann 2018: 73.

⁴ Besides the specific publication year, the back of each postcard has the following inscription: "Potchtovaia kartochka. Izd. Kontragenstva A. S. Suvorina i K^o – Fototipia Sherer, Nabgolts and K^o" (Postcard. Publ. by the Counterpart Agency A. S. Suvorin and Co. – Phototype by Scherer, Nabholz and Co.). See Figure 9.17 for an example of a back of a card.

⁵ By comparison, the surface area of the Sea of Azov is 39,000 sq. km (15,000 sq. mi) and the White Sea about 90,000 sq. km (34,750 sq. mi). Despite the fact that it has been drying up since 1960 due largely to human intervention, the water levels of the Aral Sea have also naturally fluctuated. See Breckle and Geldieva 2012: 13–36; Sokalskii 1909: 407–415.

long been referred to as a “sea” in Russian, in the regional Turkic languages, in Farsi and Tajik, in many Western and Central European languages and in Arabic. Indeed, it possesses several physical characteristics of a sea, such as varying salinity levels and a specific maritime fauna, yet it differs from “regular” seas in the sense that it has no natural saltwater connections or outlets to larger oceanic systems. This could perhaps qualify it, along with the Caspian Sea, as a *quasi-sea*.⁶ Its existence confirms Central Asia’s landlocked and thoroughly continental character.

At the same time, it has added an often overlooked maritime dimension to the region’s overall functioning, accessibility and social-economic fabric throughout history.⁷ Both Aralsk and Kazalinsk were situated in the *uezd* or district of Kazalinsk in Syr-Darya province, in the Turkestan governor-generalship.⁸ The district of Kazalinsk covered the north-eastern shore and estuaries of the Aral Sea. As we learn from Table 9.1, the district reportedly had over 140,000 inhabitants in 1897. The vast majority, about 96 per cent, were so-called Kirgiz-Kaisak, as the Kazakh population was officially as well as colloquially known at the time.⁹ This apparent ethnic homogeneity is deceptive as, in reality, many tribal and micro-regional identities existed among the indigenous population and towns were ethnically much more diverse than the district averages suggest.

The “internal Other”?

The proximity of the sea somehow generates a peculiar psychology and atmosphere. The images of what was to become Aralsk, especially that of the railway station with its vacant lots in the foreground (Figure 9.1), breathe an atmosphere suggestive of the pioneer towns of the Australian outback or the American prairie in the nineteenth century. All cards of what eventually became Aralsk

⁶ In practice, the line between what is considered a proper sea and what not is quite elastic. The Sea of Azov and the Black Sea, for instance, are considered proper seas, yet they are quasi-landlocked with extremely narrow connections to open oceanic systems and hence slow water exchange cycles. Some two-thirds of the pre-1960 Aral Sea’s water runoff came from the Amu-Darya river, the rest from the Syr-Darya and a dozen or so from minor streams. Zonn et al. 2009: 112; Letolle 2008: 18.

⁷ For a more detailed elaboration of this aspect of the Central Asian region, see De Cordier 2019.

⁸ Demoscope 2013.

⁹ The figures around 1910, closer to the publication years of the images here, were probably different. But since the census of 1897 was the only complete one to be conducted in the tsarist empire, it offers some idea of the social-geographic setting and composition of the region around that time.

Table 9.1: Social-geographic profile of the Kazalinsk district in 1897.¹⁰

Administrative entity*	Formation (year)	Total population	Ethnic-social composition of the population (% of the population)	District centre (and population)	
Kazalinsk district of Syr-Darya province, Turkestan governor-generalship	1868	140,541	Kirgiz-Kaisak** Russians (Greater Russians, Yaik Cossacks, Little Russians and Belarusians)*** Sart, Uzbeks and Tajiks Kazan and Astrakhan Tatars	96.84 2.07 0.62 0.47	Kazalinsk (7,585)

*A district was then known as *uezd* in Russian.

**“Kirgiz-Kaisak” usually referred to populations now known as Kazakhs.

***Greater Russians or *Velikorusskie* and Little Russians or *Malorusskie*, as these groups are called in the census, usually referred to populations now known as Russians proper and (northern) Ukrainians respectively.

(Figures 9.2–9.6 and 9.8), except two, explicitly show the infrastructure and property (piers, warehouses, offices, boats, etc.) of the “Khiva Company”. This reflects two things. First, that the postcards were aimed at an audience consisting of company staff, customers and travellers using the shipping infrastructures and transport services of the company. The cards were a public relations boon for the company in terms of promoting its presence and activities on the Aral Sea.

Second, and more importantly, the company – the full name of which was *Parakhodnoe soobshchenie po Amudar’e i Aral’skomu moriu “Khiva”* (“Khiva” Steamer Company for the Amu-Darya and the Aral Sea) – is displayed as a representative and vector of economic modernity connecting this backwater of Central Asia to the rest of the world, in the first place to the wider imperial Russian space. Founded in 1908, when an influential merchant and ship owner from Nizhnii Novgorod set up a fleet of fishing and transport vessels on the Aral Sea, the company officially acquired a shipping operations monopoly on the Aral Sea in early 1910. The sea served as a shorter, more convenient and safer route to the Khiva khanate and to Petro-Alexandrovsk in the Amu-Darya section.¹¹

¹⁰ Table from De Cordier 2019, based on data from Demoscope 2013.

¹¹ Petro-Alexandrovsk was situated in what is now Turtkul in Uzbekistan’s autonomous region of Karakalpakia. The “Amu-Darya section” (*Amudar’inskii otdel*) of which the town was the administrative centre was a special military-administered zone in the Syr-Darya province

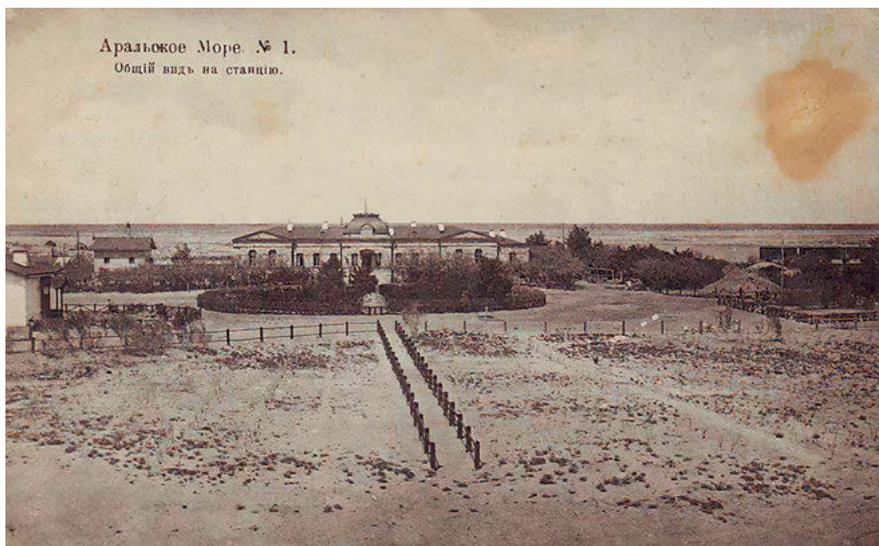


Figure 9.1: "Aral Sea. No. 1. General view of the railway station".



Figure 9.2: "Aral Sea. No. 2. Head office of the 'Khiva Steamers' Company".

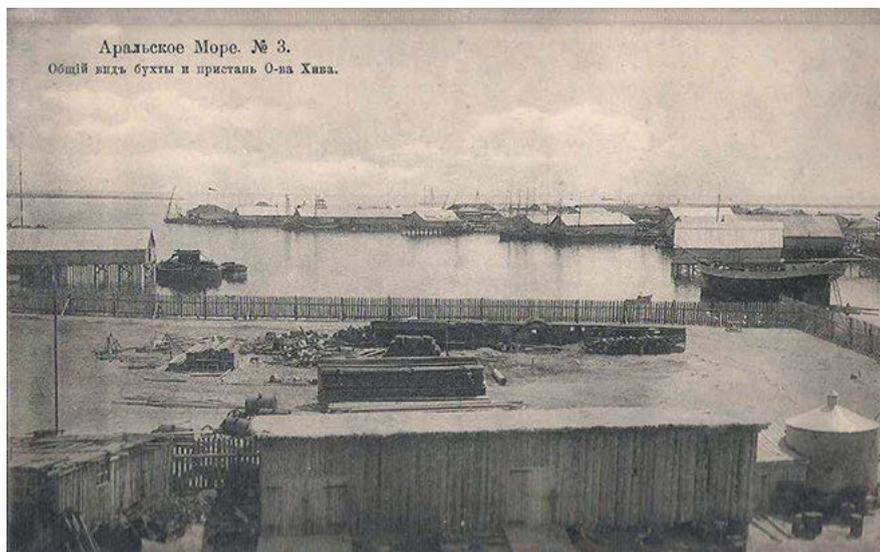


Figure 9.3: "Aral Sea. No. 3. General view of the bay and the pier, 'Khiva' company".

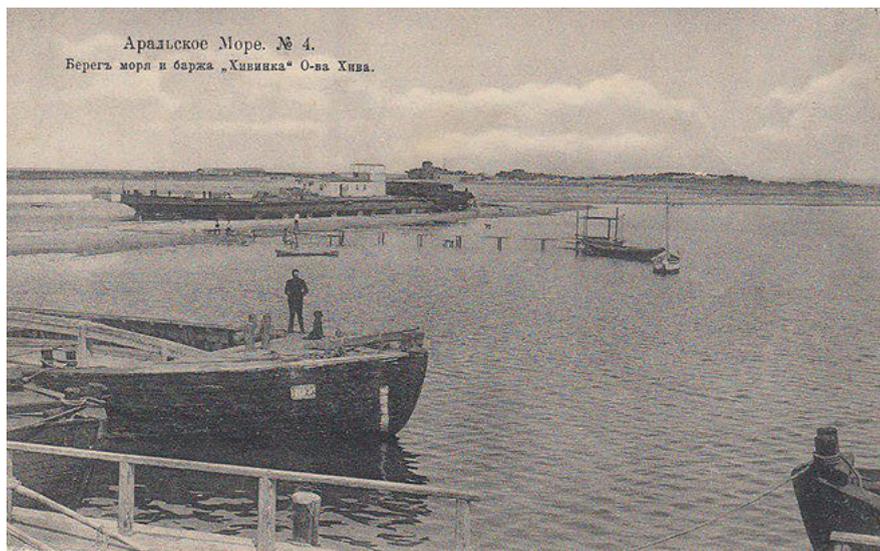


Figure 9.4: "Aral Sea. No. 4. Seashore and 'Khivinka' barge, 'Khiva' company".

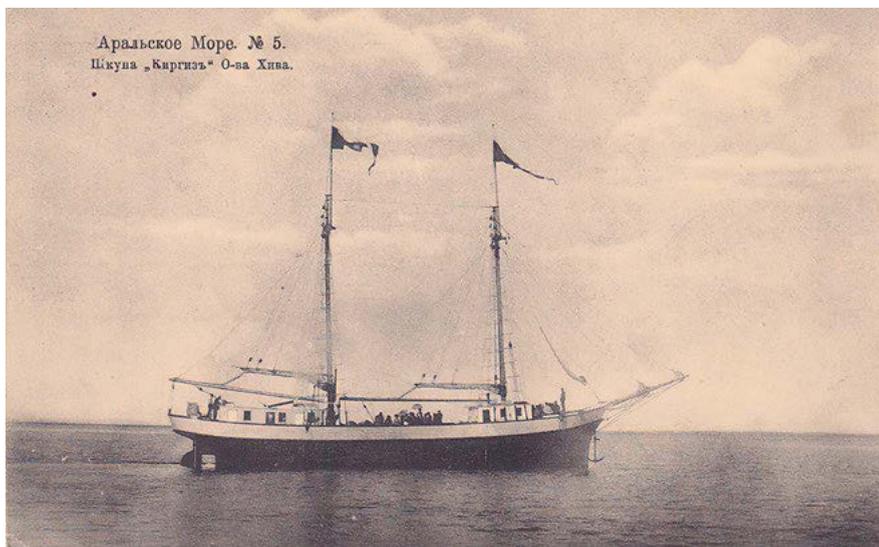


Figure 9.5: “Aral Sea. No. 5. Schooner ‘Kirgiz’, ‘Khiva’ company”.



Figure 9.6: “Aral Sea. No. 6. Tugboat ‘Sartënok’, ‘Khiva’ company (handwritten note: ‘Aral Lake, steamer’, in German)”.

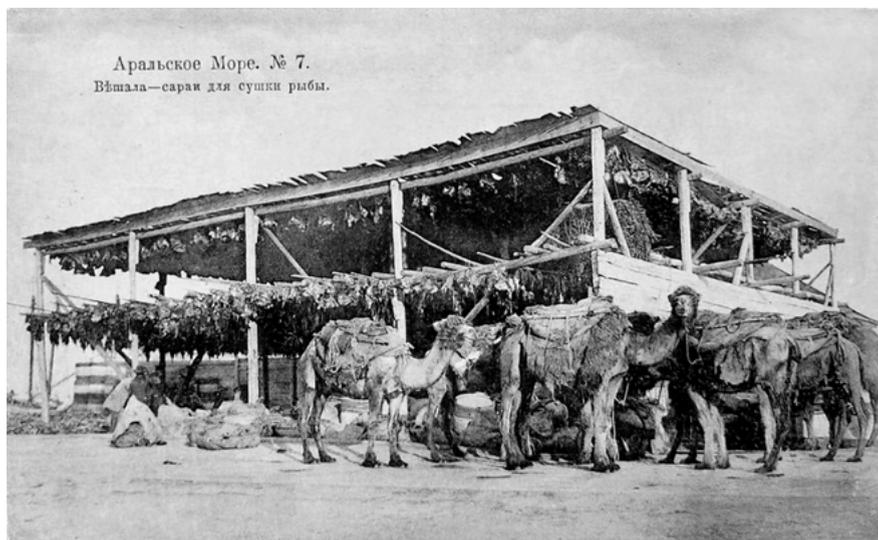


Figure 9.7: "Aral Sea. No. 7. Shed rack for the drying of fish".



Figure 9.8: "Aral Sea. No. 8. Pier, warehouses and head office of the 'Khiva' company".

The company's presence and activities were crucial in the development of the town of Aralsk. In 1884 a hydrometeorological station equipped with two small vessels was set up near a small Kazakh village established in 1817. A different dynamic emerged in 1904 when the Aral Sea Railway Stop (*Zheleznodorozhnaia stantsiia "Aral'skoe more"*) was built on the newly constructed railway between Orenburg and Tashkent, the trajectory of which touched the northern tip of the Aral Sea.¹² A few years later, the area that was to become Aralsk became the main operating base for the Khiva Company. Company ships transported raw cotton, dried fruits, grain, silk, cloth, karakul pelts and leather from Khiva, medick seeds, mulberries and reed baskets from the Karakalpak area and transported fish (e.g. see Figure 9.7), salt and wood in the opposite direction.¹³

They also ensured passenger transport, and thus replaced the military Aral Sea flotilla which operated maritime north-south routes on the sea between 1853 and 1883.¹⁴ The company essentially ran a complementary maritime leg to the new railway. By 1912 it owned thirty-seven ships and a network of piers, warehouses, repair workshops, docks and fuel posts. As its activities and assets expanded and a proper, export-gearred fishing industry took off, so did the railway settlement and its mixed population – consisting of recently immigrated Slavs and Kazakhs from nearby areas who got at least partially and seasonally involved in the new economic activities. This brings us to another observation related to the images under examination: the patterns and dynamics of town development in this corner of Central Asia.

The scenes from Kazalinsk (Figures 9.13–9.15), which primarily show the life and times of the indigenous as well as more recently established Turkic population, leave an impression that Kazalinsk is an “ancient Oriental” town. As we can see in Table 9.1, in 1897 it had some 7,500 inhabitants. By comparison, Chimkent had 11,000 inhabitants in the same year. But unlike Chimkent, which has a much older pedigree going back to the twelfth century, Kazalinsk was founded in 1853 as a Russian and Yaik Cossack frontier garrison near a Kazakh riverside settlement, after the more westwardly-located “Syr-Darya Fort No. 1 of

of the Governorate-General of Turkestan. It was formed in 1873 on the right bank of the Amu-Darya river on former territory of the Khanate of Khiva, and was the home of nearly all of Central Eurasia's Karakalpak population.

12 “Railway Stop ‘Aral Sea’” was the localities’ official name until it became “Aralsk” in 1938.

13 For the trade and export patterns of Khiva and the Karakalpak areas, see Tangirberdenova 2018: 66–67; Becker 2004: 139–140.

14 At its zenith in 1878 the Aral Sea flotilla consisted of six steamers, nine iron barges, ten wooden barges, sixteen rowboats, eight iron ferries and one floating dock. After it was abolished, part of its equipment and assets were transferred to the new Amu-Darya flotilla based at Petro-Alexandrovsk. Lapshin/Mitiukov/ Portseva 2012: 143; Zonn et al. 2009: 25.

the Aral Fortification Line” (*Syrdar’inskii fort No. 1 Aral’skogo ukrepleniia*) near Raim had been abandoned. One and a half decades later, it became the administrative centre of the Kazalinsk district. In that capacity, it was also a district market town and gradually attracted other non-Slavic populations. By 1897 it no longer had a Slavic majority, Kazakhs formed the largest group with nearly 45 per cent of the population, followed by Russians with 34 per cent.

So, paradoxically, what looks, in the images, like an Oriental town – and indeed was in its own peculiar way – was actually the outcome of Central Asia’s integration into the tsarist empire. The town also housed nearly all of the district’s Tajik, Sart and Astrakhan and Kazan Tatar populations, who were often active as traders, civil servants and middlemen between the Russian authorities and the indigenous populations.¹⁵ In the Kazalinsk collection, several cards (see Figures 9.9, 9.11 and 9.12) show “Kirgiz” (that is, as it was written and as Kazakhs were generally described at the time) mausoleum graves located in the Kazalinsk district, or at least said to be situated there.¹⁶ Interestingly, all the individuals photographed at these specific sites, except for the coachman in Figure 9.9, wear a Russian military or civil servant uniform or civilian European clothes. Their body language and poses reflect a degree of curiosity about an unusual sight. The coachman in Figure 9.9, for his part, was likely asked to pose solemnly near the coach in front of the Isali mausoleum to add an indigenous character to the scene. Contrary to the Turkestan governor-generalship, these parts of Central Asia have no visible, older urban centres like Tashkent, Namangan and Kokand, with architectural heritage that appealed to connoisseurs of the exotic and the Oriental.¹⁷ This emphasis on native mausoleum graves, shown in three of the eight postcards in the Kazalinsk series, probably had to compensate for the perceived dearth of “Oriental-Islamic architectural heritage” in this corner of the Central Asian region.

Another striking element in the card series and their scenes is the apparent absence of both indigenous and Russian women. When one takes a close look at the schooner in Figure 9.5, the presence of people wearing wide hats and parasol umbrellas, as was fashionable at the time, suggests European women – probably the spouses or daughters of military officers and civil servants – were among the ship’s passengers. But this is the only image in which women are shown. The complete absence, or, rather, invisibility, of Central Asian women

¹⁵ Demoscope 2013; Pierce 1960: 104.

¹⁶ There are instances of images in other postcard collections where the architectural sights depicted were in reality not situated in the locality indicated on the caption of the card.

¹⁷ For an in-depth examination of how the authorities in the General-Governorate of Turkestan created an official perception and standard of “architectural heritage” in the case of Samarkand, see Gorshenina 2014: 252–261.

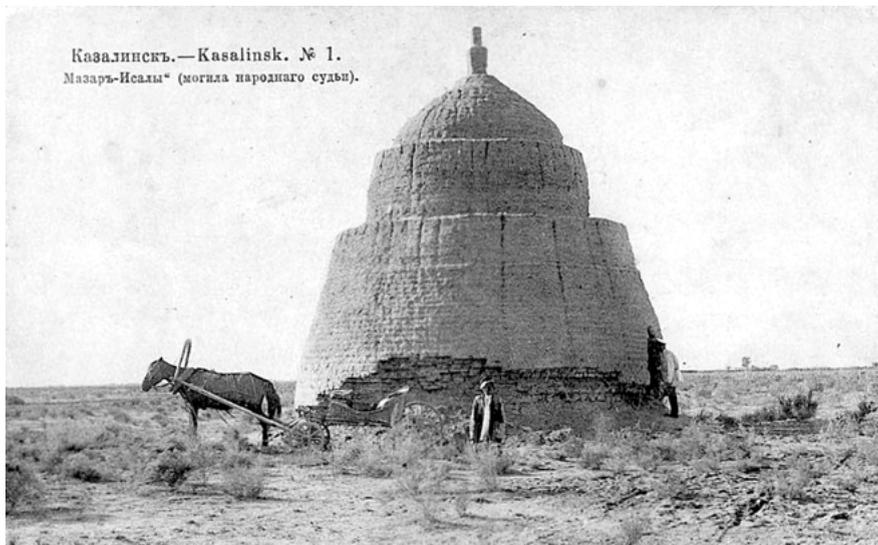


Figure 9.9: “Kazalinsk. No. 1. Isali mausoleum (tomb of a people’s court judge)”.

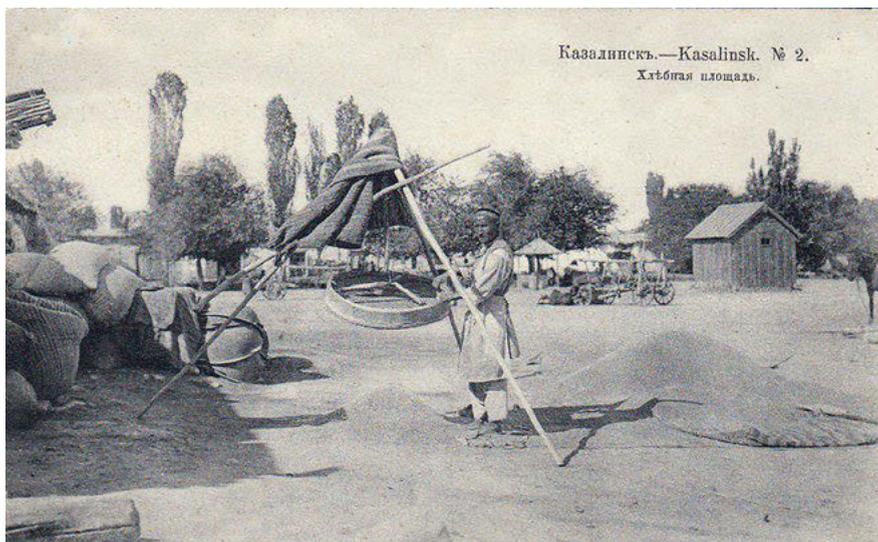


Figure 9.10: “Kazalinsk. No. 2. Bread square”.

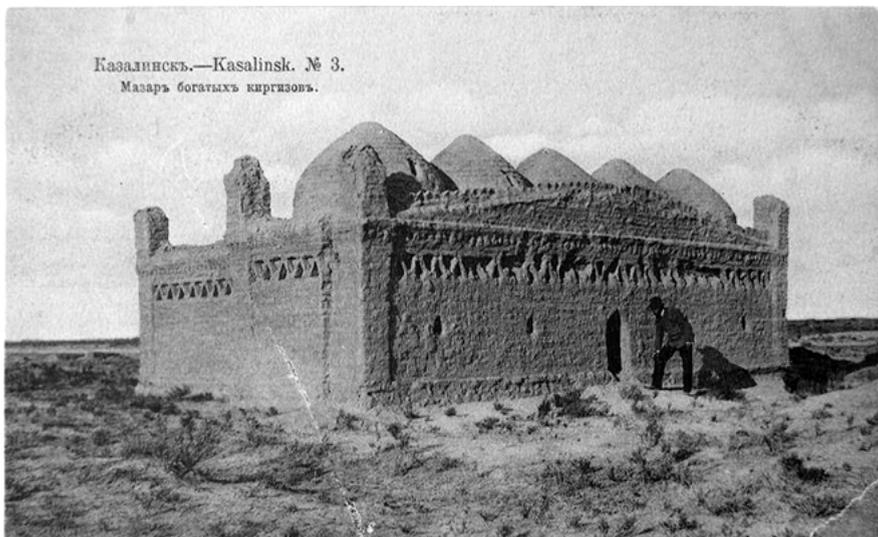


Figure 9.11: “Kazalinsk. No. 3. Mausoleum of a wealthy Kirgiz”.



Figure 9.12: “Kazalinsk. No. 4. General view of Kirgiz mausoleum tombs”.



Figure 9.13: "Kazalinsk. No. 5. Main market".



Figure 9.14: "Kazalinsk. No. 6. General main street view".

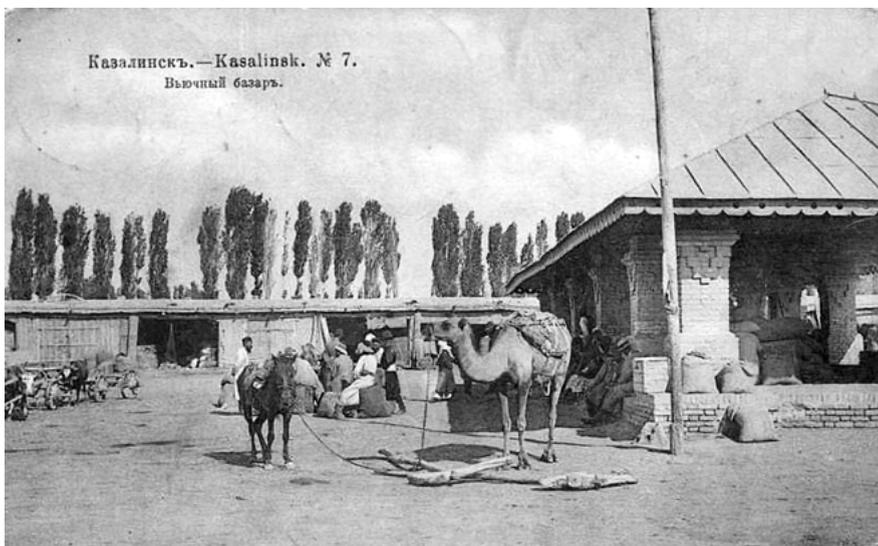


Figure 9.15: “Kazalinsk. No. 7. Carriers’ market”.

is likely the outcome of local cultural reluctance to have them included and exposed in photographic scenes – even though contemporaneous postcard series on other localities in Central Asia feature Kirgiz-Kazakh, Kalmyk, Sart and Tajik women. Whether this exclusion was intended by the makers and publishers or not, the near exclusive presence of men and absence of families in the card scenes leave an impression of this part of the Central Asian region as a backwater and early-stage settler area.

In the Russian Empire, as elsewhere, picture postcards were often used for business purposes and brief business-related correspondence.¹⁸ These functions are relevant to these collections, for neither Aralsk nor Kazalinsk, nor the entire Aral Sea basin for that matter, were coastal leisure areas for the upper classes and the entrepreneurial classes – like the many resort and dacha towns of the time on the Crimean, other Black Sea localities and the Baltic coasts. The Russian military, civil service and merchant elites and sub-elites in Tashkent and Ashkhabad, Central Asia’s administrative-military capitals of the time, and the native upper classes, did not spend holidays on the Aral Sea littoral. Therefore, the users and senders of these postcards were predominantly corporate staff, ranked military personnel on temporary missions or fixed-term assignments, civil servants

¹⁸ Rowley 2013: 31–32.

stationed locally or on short missions from Tashkent, railway staff and Western and Central European travellers and expatriates.¹⁹

All the people on the cards, no matter their ethnic and cultural background or their origins, are anonymous and not mentioned or referred to in the captions. Instead they form components in scenes that show the impacts of human presence and activity in interaction with the local and subregional environment. Most scenes are likely staged to some extent, if only because photographing spontaneous action and movements was technically difficult. This does not mean, however, that the scenes depict completely artificial or fantasised settings. The images on the Kazalinsk cards of the grain sieve at the bread market (Figure 9.10) and the market, mosque and horsemen (Figure 9.16), for example, showed part of life as it was lived at that time. Judging by their dress and posture, the horsemen in Figure 9.10 were probably local nobility or relatively wealthy traders. Here they are brought together in composed “ideal scenes” that appeal to the audience’s imaginations about indigenous life and society in these parts of the empire.



Figure 9.16: “Kazalinsk. No. 8. Market and Khusainov mosque”.

¹⁹ The captions on some of the cards are also provided or transliterated in German, which had the status of an international idiom before 1914 and was also a commonly used language among the Russian and, of course, Baltic German elites.



Figure 9.17: Example of the back of a card (“Aral Sea. No. 6”).

The compositions can be interpreted as an example of oriental exoticism, but they have the purpose of visualising the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional character of the tsarist empire. It is worth recalling how postcards of Sarajevo and Bosnian towns and villages were instrumental in promoting Bosnia and Herzegovina, which in 1878 became a Habsburg protectorate and in 1908 a province, and the multinational empire’s own peculiar Orient.²⁰ In the case of the tsarist empire, however, there was less of a “civilisational discontinuity” than that between Western and Central Europe and their “own” Orient, in the sense that Central Asia’s Turkic population groups were seen as an extension of the Tatar and other Turkic Muslim populations who had been present in the central parts of Russia since the sixteenth century.

Concluding remarks

What is the current relevance of all this? These postcards were not merely a gadget or a collector’s item published in an ideological or political vacuum but reflected notions of territoriality, national consciousness and the perception of

²⁰ For this case, see Feichtinger 2018: 310–312.

and relationship to the “Other”, in this case, the “internal Other”, which is common and characteristic for all sufficiently large and culturally and sociologically diverse polities and societies.²¹ In particular, they fit into Aleksei Suvorin’s mission of (re)invigorating national consciousness. The physical environments and everyday scenes on the postcards form visual evidence of often little-known parts and dimensions of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Central Asia. Do these images and postcards show life as it was, or what the makers, publishers and their audiences wanted to see? It varies. The images somehow feel less like orientalist and folkloristic set-ups than general views of the everyday surroundings in these areas.

They document societies and lifestyles, the imagery of which often leaves the impression that these changed little over the decades if not the centuries, but which were in fact already being heavily affected by modernity. Rather than showing the end of an era, they show the impact of a number of developments that took place in this part of the Central Asian region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As such, they are a useful tool and illustration for the teaching of modern Central Asian history, and trigger curiosity about the historical reality behind the images. Some of the images in this chapter are a testament and witness to the Aral Sea and its significance in history, especially if one remembers what eventually happened to this sea in the second half of the twentieth century.

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²¹ See, for example, Malaurie 2001: 70–85.

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Helena Holzberger

10 Max Penson: The rise of a Soviet photographer from the margins

Abstract: Although Max Penson’s photographs have been presented at numerous exhibitions in recent years, his career has hardly been discussed in the context of the history of photography. Yet he was the only photographer in the interwar Soviet Union to rise to the first rank of photojournalists without ever leaving the Soviet periphery. Using contemporary illustrated press and photo journals published locally and centrally, this article analyses the photographer’s rise from amateur to leading figure of photojournalism in Uzbekistan. The results of the analysis reveal that the cultural upheaval in the first Five-Year Plan was crucial for his career. He adapted his photojournalistic oeuvre to the ideas of the magazine *Sovetskoe Foto*, which in turn promoted his career in the central press. At the same time, Penson’s rise as an all-Soviet photographer demonstrates that the Soviet Union was not a rigid empire but possessed actors with supra-regional agency even on its periphery.

Keywords: photography, photojournalism, Soviet Union, Central Asia, media, cultural revolution

Introduction

Today, Soviet Uzbekistan is directly linked in photographic memory with one name – Maks (Max) Zakharovich Penson (1893–1959). His radiant Uzbeks have become the symbol of the Soviet Orient. At the same time, they served the Soviet narrative as crucial evidence of socialist modernisation on the periphery and the transformation of this space from a “colony” to a “modern society”. The question of whether the Soviet Union was a continuation of the Russian colonial regimes is still a matter of controversy among researchers today. At the turn of the millennium, the application of postcolonial methods increasingly led to the consideration of the Soviet Union as a direct continuation of the colonial regime, as classic imperial power dynamics were identified.¹ More recent

¹ Northrop 2004; Michaels 2003.

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studies are increasingly breaking with this conclusion. Researchers devoted to the local level have been able to establish the considerable agency of local actors and show that Central Asia's transformation into part of the Soviet Union is much more complex than a regime conceived in colonial terms.² This essay is a contribution to the still unanswered question about the essence of the imperial structures of early Soviet Central Asia.

It is too easy for today's viewers to be tempted to consider these photographs as mere propaganda. Yet their success in exhibitions in recent years alone shows that their appeal is undiminished.³ The art theorist John Tagg explained that representations in ideological systems also possess an inherent truth. Instead of viewing ideological image-making as the production of a "false consciousness" whose system needs to be revealed, Tagg argues, the dominant ideology should be viewed as the lens through which representations emerge, explaining the contradiction between the existing social order and its projected image.⁴ Max Penson's photographs from Central Asia between 1927 and 1941, which have already been addressed by a number of scholars, can also be understood from this perspective.

Sergei Abashin uses Penson's example to show that the visual representation of Soviet Uzbekistan cannot be grasped within Edward Said's theory of Orientalism. Instead, he argues, the division into "us" and "them" is rooted in a contradictory and complex ideological structure, composed of remnants of traditional life, the construction of national cultures and the superstructure of a Soviet society.⁵ In this way, he does more justice to his complexity than the art historian Alexander Borovskii, who locates Penson solely in totalitarianism, arguing his point with incomprehensible cross-references and (photo-)historical misconceptions.⁶ Il'dar Galeev, an expert on Central Asian art who runs a gallery in Moscow, is more reflective. He argues that Penson perceived the ideological context as an aesthetic challenge and adapted his work to it.⁷

All the studies on Penson shed light on his oeuvre in the 1930s. Their authors focus on a time when Penson was already an established Soviet photo-journalist whose photographs of local Soviet life were received far beyond the

2 Khalid 2015; Abashin 2015.

3 Over the past twenty years, Max Penson has gained recognition throughout Europe with major solo exhibitions, each of which has been accompanied by more or less extensive catalogues. The most significant of these are Khodzhaeva 2006; Galeev/Penson 2011; Billeter 1996.

4 Tagg 1993: 190.

5 Abashin 2015: 620–623.

6 Borovsky 1998: 80–84.

7 Galeev 2011: 10–11.

borders of Uzbekistan. But how did Penson reach this prominent position? Why did he, of all photographers, manage to become the visual chronicler of Uzbekistan, even though two other photographers defined and shaped Uzbek photojournalism in the first year of its existence?

Considering that he was a Jewish refugee from the Pale of Settlement who came to Central Asia during the First World War, he was more than 3,000 km away from Moscow as well as from all contacts with the Soviet media scene. This article aims to fill this gap and to demonstrate that it was above all the cultural upheaval in the first Five-Year Plan (1928–1932) that helped him to make his breakthrough first in Uzbekistan and finally in Moscow. His characteristic oeuvre was developed during this period, when he found his style of photographing Soviet Uzbeks while reproducing ethnographic pictorial traditions in the early years of his activity. Since the historiography around the beginning of Penson's career is reproduced repetitively on the basis of the same material that has not been subjected to source criticism, this essay will challenge it directly using the material of the regional and all-Soviet press. At the same time, Penson's biography encourages us to reconsider the characteristics of the category "empire" in relation to the early Soviet Union, since his rise to prominence illustrates the circulation of knowledge and ideas between centre and periphery.

The emergence of modern photojournalism in Uzbekistan

Tashkent – Moscow – Tashkent: Aleksandr Kapustianskii and Georgii Zel'manovich

In Central Asia the revolutionary years led to an enormous break in public life. Until the First World War, Tashkent, the capital of the Turkestan governor-generalship, still offered most of the amenities of a major European city. This was evident in the numerous photo studios that appeared there in the years around 1900.⁸ A local illustrated newspaper never existed in the Turkestan governor-generalship, but some local photo correspondents supplied large newspaper offices in St Petersburg and Moscow with photographs. Modern photojournalism is primarily a phenomenon of the 1920s throughout Europe, and Soviet revolutionaries soon recognised the impact of photographic pictures. As early as 1917,

⁸ Golender 2009.

photographers documented the revolutionary events on the streets of Petrograd, creating visual documents of the beginning of a new era.⁹ Even though it was not possible to print illustrated magazines in the former tsarist empire until 1924, the new rulers created structures to guide the development of photography. The Bolsheviks founded the first photo committees as early as 1918, which, in addition to their own photographic activities, also collected negatives for a revolutionary photo archive. The first post-revolutionary institutionalisation of photography took place at their eighth Congress, in May 1919. There the delegates approved a resolution on political propaganda and cultural education in villages, in which they officially defined photography as a revolutionary practice for the first time. For example, readings and lectures were always to be accompanied by films, image presentations or musical interludes, in order to attract a larger number of participants.¹⁰ However, photography could only reach its full impact through the mass press, so the development of illustrated newspapers and magazines was high on the revolutionary agenda.¹¹

In Uzbekistan, two photographers in particular were responsible for the emergence of modern press photography: Georgii Anatol'evich Zel'manovich¹² and Aleksandr Borisovich Kapustianskii. Unusually, they were both born and raised in Tashkent but came to Moscow in the wake of the revolution and were trained in press photography there. With this knowledge, they returned to Tashkent a few years later and founded local photojournalism.

Georgii Zel'manovich (1906–1984) is one of the most important photojournalists of the Soviet Union. Yet the details of his early biography in the literature are inconsistent and inaccurate.¹³ It is likely that his family moved from Tashkent to Moscow in 1921, where he trained as a press photographer before he eventually returned to Tashkent in 1926. In 1928 he joined the army service and then settled in Moscow, where he started working for major newspapers. In contrast, nothing is recorded on Alexander Kapustianskii's biography in the literature – as he only published in the 1920s and only in Uzbekistan – apart from his activity as a correspondent during the Second World War. However, this

⁹ On photography during the revolution and first years of Soviet power, see Volkov-Lannit 1980.

¹⁰ Boltianskii 1939: 90.

¹¹ For a detailed analysis of the genesis of Soviet photography that uses the example of *Pravda* and which is both quantitative in nature and offers a visual examination, see Sartorti 1981.

¹² In the 1930s Zel'manovich abandoned the suffix of his name and worked under Zel'ma. The article uses its original name, which was the photographer's at the time of the study period.

¹³ See for example the different versions of his biography in Stigneev 2005: 311–312; Shneer 2011: 38.

was not sufficient for him to enter the historiography on Soviet photography. Kapustianskii's descendants did not linger in the collective memory either, unlike Penson and Zel'manovich's, who were film and cultural professionals.

His father, Boris Khaimovich Kapustianskii, ran one of the numerous photo studios in Tashkent during the time of the Turkestan governor-generalship. However, soon after the revolution he moved to Moscow and started working for the first Soviet photo agency, Russ-Foto.¹⁴ In Moscow the profession of photojournalism was in great demand after the second third of the 1920s, when the illustrated press re-emerged. The skill requirements of these newly created jobs and the mobility of young people in the early Soviet Union formed a close network around individuals in this new cultural sphere in the Soviet capital. Historian David Shneer explored the best-known of these networks, which formed around Mikhail Kol'tsov and the *Ogonëk* journal and publishing house.¹⁵ Shneer was able to show that young Jewish photographers, most of whom came from poor backgrounds in the Pale of Settlement, became the foundation pillars of Soviet photojournalism. He interprets being Jewish as a link in the network around *Ogonëk*, which, in addition to the illustrated magazine of the same name, also published the specialised journal *Sovetskoe Foto*.

However, another network emerged in Moscow, namely around Kapustianskii and the Russ-Foto agency. Although this group was also Jewish, they were united primarily by their former life in Central Asia. The portrait photographer Abram Shterenberg, who later became famous, worked in Kapustianskii's Tashkent studio between 1917 and 1920 and followed him to the Moscow agency.¹⁶ While there, Shterenberg in turn trained Boris Kapustianskii's son, Aleksandr, as well as the young photographer Georgii Zel'manovich, also from Tashkent.¹⁷ Both of them soon returned to Tashkent and used their new knowledge to establish local photojournalism. Aleksandr Kapustianskii's return must have been before 1926, since by that time he was already active in the Uzbek illustrated press. Zel'manovich's return can be distinctly dated to the year 1926 on the basis of an exchange of letters and was not, as is often erroneously stated in the literature, in 1924.¹⁸ In Tashkent he worked as a picture agent for the Moscow picture agency TASS and also began to take photographs for the local press.

The first and only illustrated magazine in Uzbekistan in the 1920s was called *Sem' Dnei* (Seven Days) and was produced in the publishing house of *Pravda*

¹⁴ GARF. F. R-5283. Op. 1. D. 97. L. 65.

¹⁵ Shneer 2011: 23–30.

¹⁶ GARF. F. R-5283. Op. 1. D. 71. L. 225.

¹⁷ Stigneev 2016: 16.

¹⁸ GARF. F. R-5283. Op. 1. D. 101. L. 64.

Vostoka. The eastern offshoot of the major Soviet newspaper also illustrated its articles with photographic images from 1926, which were taken by the same photographers as those in *Sem' Dnei*. In its typical format, the illustrated magazine printed, among other things, entertainment, published literary works, interesting facts from Soviet science and full-page photographs not related to the articles.

Thus the same transition around dealing with images and media took place in the Uzbek *Sem' Dnei* as in Western societies. After the First World War, illustrated magazines blossomed everywhere. They focused on photographic images, which they reproduced in new formats and excellent quality. They popularised the use of images so that the general public could view, discuss and display the photographs they contained.¹⁹ The existence of *Sem' Dnei* proves that a new visual culture had also begun in Soviet Uzbekistan in the 1920s, and that the country thus became part of a global media modernity. It was not only the first illustrated magazine in Central Asia that corresponded to this ideal but also the first illustrated medium of (the former) Turkestan.

The two to three full-page photographs that *Sem' Dnei* published in each issue were so-called photo-etudes – meaning photo studies. With this classification, these pictures did not have to meet the strict requirements of press coverage formulated by Leonid Mezhericher, the head of the TASS photo department and later editor of the important journal *Sovetskoe Foto*. According to these, photographs in the press always had to be up to date, authentic and politically relevant, taken in a clear, not overly aestheticised way and with clearly recognisable iconography.²⁰ For Mezhericher, photographic images reproduced in the Soviet press always had to serve socialist agitation. His statements reflect not only the positively connoted notion of propaganda of the time but also how ideology, as Tagg explains, was naturalised through representation.

Deviating from this, the declaration of a *photographic etude* offered an opportunity to continue photographing long-established motifs from Central Asia. In 1927, the first year of its publication, *Sem' Dnei* mostly published two iconographies. The first developed within the context of the construction of a socialist society. The motifs in this category referred either to new organisations or to the modernisation of society through mechanisation, education and the development of modern infrastructures. Images of the new organisations showed children and youth meetings, schools, hospitals, and so forth. But they mostly portrayed either natives or Europeans in these early years. Factories and people on workbenches visualised new production processes and elevated worker portraits to a motif

¹⁹ Holzer 2019: 5–17.

²⁰ Mezhericher 1928: 296–305.

worthy of depiction. Infrastructures, however, were particularly popular. These photographs often showed the modernisation of cities through the development of a modern transportation network or the radio, which also suggested a connection to Moscow.

In addition to typifying “Soviet people”, these photographers continued to reproduce an “ethnographic gaze” that focused on what was foreign in the other culture. In doing so, most of the photographs showed the native population working in traditional processes of production. Since the invention of photography, local handicrafts had been an ever-present topos in the representation of foreign cultures and became an essential element of ethnographic knowledge production.²¹ Although the motifs have a “colonial” tradition, it was new to represent them in a popular, modern medium as full-page illustrations. They found new audiences and at the same time a new appreciation, as they are depicted in the same medium as the Soviet workers in factories.

At that time, Aleksandr Kapustianskii and Georgii Zel’manovich photographed almost exclusively for the Uzbek press. The two young photographers experienced the Soviet upswing in Moscow and the new modern culture that accompanied it, and they identified themselves as part of it. Both photographers therefore devoted their photographic work primarily to the socialist construction of the country, so that images such as “Kotoryi Chas?” by Zel’manovich (Figure 10.1) or “Na bazar” by Kapustianskii (Figure 10.2), both published in full-page format, were very rare. These photographs show traditional cultural practices performed by men in ragged clothes and unfold in a purely individual context. These men symbolise the old way of life, which contrasts with the usual iconography.

The young photographers were able to skilfully put the knowledge they had acquired in Moscow into practice and produced an imagery that flawlessly represented the new ideology and the resulting change. Zel’manovich’s photographs were even regularly featured in *Prozhektor*, the weekly supplement of *Pravda*, during this period.²²

The case of these two photographers illustrates one way in which new knowledge circulated between the centre and periphery in the early Soviet Union, namely through individuals and their networks. The return to the periphery, at least in Zel’manovich’s case, was definitely for economic reasons, as

²¹ On the correlation of photography and colonial scholarship, see Edwards 1992. For an analysis of ethnographic photographs in the tsarist empire, see Prishchepova 2011.

²² See *Prozhektor* 1928: issue 9: 1; issue 24: 13; issue 36: 11–12. Unless otherwise stated, all titles and quotations in English are my translation.



Figure 10.1: Georgii Zel'manovich, "What time is it?" ("Kotoryi chas?"). *Sem' Dnei* 32 (1927): 16.



Figure 10.2: Aleksandr Kapustianskii, "To the bazaar" ("Na bazar"). *Sem' Dnei* 34 (1927): 16.

there was a niche market for photographers in Uzbekistan. Kapustianskii recognised it even earlier. With their training in Moscow – the location of knowledge production around the new culture – they could rise directly to leading editorial offices and use their expertise on the periphery.

At the same time, they supplied the central press with the necessary photographs from Central Asia, which in turn literally served to form an image of the region to be Sovietised. The photographers were not Uzbeks, but they benefited from a clear break with previous image practices, since the newspapers no longer strictly separated Russian and Asian environments, as had been the case in the tsarist empire. Even if the pictorial worlds were often still divergent, they still appeared in the same illustrated magazines.

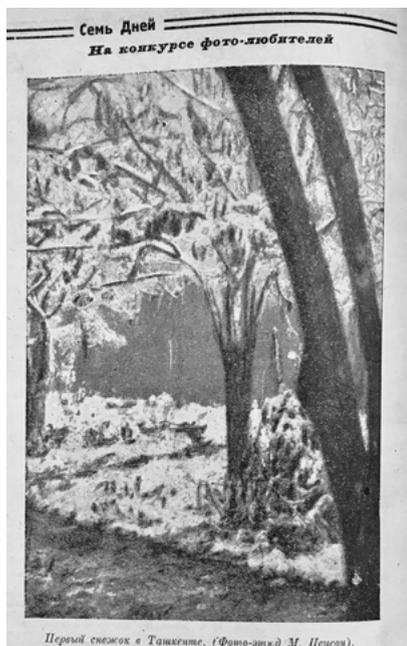


Figure 10.3: Max Penson, “First snowfall in Tashkent” (“Pervyi snezhok v Tashkente”). *Sem’ Dnei* 48 (1927): 8.

Max Penson, *Fotoliubitel’*

In contrast, an artistic photograph of a wintry landscape entitled “First Snow in Tashkent” (Figure 10.3), showing a snow-covered park landscape, is not consistent with the style of socialist iconography at the end of 1927.²³ The photograph was a submission to a contest for amateur photographers announced by *Pravda Vostoka* – its author was “Fotoliubitel’” (which does not quite translate accurately as “amateur”) Max Penson.

The surprisingly conventional photo corresponded neither to the new pictorial world nor to an ethnographic representation of space. Despite a certain realism, it is only slightly linked to photo reportage as it shows a landscape instead of an event. Soviet photographers and photo theorists always had an ambivalent relationship with landscape photography. The genre was too much taken up by art photography and was meaningless for the socialist project of modernisation. Nevertheless, the complicated subject of the landscape always attracted Soviet photographers, who were rooted in a European art-historical

²³ *Sem’ Dnei* 48 (1927): 8.



Figure 10.4: Max Penson, “Winter – the cold is coming” (“Zima – kholod nastaët”). *Sem’ Dnei* 49 (1927): 1.

tradition. In a second image from the competition, which *Sem’ Dnei* published on its cover in the following issue, Penson takes up the theme again, this time with a full-body portrait of an old man carrying a bale of hay on his back (Figure 10.4).²⁴ This portrait is more in keeping with the criteria of modern press photography, as it shows a person in action with an attribute that refers to the current situation – namely, the bundle of wood with which the old man is bracing himself against the onset of winter. However, the depiction of the old man, just like the examples of Zel’manovich and Kapustianskii, belongs to a vanishing style of imagery. Penson perhaps chose the motif to illustrate the approaching winter as a metaphor for the lonely end of life, like Rainer Maria Rilke in his poems. Thus both photographs point to his intellectual background and situate his early photography in the tradition of an European intellectual culture.

In those years many Soviet editorial offices held competitions of amateur photography. This practice was based on Soviet ideology, which wanted to bring art and cultural production to the masses and thereby educate them. As Lunacharskii said in his famous speech, every Soviet citizen should become a photographer in

²⁴ *Sem’ Dnei*, 49 (1927): 1.

order to document social change.²⁵ *Sovetskoe Foto*, which in the 1920s addressed professional photographers and amateurs, took on this task, as art historian Emily Evans explains in her study of the magazine.²⁶

However, photography was already fully developed in Russia before the revolution, so that in the 1920s there were many potential photographers – and thus propagandists – who theoretically only needed to be awakened and trained.²⁷ Thus photo competitions also offered an opportunity, especially for local editorial offices, to discover new photographers and, in the best case, to recruit them. In Uzbekistan, however, this strategy did not work because there were only two other participants besides Penson. In the end, the competition had to be cancelled without a winner due to the low number of entries.

In principle, however, Penson's example shows that it was entirely possible to rise from amateur photographer to professional photojournalist. In his case, however, there would have been no need for a competition since *Sem' Dnei* had already published four of his photographs some weeks earlier and was probably inspired by them to organise the competition in the first place. These shots already reveal Penson's versatility and working method and can therefore be understood as a portfolio with which the *Fotoliubitel'* applied to the editorial team.

The first two photographs, published in issues 40 and 44 of 1927, show locals at work, a subject that places them in an ethnographic pictorial tradition (Figures 10.5 and 10.6). With the other two photographs, published by *Sem' Dnei* in issue 46, Penson demonstrated his mastery of socialist iconography by invoking the “Red Army” and “Happy Childhood under Socialism” campaigns. In these photographs Penson showed moments from the socialist life cycle, a motif that characterised Soviet imagery of the time (Figures 10.7 and 10.8).

Penson's strategy of serving both pictorial spheres proved successful as his photographs appeared regularly in *Sem' Dnei* in 1928 and finally in *Pravda Vostoka* at the end of October that year. Nevertheless, his way of proactively entering press photography as an amateur was rather unusual. Most Soviet photographers of the first generation came to photography through auxiliary work in studios or editorial offices and did not become photojournalists as professional photographers.²⁸

²⁵ Lunacharskii 1926: 2.

²⁶ Evans 2014: 26.

²⁷ On the general history of photography in Russia, see Barkhatova 2009.

²⁸ For the biographies and career paths of the early Soviet photojournalists, see Shneer 2011: 31–60; Stigneev 2005: 177–213.



Figure 10.5: Max Penson, untitled. *Sem' Dnei* 40 (1927): 1.

A comparison between Penson and Alexander Rodchenko has often been drawn in the scholarship, but this is only of limited benefit and not necessary. At first glance, the external circumstances seem similar – they both started taking pictures in their thirties, so were much older than their colleagues. They both had an artistic education, Penson studied drawing in Vilnius and, upon his return to Vitebsk, was exposed to the ideas of the local avant-garde.²⁹ However, by the time Rodchenko got into photography, he was already an established artist who had begun to explore the new medium from a revolutionary artistic perspective. His photographs emerged from a new theory of images that sought to create new post-revolutionary representations and wanted to destroy not only traditional motifs but established habits of seeing.³⁰ Rodchenko only entered photojournalism in 1928, and for him photography remained primarily a form of artistic expression, so he exclusively produced media in which this could be expressed. He never worked as a photojournalist for a newspaper, but always belonged to the elite of Soviet photographers – even when his work was

²⁹ For Penson's biography, see Galejev/Penson 2011: 182.

³⁰ For Rodchenko's work, see Rodchenko/Chilova/Westheider 2013.



Figure 10.6: Max Penson, “Autumn ploughing” (“Osenniaia vspashka”). *Sem’ Dnei* 44 (1927): 20.

publicly criticised – so that photojournalism never became paid labour for him, on which his existence depended.³¹

For Penson, on the contrary, photography was a way to establish himself professionally in Central Asian exile, after ten years of various white-collar jobs in several cities in Uzbekistan. His art school training undoubtedly contributed to his understanding of composition, but he was not an established artist and had not been involved in photo-theoretical discourse even after his breakthrough as a photographer. In this way, Penson is much more reminiscent of the first-generation Jewish photographers, who excelled when the profession was still new. Shneer explains that they succeeded because they were able to practise a new art form that required a certain willingness to take risks without the usual repressive measures, and it brought them a good income.³²

Unlike his contemporaries in Moscow and Leningrad, Penson was not able to join a media circle but worked on his own. However, he managed to use the new structures to his advantage. According to his autobiography, he worked at

³¹ For Rodchenko’s participation in Stalinist visual culture, see the discussion by Wolf 2008.

³² Shneer 2011: 15.



Figure 10.7: Max Penson, “Today is our holiday” (“Segodnia nash prazdnik”). *Sem’ Dnei* 46 (1927): 1.



Figure 10.8: Max Penson, “The Red Army at the October celebrations in Tashkent” (“Krasnaia Armia na oktiabr’skikh torzhestvakh v Tashkente”). *Sem’ Dnei* 46 (1927): 3.

the Narkompros in Kokand, a stage in his career that formed his understanding of the needs of socialist propaganda. There he received a camera as a reward for good work and taught himself photography.³³ Autodidacts learning photographic techniques were not unusual, as countless manuals existed at the time.³⁴ But only a very few *Fotoliubiteli* became photojournalists – Penson’s career is a unique achievement, even if he benefitted from the lack of photographers in Uzbekistan and Soviet promotion of amateur photography.

His widely cited autobiography misdates the start of his career. In it he claims to have started working as a photojournalist for *Pravda Vostoka* in 1926. However, his first pictures only appeared, as shown, at the end of 1927. The reasons for this discrepancy can only be speculated. The autobiography was published in 1939, at a time when the Stalinist terror was reverberating loudly, so it is reasonable to assume that Penson sought to plug any gaps in his curriculum vitae as carefully as possible. The Penson family was itself affected by the persecutions: Penson’s brother was arrested and spent some time in prison.³⁵ Perhaps his former amateur status made him uncomfortable in retrospect; after all, in the 1930s he was the most important photojournalist in Central Asia with his own school. These explanations remain hypothetical, but they invite a source-critical examination of the available materials.

A few weeks into 1928 *Sem’ Dnei* deleted the designation “Fotoliubitel” after Penson’s name and started publishing his images as frequently as photographs by Zel’manovich and Kapustianskii. This indicated that the editors not only recognised him as a professional photographer but employed him as such. In the daily newspapers *Pravda Vostoka* and the Uzbek-language *Kizil Ouzbekiston*, on the other hand, Penson’s photographs were not used until the second half of 1928. Before that, only the two others, first and foremost Zel’manovich, were allowed to photograph for the newspapers: there was a hierarchy among local photographers. The first half of 1928 can be described as a golden age of Soviet photography in Uzbekistan. Zel’manovich, Kapustianskii and Penson unfolded an imagery that left a lasting mark on the visual representation of Uzbekistan. Important photographic topics of this year were land reform and, of course, the so-called “Hujum” campaign: a secularisation movement imposed from above by the Soviet administration concerned with, among other things, the unveiling of

³³ A copy of the biography is available at <http://www.maxpenon.com/biographydocs#show> (2 December 2020).

³⁴ For a chronological list see Barkhatova 2009: 382–398.

³⁵ Miron Penson shared this information personally with me during our meeting in New York in November in 2016.

women. Photographs of socialist construction were even more present. Gradually, cotton began to be more visible in press photography. Thus press photography reflected and, above all, emphasised the country's radical transformation, without, of course, providing an all-encompassing picture.³⁶

Photographs that had a topical relevance – for example documenting political campaigns – were still mostly by Kapustianskii or Zel'manovich. Nevertheless, Penson's work was no less present and could be seen in almost every issue of *Sem' Dnei*. He continued to photograph a wide variety of subjects, including views of landscapes, shots of local craftsmen and scenes from the process of cotton growing. But, equally, he documented scenes from new educational institutions and hospitals, as well as athletes, recreational activities, construction workers on new building sites, factory workers and radio listeners.³⁷ Thus he served the needs of the Uzbek press like his colleagues, whose photographs hardly differed from each other stylistically during this period.

Nevertheless, in the second half 1928 the Uzbek press encountered a lull. It was not to recover from this a caesura for several years. Even before the local editorial offices were affected by the upheaval of the "cultural revolution", first Kapustianskii and a short time later Zel'manovich were drafted into army service. Penson filled this gap together with new photographers, none of whom would outlast him. In the following year, also the final year of its publication, *Sem' Dnei* showed a clear decline in quality. The number of reproduced photographs decreased dramatically and the printing technique significantly worsened. The same can also be observed with *Pravda Vostoka*. Since neither war nor economic conflict inhibited production, these observations strongly suggest that the problem was in the newsrooms. Newspapers became thinner and the layout less professional. Not only did photographs disappear from *Sem' Dnei* but so did the diverse and high-quality articles of popular knowledge and feuilletonistic nature.

It is therefore reasonable to assume that a process described by Sheila Fitzpatrick as the "Proletarian Cultural Revolution" also took place in the editorial offices of Tashkent.³⁸ This movement, which lasted from 1923 to 1932, was a

36 There is plenty of research on early Soviet Uzbekistan, all of which outlines the complexity of the processes. The crucial monographs are Khalid 2015; Kamp 2010; Northrop 2004; Abashin 2015.

37 Besides the mentioned catalogue the reader can access parts of his archive at <http://www.maxpenson.com/>.

38 For the development of the term through an analysis of the Narkompros, see Fitzpatrick 1970. For a critical revision that includes additional thoughts, see Fitzpatrick 1999: 202–209.

grassroots phenomenon directed against the cultural establishment and the bourgeois intelligentsia. The press was affected by it throughout the Soviet Union, and similar changes in local periodicals indicate that the Tashkent editorial offices were caught up in it.

During this time, Penson's photographs dominated the front pages and full-page prints, and in the final months these were exclusively his. He remained the only photographer who had mastered socialist imagery, and so began his career as a photojournalist exclusively for *Pravda Vostoka*. Yet the quality of press photography did not regenerate until 1930 when the cotton campaigns defined the entire visual culture of the country, which from then on was overwhelmingly dominated by Penson's work.

While Penson took over photography in the Uzbek press, Zel'manovich and Kapustianskii went their own ways. It is not clear whether Kapustianskii returned to Uzbekistan after his army service. A studio in his name still existed in the 1930s, as the passepartouts of various group portraits indicate – but this is no proof that he ran the studio himself. It is only during the Second World War that he is documented engaging in photojournalism again, after which his trace is once again lost.³⁹

Zel'manovich also participated in the war as a photo correspondent and achieved great fame with his photographs of the battle for Stalingrad.⁴⁰ But even before that, he was one of the busiest photojournalists in the Soviet Union. After his army service, he settled in Moscow and worked as a regular photo correspondent for the daily *Izvestiia* and later for the illustrated magazines *Ogonëk* and *SSSR na stroike*. Throughout his life, he regularly returned to Central Asia for photo reportage, where he also always visited his good friend Max Penson, as his son Miron Penson recalled.⁴¹ An important finding for press photography in interwar Uzbekistan is that there were no truly established indigenous photographers. It is true that various photography circles were founded in Central Asia at this time – in 1927 at the Ferghana land administration office, in 1928 as an amateur club in Tashkent, and in the same year at the Narkompros of Tajikistan. But only Penson was present in the local and central press after Zel'manovich and Kapustianskii left the country.

³⁹ See <https://picturehistory.livejournal.com/3700283.html> (5 February 2021).

⁴⁰ Shneer 2011: 118–120.

⁴¹ See note 29.

Penson's journey from local to Soviet photographer

Sovetskoe Foto journal as a bridge between Moscow and the periphery

Penson's success was not exclusively due to the coincidence that Zel'manovich and Kapustianskii were enlisted. He also managed to become popular and successful in the Soviet centre. Many telegrams from the Moscow editorial offices, preserved in the family archive, testify to this.⁴² His first success in Moscow's professional circles, however, came with an unspectacular commissioned work. At the beginning of 1928, he illustrated the story "Parandzha" by M. Sheverbin for *Sem' Dnei*, which was published for International Women's Day.⁴³

His three photographs showed two mullahs and the entrance to a mosque (Figure 10.9) – a staging that illustrates the narrative. In the magazine these photographs played a minor role, taking up only about a third of the page. But they sparked the interest of *Sovetskoe Foto*, for in its fifth issue of 1928 the magazine published both the mosque and a portrait of one of the old men as full-page reproductions (Figures 10.10 and 10.11). The editors credited Penson, whom they again declared an amateur, with producing particularly successful photographs of local types and they praised the photograph of the mosque:

In the first work the architecture of the mosque is distorted by the difficult conditions of photography, but the compositional idea of the author is well resolved. The crowd under the arch of the building gives an idea of its size (in terms of scale!), besides, white spots of headdresses and windows above, all against a dark background, give the entire photograph a kind of logical completeness.

In outlining the types and everyday life of Uzbekistan this author always uses his model quite skilfully. His second work, not bad in technique, expressively conveys the ethnographic character of an old man's portrait.⁴⁴

The photographs fulfilled the critics' expectations by depicting impressions from the periphery in ethnographic topoi using traditional methods of composition – like using scale figures. It is evident that the editors of the journal, and thus key figures in the discourse on the essence of Soviet photography, continue to understand the function of photography from Uzbekistan as producing ethnographic knowledge. In the local press, on the other hand, these motifs

⁴² Several telegrams are published at <http://www.maxpenson.com/> (2 December 2020).

⁴³ *Sem' Dnei* 10 (1928): 8–9.

⁴⁴ "ËNDE: K nashim illiustratsiiam", *Sovetskoe Foto* 5 (1928): 232–233, this quote on 233.



Figure 10.9: Max Penson, illustrations for the essay “Parandzha”. *Sem’ Dnei* 10 (1928): 8–9.

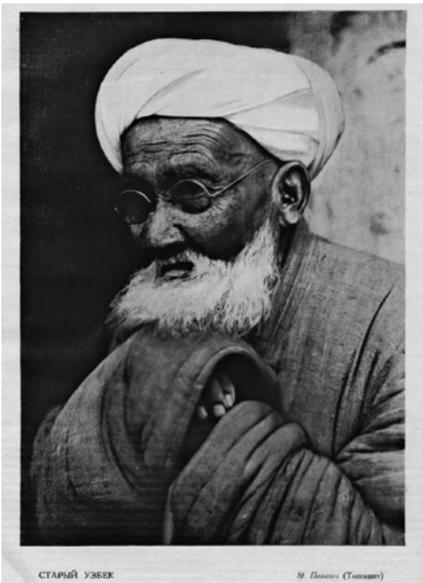


Figure 10.10: Max Penson, “Old Uzbek” (“Staryi Uzbek”). *Sovetskoe Foto* 5 (1928): 223.

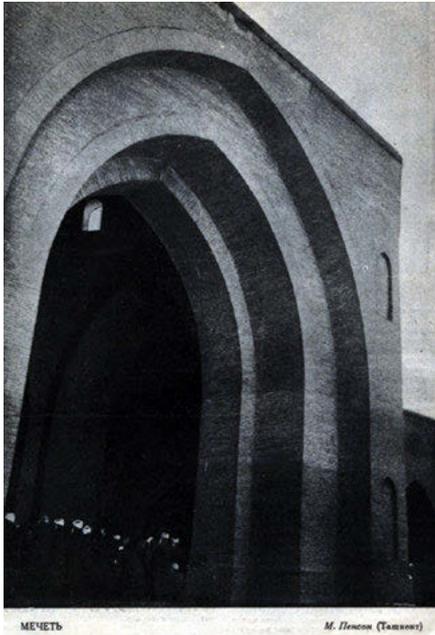


Figure 10.11: Max Penson, “Mosque” (“Mechet”). *Sovetskoe Foto 5* (1928): 224.

only served to illustrate stories from the past world, once again reflecting the incongruity of Soviet modernity.⁴⁵

This success may have surprised Penson, because only a few weeks earlier the same photo critic, named Ėnde, vehemently criticised one of his photographs. The magazine juxtaposed two photographs from Uzbekistan, one by Zel’manovich and one by Penson, which could not be more different (Figures 10.12 and 10.13).

Penson’s photograph, titled “Pottery Factory in Tashkent”, shows three men bent over large clay jars (*tandur* ovens), apparently engaged in modelling. The photograph fulfils the usual editors’ criteria with regard to contemporary photography: the men are not looking at the camera but are absorbed in their work process; the picture has a clear theme and does not appear to be posed.

Zel’manovich, on the other hand, shows a very different image of Uzbekistan, entitled “In Uzbekistan”. In the foreground are the contours of a person sitting cross-legged on a *tapchan* at the left edge of the picture, looking into the far distance. In front of him are a few simple buildings and ruins, while the background is dominated by a wide, open landscape.

⁴⁵ For an elaboration on this topic, see Holzberger 2018: 487–508.

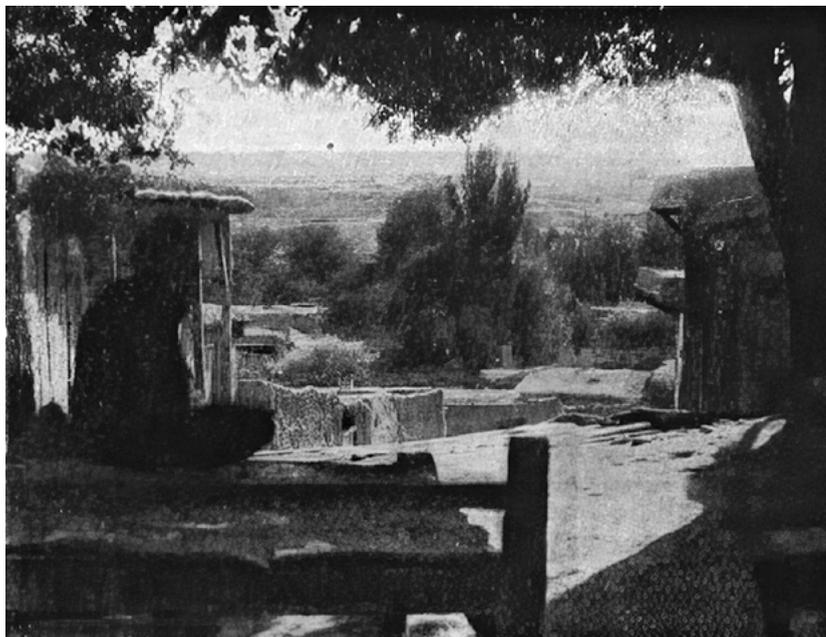


Figure 10.12: Georgii Zel'manovich, "In Uzbekistan" ("V Uzbekistane"). *Sovetskoe Foto* 3 (1928): 134.

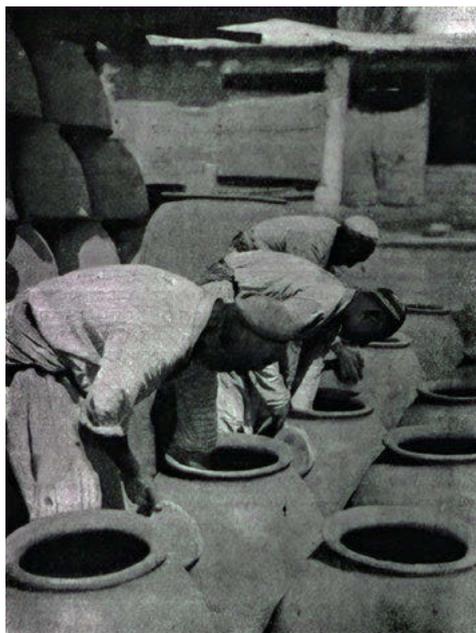


Figure 10.13: Max Penson, "Pottery in Old Tashkent" ("Goncharynye proizvodstva v starom Tashkente"). *Sovetskoe Foto* 3 (1928): 135.

The shot contains many pictorial elements that come from art photography and are very unusual for Zel'manovich's oeuvre. These include the botanical framing of the image by branches in the upper edge of the picture and its use of chiaroscuro. This shot does not correspond at all to the ideal of *Sovetskoe Foto*. Yet for the critic N. D. Petrov, only the photograph by Zel'manovich was accomplished:

Regardless of the fact that there [in Zel'manovich's picture] are somehow many elements of image composition in this shot, it does not irritate the viewer and can be observed with interest. The attempt to reproduce an impression by contrasting the tone of individual elements in the picture composition is more or less successful; it may be that this is precisely what attracts the viewer. The contrast is well balanced by the figure on the left, which is darkest, and the incoming sunlight, which is brightest. The technical execution is fully satisfactory.⁴⁶

Surprisingly, the critic, who is probably but not evidentially the pictorialist N. D. Petrov, seems to care little for the content and thus the image that is conveyed of Uzbekistan. Rather, he is enraptured by the compositional elements that make the picture an aesthetic expression of the Orient and thus can be assigned to the genre of orientalist art rather than knowledge communication.

He had a different opinion of Penson's photograph:

It barely reveals what the author put as the title of his photograph: production. A number of large pots, by the way, seemingly already finished, a few workers bent over them, cannot all give an idea of pottery production in this case. The shot should have been organised differently, and this interesting topic should have been brought out more prominently. Besides, the picture is grey, it lacks sunlight, which is abundant in Tashkent; the round shape of the works is not revealed in the light, and the viewer does not know who these people are and why they are bent over. The author does not really satisfy us – his interesting idea is not yet sufficiently developed.⁴⁷

This statement suggests that Petrov judged Penson's photograph from a different perspective because he is primarily concerned with the knowledge that the picture conveys. In contrast to Zel'manovich's photograph, which he perceived as an art object, Petrov saw in Penson's photograph the heritage of ethnographic photography.

In both cases, the critic's perception makes it clear that he did not consider photography from and in Uzbekistan to be of equal merit. Instead, these photographers were still required to perform "Oriental images" that had to convey either ethnographic knowledge or an aesthetic sentiment. Furthermore, this

⁴⁶ Petrov 1928a: 134.

⁴⁷ Petrov 1928a: 135.

example reveals a divergence in the perception of a successful photograph in the Soviet centre and in its periphery. While the picture of the potters in *Sovetskoe Foto* was virtually torn apart, *Sem' Dnei* published it on its front page.⁴⁸

Sovetskoe Foto published three more photographs by Penson in 1928, all of them showing local life and so diverging from the trend in Uzbekistan for socialist imagery. Instead, their subjects were agricultural workers with local tools, the old city of Tashkent and local carriages. It is striking, however, that the authors in the magazine never commented on the content of the pictures but exclusively on the level of technical execution and composition. Even the photograph of an “Asian” old town in the form of a classical “view” is hardly analysed in terms of content by Petrov:

Here one can feel the city and the character of its architectural ensemble. Part of a huge building (mosque) included on the right side of the frame gives not only the impression of the grandeur of the building, but also intensifies the impression of perspective. The moment of lighting (time of day) is chosen well – these shadows from the two towers on the square are logically coordinated by tone and direction with the lines of buildings on the far background. This is an original and well done shot.⁴⁹

Instead, it is increasingly visible that Penson’s technique improved in the eyes of editors and critics. There was no sign of a rupture with pre-revolutionary iconography in Penson’s oeuvre that year, whereas Zel’manovich published photographs of modern Uzbekistan in *Prozhektor* and even of Moscow in *Sovetskoe Foto*.⁵⁰ The picture from Moscow shows an urban scene of a street intersection and has no reference to Central Asia. Although the critic finds weaknesses in the composition, he is overall pleased with Zel’manovich’s accomplishment.⁵¹ As in Uzbekistan, Zel’manovich plays with extreme light and shadow and demonstrates that he consciously separated aesthetic and press photography in those years.

Zel’manovich may have sent this photograph to the editors in order to present himself as a Soviet and not an Uzbek photographer, especially as his time in Uzbekistan was coming to an end and he had higher ambitions. As early as 1927, he asked TASS for a permanent position as a correspondent instead of working on an honorary basis, a request Mezhericher nevertheless denied.⁵²

⁴⁸ *Sem' Dnei* 14 (1928).

⁴⁹ Petrov 1928b: 379.

⁵⁰ For example, the cover picture of issue 11 of *Sovetskoe Foto* in 1928, titled “New Harvest” (Novyi urozhai).

⁵¹ Petrov 1928c: 223.

⁵² GARF. F. R-391. Op. 9. D. 39. L. 41–41v.

The Moscow photograph appeared in the same issue as Penson's pictures of the mosque and the Uzbek. The latter were the only full-page shots besides of photographs from the exhibition "Ten Years of Soviet Photography", in which Penson did not participate.⁵³ The editors thus added a view of the Soviet periphery almost as an afterthought. The exhibition took place in Moscow in May 1928 and showed more than 8,000 exhibits of very different styles.⁵⁴ It was not only a milestone in Soviet photography but also triggered heated debates, since it marked the beginning of the critique of formalist and thus "left-wing", as well as traditional and thus "right-wing", photography and was accompanied by the founding of two different collectives of photo reporters.⁵⁵ The split was triggered by disagreements over which stylistic means would best promote and reflect social transformation under the first Five-Year Plan. *Sovetskoe Foto* became the mouthpiece of the Russian Association of Proletarian Photography (ROPF) and later became infamous for its criticism of the avant-garde photographers of the Oktiabr' group.

Penson's role in the photographic debates during the first Five-Year Plan

Even though Penson never publicly positioned himself within these debates, in *Sovetskoe Foto*'s understanding he belonged to them. Starting in the second half of 1929, the magazine began to print his photographs regularly – some even in mezzotint print, a high-quality printing process used to highlight a few particularly outstanding shots in each issue. The subjects of his photographs changed radically that year. Instead of depicting old Uzbeks, local crafts and Eastern architecture, it was now construction sites, urbanisation, liberated women and all-Soviet campaigns that defined his oeuvre. In some cases, these were images he had already published in the local press, such as the photograph "Na stroike" (On the construction site), which shows that Penson had internalised the requirements for photography of the Five-Year Plan (Figure 10.14).⁵⁶

The image shows a young and muscular worker, corresponding to the Soviet male ideal, standing at a workbench with heavy machinery. Although there were no comments from the editors about this photograph, its selection for mezzotint

⁵³ Besides Penson, there is only one other shot pictured in full-page that was not at the exhibition: a landscape shot by a foreign photographer whose sophisticated composition was praised by the editors.

⁵⁴ Stigneev 2016: 75–85.

⁵⁵ For the controversy, see Wolf 2004: 106–117.

⁵⁶ This picture was published in *Sem' Dnei* 27 (1928): 3; *Sovetskoe Foto* 9 (1929): 252.

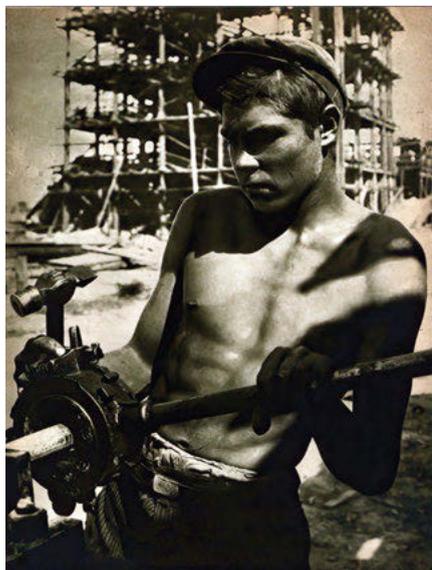


Figure 10.14: Max Penson, “On the building site” (“Na stroike”). *Sovetskoe Foto* 9 (1929): 252.

reproduction, reserved only for the best photographs, already distinguished it. This photograph is particularly noteworthy because it breaks with the previous Soviet image of the East and foregrounds a white worker. In this way, Penson detached himself from his function documenting the everyday life of an Oriental people, and instead rose to become an equally qualified Soviet photojournalist.

Even though the editors of *Sovetskoe Foto* never used Penson’s photographs as examples to explain their theory of images, their uncritical publication of his works shows that they regarded them as examples of successful photography. His contemporary motifs rule out the possibility that he was fulfilling a quota for photographers from the republics. Penson’s photographs, such as the construction site portrait, conformed to the ideals of ROPF and *Sovetskoe Foto* – the photographs were well composed, but not formalistic. Instead of using new perspectives, Penson worked with a clear composition in the form of thoughtful pictorial planes. He always placed a person in the foreground who, through the use of iconographic attributes, was engaged in a clearly legible activity or belonged to a particular group of people. The background of the picture simultaneously provided the larger sociopolitical context and placed the local person in an overarching Soviet world. This compositional scheme, which Penson maintained throughout his career, established his success among photographers and photo theorists at the time of the “cultural revolution”. From 1930 onwards, his work appeared in almost every issue of *Sovetskoe Foto* and was thus an important part of the elaboration of an universal Soviet style of photography that was taking place at the time. At this moment photographic debates were

characterised by a dynamism that can be defined as the search for the right photographic language. Both collectives contributed to this with theoretical essays and exemplary images.⁵⁷ The frequent publication of Penson's work in the magazine shows that his editors, and thus their collective of photographers, saw his work as exemplary – and not only for photographs from the Soviet Orient.

Penson developed his personal style in 1929, when he took over the main responsibility for Uzbek Soviet photojournalism at rather short notice. This task left him no time for aesthetic experimentation, even though he continued to use styles from art photography, such as soft focus, for private portraits.⁵⁸ Instead, he had to adopt a Soviet visual language that was clearly legible and allowed the local world to belong to Soviet society. At the same time, his photographs had to be “good enough” to be shown centrally, so he kept a detailed record of what was required of high-quality images in Moscow. However, it would be a mistake to evaluate Penson's success with ROPF and *Sovetskoe Foto* in a negative light. The dichotomy in photographic historiography between the “good” avant-garde around Rodchenko and the Oktiabr' collective and the “bad” reactionary photography around ROPF is a misconception. In the contemporary context, the photographers of ROPF were much more formative in the development of Soviet photojournalism through their work at *Ogonëk*, the most important illustrated magazine in the Soviet Union, and given the strong circulation of *Sovetskoe Foto*. And Penson saw himself precisely as a photojournalist.

Although Penson's success in *Sovetskoe Foto* began as early as 1928, it took him a full three years to achieve his breakthrough in the all-Soviet mass press. He finally had it with a series of ten photographs on the cotton production process published in the magazine *Prozhektor*. Penson's photo series reflects a dynamic development in the history of photography by capturing the production process as a photo series and illuminating it from different angles.⁵⁹ At the same time, it represents the beginning of cotton as a symbol of the visual representation of Uzbekistan. The photo series contained a total of fifteen photographs to be spread over three consecutive issues, but they appeared in a single issue, indicating production difficulties.⁶⁰ The issue devoted several articles to cotton production in Central Asia and its special significance for the Soviet Union. For the photo series, Penson was forced to find new motifs because the ever-recurring “cotton picker” as the only iconographic elaboration

⁵⁷ For a detailed analysis of the debates, see Evans 2014: chaps. 3 and 4.

⁵⁸ Some examples are to be found in Penson's archive at <http://www.maxpenson.com/> (2 December 2021).

⁵⁹ Stigineev 2016: 175–199.

⁶⁰ *Prozhektor* (1931): 34–36.



Figure 10.15: Max Penson, from the series on cotton production. *Prozhektor*, 34–36 (1931), n.p.

had already been criticised by Moscow critics.⁶¹ In fact, Penson photographed a variety of new motifs related to cotton production. The editors arranged them more or less in the order of the production process, so that they almost formed a photo essay (Figure 10.15). The series shows a cross-section of Soviet Uzbek society with individual and group portraits of peasants, workers, the technical elite, functionaries and youth. There is also a special focus on the new machines in recent use. Arranged as an analepsis, additional photographs also visualise the cultivation of the plant and its botanical nature.

But most intriguing is the photograph of a cotton bud, still closed in one hand, which proves how attentively Penson followed visual discourse (Figure 10.16). With this photograph, in fact, he quotes the famous political poster of the constructivist Gustav Klucis, used in propaganda for the Five-Year Plan, bearing the slogan “We fulfil the plan of great works!” (Figure 10.17). Klucis’s photomontage also shows an outstretched hand with part of the forearm on which the motif of the



Figure 10.16: Max Penson, “Egyptian Cotton” (“Korobochki egipetskogo khlopka”). *Prozhektor* 34–36 (1931) n.p.



Figure 10.17: Gustav Klucis, “Fulfil the great work plan” (“Vypolnim plan velikikh robot”). 1930.

⁶¹ “Kak perestraivaetsia zhizn’ (Obzor Mezzo-Tinto)”, *Sovetskoe Foto* 24 (1930): 688.

outstretched hand reappears multiplied. In this way, the artist interprets the metaphor of the state as a body – which was first visualised in the frontispiece to Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan*.⁶² While Klucis’s image conveys the message that the masses can fulfil the plan through mobilisation, in Penson’s shot cotton becomes the central element. His interpretation of the motif on the periphery proves once again that the photographer was creatively involved in shaping agitative imagery, rather than merely providing the requested motifs.

Conclusion

What followed for Penson after his breakthrough is well known. The photographer was one of the most published photojournalists in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and was featured in every major illustrated magazine. However, he was the only one never to leave the periphery and instead used modern structures of image circulation that had been established in the early Soviet Union. But he also continuously developed photography in Uzbekistan itself – whether through his own students, such as his brother-in-law Glauberzon, who photographed for the Uzbek daily *Kizil Ouzbekiston*, or his own photo books, such as the photo essay “Alim Pachaev” published in 1934.⁶³

Penson remained the senior photojournalist for *Pravda Vostoka* until the late 1950s, with what family members report was an enormous workload. However, myths surround the end of his career. It is not clear whether he was a victim of the anti-Semitic campaigns that affected Jewish cultural workers all over the Soviet Union at that time, as can be read in many catalogues and is implied by his son Miron in one of them. According to this, he stopped receiving a correspondence permit – which amounted to a resignation from the editorial office – and this was followed by a severe depression.⁶⁴ The editor of the said volume, Il’dar Galeev, in turn learned from Penson’s daughter that her father was suffering from Alzheimer’s disease and therefore gave up his work and withdrew from public life.⁶⁵ Without further sources, this question must remain open.

⁶² See the picture at [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leviathan_\(Thomas_Hobbes\)#/media/File:Leviathan_by_Thomas_Hobbes.jpg](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leviathan_(Thomas_Hobbes)#/media/File:Leviathan_by_Thomas_Hobbes.jpg) (12 February 2021).

⁶³ Karasik 2015: 300–303.

⁶⁴ Miron Penson, “Film of Memories”, in Galeev/Penson 2011: 41–44.

⁶⁵ Il’dar Galeev shared this information with me during our meeting in Moscow in the spring of 2018.

An analysis of Penson's career based on the press introduces an unknown side of the famous photographer. It shows that Penson's famous and lauded images of the 1930s were a dialectical reflection of the social experience in Uzbekistan and were based on many years of continuous development of his work. Penson's career reflects the complexity of the Soviet empire and proves once again that it cannot be grasped within a narrow concept of empire. In his case, there was no clear divide between the "sending centre" and the "receiving periphery", but rather a circulation of knowledge and images. Penson knew how to utilise the new infrastructures and knowledge bases offered by picture agencies, journals and editorial offices throughout the Soviet Union, and thus to participate actively and equally in Soviet cultural production, even if he thereby normalised Soviet ideology. His case study traces the making of a Soviet photographer and sheds light on Moscow's role. The capital of the Soviet Union was also the nucleus of the production of "Sovietness" – be it the knowledge of Sovietness or the cultural practice of being Soviet. The transmission of this knowledge to other educated elites functioned less through personal agitation, as was done in the village or factory, but through modern structures. Professional journals, such as *Sovetskoe Foto*, played a special role. In them, the addressees found expert knowledge that they could use for themselves and, at the same time, a medium to which they could turn with questions or contributions and ultimately, like Penson, also help shape.

The broadcast of the new culture was thus not one-sided or impermeable but a dynamic process in which actors from the periphery could participate. Thus, imperial asymmetries of power between the centre and periphery could be broken down, at least for the cultural elite and intelligentsia at this time. Penson's chance for local success, as this analysis of his breakthrough shows, came from an unexpected opportunity to take over Uzbek photojournalism during the first Five-Year Plan. But only his attentive study of socialist photography, as taught by *Sovetskoe Foto*, helped him to succeed in that magazine and, ultimately, in the all-Soviet press. From his example, it can be seen that cultural production, at least in the early Soviet Union, was characterised by fluid circulation between the Russian centre and the Central Asian periphery. At the same time, these early years illustrate that, as John Tagg writes, it is not the author alone who determines the meaning of a photographic image, but rather the image gains meaning through ideological contexts.⁶⁶ Hardly any other photographer demonstrates as clearly as Max Penson that these contexts could also be used for one's own agency.

66 Tagg 1993: 163.

Abbreviations

GARF Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (State Archive of the Russian Federation)

Archives

GARF. F. R-391. Rossiiskoe Telegrafnoe Agentstvo (ROSTA) pri Sovete Narodnykh Komissarov RSFSR.

GARF. F. R-5283. Op. 1. Vsesoiuznoe Obshchestvo Kul'turnykh Sviazei s zagranitsei (VOKS).

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Natalia Lazarevskaia, Maria Medvedeva

11 The expeditions of the Academy for the History of Material Culture to Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s: An examination of its well-known and unknown photographic collections

Abstract: The Scientific Archive at the Institute for the History of Material Culture at the Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg, contains a number of visual documents, dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, that reveal various aspects of the exploration and study of Turkestan. Many of the photographic documents dated prior to 1917 have already gained global renown. This article discusses the collections of photographs from the Central Asian expeditions of the 1920s and 1930s conducted by members of the Academy for the History of Material Culture. These materials are no less important as historical documents of cultural and historical heritage; however, they remain comparatively under-researched. Photographs taken during expeditions to Central Asia show the results of architectural and archaeological studies and restoration work. They also depict ancient monuments as well as the everyday life and activities of residents in the 1920s and 1930s.

Keywords: Academy for the History of Material Culture, photographs, documents, archaeology, ethnography, Central Asian studies

Introduction

The Archive at the Institute for the History of Material Culture at the Russian Academy of Sciences possesses a documentary collection that can provide an excellent basis for research on various aspects of Turkestan from the mid-

Note: Translated by Adelaide McGinity-Peebles

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nineteenth century onwards.¹ It contains photographs, drawings and manuscripts created during the course of expeditions and the architectural and archaeological study of Turkestan in the pre-revolutionary period. These sources formed part of collections held at various scholarly institutions as well as in the private archives of Russian scholars. Representative photographic collections are kept by the Imperial Archaeological Commission, the Russian Archaeological Society and the Library of the Marble Palace in St Petersburg. Among them are the renowned *Turkestan Album*, the work of photographer Anton Stepanovich Murenko (1837–1875) taken during Colonel Nikolai Pavlovich Ignat'ev's (1832–1908) diplomatic mission from Orenburg to Khiva; the photographic collections of the prominent orientalists and archaeologists Nikolai Ivanovich Veselovskii (1848–1918) and Valentin Alekseevich Zhukovskii (1858–1918); and the works of photographers including Ivan Vvedenski, Vladimir F. Kozlovskii, Paul Nadar (1856–1939), Samuel Martynovich Dudin (1863–1929) and F. Orde.²

The photographs which detail the Central Asian expeditions of the 1920s and 1930s are less well known but no less important in terms of their scholarly and documentary value. These are held by the Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture at the Russian Academy of Sciences. They are stored in the photographic collection of the Academy for the History of Material Culture, which was established in 1919 and based on the pre-revolutionary Imperial Archaeological Commission. The new institution absorbed all the best traditions of the pre-revolutionary school yet had a much broader function, organisation and staff.³ The Academy for the History of Material Culture in the 1920s and 1930s occupied a leading position in Russian oriental studies. It comprised renowned orientalists Vasilii Vladimirovich Barthold (1869–1930), Nikolai Iakovlevich Marr (1865–1934) and Sergeii Fëdorovich Oldenburg (1863–1934) – who greatly influenced the formation of the School of Russian oriental studies – and their talented students Joseph Abgarovich Orbeli (1887–1961) and Alexander Iur'evich Iakubovskii (1886–1953), among others.

¹ The study was conducted within the framework of the programme of the Federal Research Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences on the topic of government research, No. FMZF-2022-0015.

² For further information, please consult Devel 1994; Dluzhnevskaja 2010, 2011.

³ Boriskovskii 1980; Dluzhnevskaja 2011: 101–114; Zhebelev 1923: 115–116; Musin/Platonova 2009; Nosov 2013; Peskareva 1980.

Photographic collections from expeditions in the 1920s

The Turkestan pluridisciplinary architectural expedition of 1921

The work conducted by the Russian Academy for the History of Material Culture (later, the State Academy for the History of Material Culture)⁴ in Central Asia was a logical continuation of the research on this region by the Imperial Archaeological Commission. Its Central Asian and Muslim archaeology departments were headed by the historian Vasilii Vladimirovich Barthold. His intent was to launch large-scale studies of the monuments of Turkestan and he became one of the key figures in the creation of committees for the protection of monuments in Bukhara and Samarkand and in the organisation of the Turkestan Committee for the Protection of Monuments of Art and Antiquity (Turkomstaris).⁵ In 1920, Barthold went on a research expedition to Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara;⁶ in 1921 the Turkestan pluridisciplinary architectural expedition (*Turkestanskaia kompleksnaia arkhitekturnaia èkspeditsiia*) was held as part of the project for the restoration and preservation of the monuments of Samarkand. It was co-organised by the Russian Academy for the History of Material Culture and the Central Committee for Museums and the Protection of Monuments of Art, Antiquity and Nature under the People's Commissariat for Education of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (Glavmusei). The main task of the expedition was to perform detailed archaeological measurements of the entire complex of Shah-i Zinda in Samarkand, after which an analysis of the architectural forms, construction and construction techniques was planned, and recommendations on the repair and protection of the monument were made.⁷ This work was supervised by the architect Alexander Petrovich Udalenkov⁸ and the expedition

4 In 1919 the Russian Academy for the History of Material Culture was first established and later renamed the State Academy for the History of Material Culture in 1926.

5 Tolz 2013: 274–290.

6 Bartol'd 1922: 3–4; Iakubovskii 1940: 15.

7 Iakubovskii 1940: 15.

8 Alexander Petrovich Udalenkov (1887–1975) was an architect, conservator, architectural historian and member of the Imperial Archaeological Commission (1913–1917). In 1919 he became a member of the Russian Academy/State Academy for the History of Material Culture. He became a professor at the Leningrad Institute of Railway Engineers (1935–1949), and from 1935 he was a member of the Leningrad City Council Commission for the reconstruction of Leningrad, head of the restoration of churches in Novgorod (1945–1948), and from 1949 he worked

consisted of eight members who were well-versed in relevant issues: architects, artists (including Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin⁹ and Alexander Nikolaevich Samokhvalov (1894–1971)), photographers, chemists and conservators. Despite various organisational difficulties, the specialists carried out a significant amount of work in four months. Measurements for the upper group, two mausoleums on the Western side of the corridor and the middle group were taken, while the outer plans and sections of two mausoleums were made for the lower group.¹⁰

The most significant material from these studies is the documents that capture the condition of the monuments at that time. The photographs take a prominent place in the visualisation of the mausoleums of Shah-i Zinda. The photographic collections of the Turkestan expedition were only admitted into the archive in the late 1920s, and before then it seems that the Academy's employees worked with them in its offices, as was customary at that time. Currently, the photography department holds seven photographic albums¹¹ that capture the carefully executed work of repairing this unique monument. In the pictures, one can see external and internal views, details, decor and long shots (Figures 11.1–11.4). In 1923 the Academy submitted a document detailing the condition of the monuments of art and antiquity at Shah-i Zinda in Samarkand¹² as well as an estimate for the necessary repair and restoration work to the Department of Central Research of Museums, but the expedition was terminated. That same year, an exhibition of documents (drawings and photographs) from the Turkestan expedition was held, occupying six halls of the Marble Palace (where the Academy for the History of Material Culture was located at that time). Later, the Academy planned to prepare a full publication of the Shah-i Zinda complex as part of the "Mosques of Samarkand" series¹³ undertaken by the Archaeological Commission, but this grandiose plan was not fulfilled, and the photographic collection of 1921 remains unpublished, possibly due to budgetary constraints.

for the State Inspectorate for the Protection of Monuments and headed its architectural workshop. He was arrested in 1949, and later released in 1956.

9 The artist Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin (1878–1939) made a series of paintings and drawings during the expedition.

10 Iakubovskii 1940: 15–16.

11 Department of Photography at the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences. Albums O. 1382 to O. 1388, total 446 negatives and 443 prints. The materials were added to the Archive in 1928.

12 Department of Manuscripts of the Institute for History and Metrology, Russian Academy of Sciences. F. 2. Op. 1.1923. D. 120.

13 Mosques of Samarkand 1905; Department of Photography at the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences F. 2. Op. 1. 1923. D. 120. L. 5r.

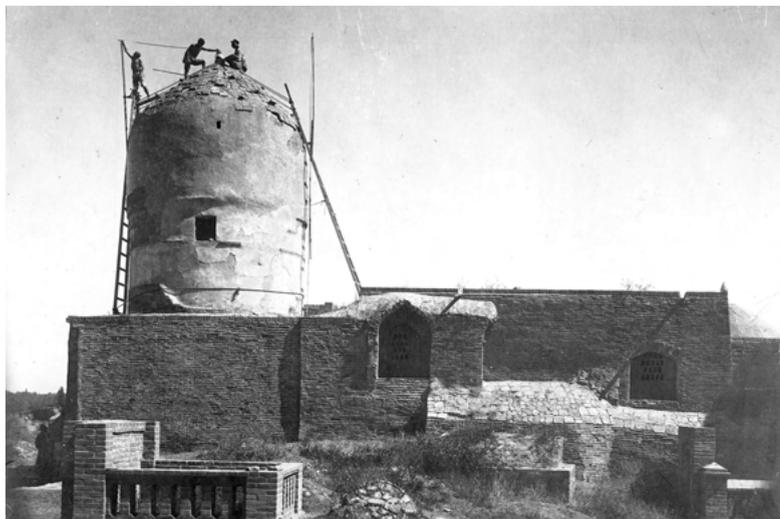


Figure 11.1: “Mausoleum No. 8 (on the west side), view from the west, Shah-i Zinda, Samarkand, taken during the Turkestan architectural expedition of 1921”. Archive of the Institute for the History for Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.

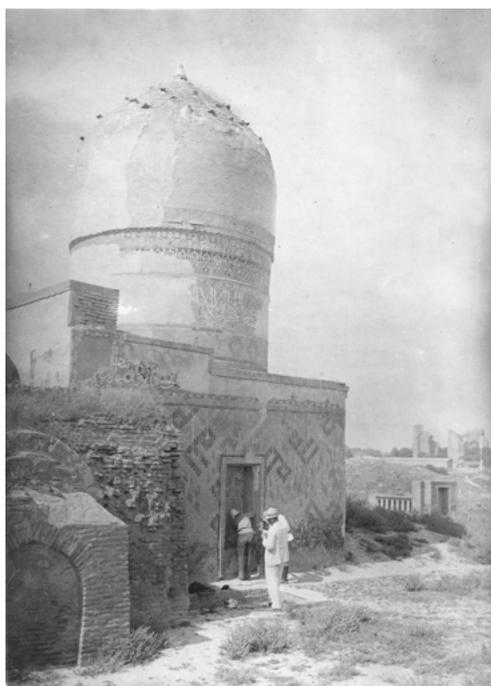


Figure 11.2: “Mausoleum No. 8 (on the west side), view from the north-east, Shah-i Zinda, Samarkand, taken during the Turkestan architectural expedition of 1921”. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.



Figure 11.3: “Corridor of the central group of mausoleums, Shah-i Zinda, Samarkand, taken during the Turkestan architectural expedition of 1921”. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.

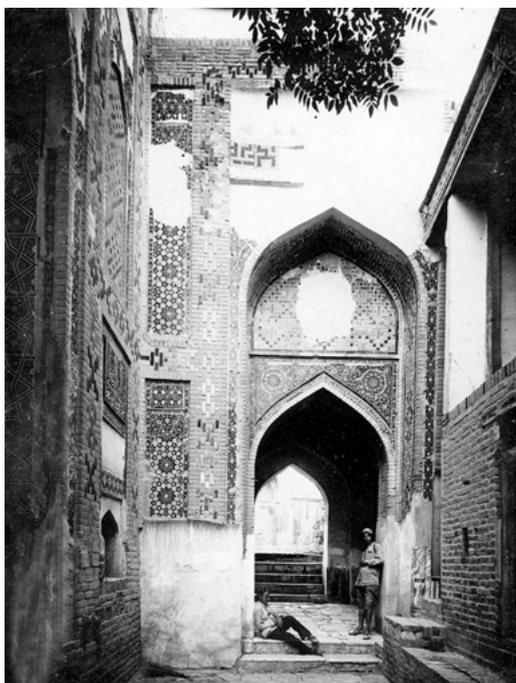


Figure 11.4: “Arch over the passage at the mausoleum of Qutham b. Abbas, Shah-i Zinda, Samarkand, taken during the Turkestan architectural expedition of 1921”. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.

Alexander Iakubovskii's expedition to Bukhara and Shahrīsabz in 1926

In the 1920s the archaeologist and orientalist Alexander Iur'evich Iakubovskii (Figure 11.5) began his work at the Academy.¹⁴ Thanks to his work, the photographic collection of the Archive is replete with valuable images of Central Asia. Between 1925 and 1928, the Academy for the History of Material Culture regularly sent the young researcher on expeditions into Central Asia.¹⁵ As a true disciple of Barthold, Iakubovskii always began his expeditions with a thorough study of the written documents on the monuments under study. Keenly aware of the importance of sources to historical research, he took a methodical approach to the documentation of his work. In 1926 Iakubovskii made an expedition that allowed him to become familiar with the architectural monuments of Shahrīsabz and Bukhara, from where “a considerable number of photographs were brought



Figure 11.5: “Portrait of Alexander Iur'evich Iakubovskii, c. 1920s”. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.

¹⁴ Alexander Iur'evich Iakubovskii (1886–1953) was an archaeologist, historian and orientalist, a doctor of the historical sciences and a student of Vasilii Barthold. He was a member of the Academy for the History of Material Culture from 1925, and from 1945 he was head of the Department on Central Asia and the Caucasus at the Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. From 1928 he was head of the Central Asian Department at the Hermitage Museum, and was appointed a professor at Leningrad State University in 1935.

¹⁵ Alekshin 2016: 151.

back to the Academy”.¹⁶ In his report on the expedition, the scholar outlined the three main tasks that were performed during his stay in Shahrisabz: (1) studying the topography of the city; (2) studying the monuments of the Timurid era; (3) photography.¹⁷ One of Iakubovskii’s major successes was obtaining the Shahrisabz plan, drawn up by military topographers for the Bukhara Tropical Institute between 1924 and 1926, as well as a detailed irrigation map of Shahrisabz and Kitab and their surrounding areas. The latter was realised from the hydraulic surveys conducted in the summer of 1926. Without these cartographic materials, a study of the topography of the city would have been extremely difficult.¹⁸ During the expedition of 1926, Iakubovskii attentively inspected the remarkable monument of Ak Sarai: the ruins of Timur’s Palace (Figure 11.6). In the report, Iakubovskii assesses the preservation of this monument through an analysis of the 1901 images of the ethnographer, artist and photographer Samuel Martynovich Dudin¹⁹ and notes that, in comparison with these photographs, “there was no further destruction to the monument”.²⁰ Iakubovskii also examined the collection of monuments in the southern part of Shahrisabz – which includes the Ulugh Beg mosque (Kok-Gumbaz) and the ruins of the Timur mosque and mausoleums – and photographed them in detail. He spent two weeks in Bukhara familiarising himself with the topography of the ancient city and its architectural monuments, which he also photographed in detail. It is important to recall that, during this time, Iakubovskii was perfectly familiar with the contents of the Academy’s materials concerning the study of Central Asia. Between 1924 and 1925, at the behest of the

16 Iakubovskii 1940: 16; Department of Photography in the Archive at the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences. Albums O. 115 to O. 116, total 106 negatives and 106 prints. The materials were added to the Archive in 1926. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine or the translator of this article’s.

17 Department of Manuscripts in the Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences. F. 2. Op. 1. 1927. D. 23. L. 1.

18 Department of Manuscripts in the Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences. F. 2. Op. 1.1926. D. 132. L. 1. The maps were obtained by Iakubovskii on site. Their photographs are contained in the album O. 116.

19 Samuel Martynovich Dudin-Martsinkevich (1863–1929) was a Russian ethnographer, artist, photographer and explorer. In 1895 he was sent by the Archaeological Commission to Nikolai Veselovskii’s expedition, where he photographed Samarkand. Later, he took part in many expeditions examining the monuments of Turkestan and Central Asia. Between 1900 and 1902, Dudin made three trips from the Russian Museum’s Department of Ethnography to the Turkestan region and the western part of Chinese Turkestan, where he developed large ethnographic and archaeological collections, and took more than 1,500 photographs. For more information, see Prishchepova 2011.

20 Department of Manuscripts in the Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences. F. 2. Op. 1.1926. D. 132. L. 2.



Figure 11.6: “Ak Sarai Palace in Shahrīsabz, 1926”. Photo by Alexander Iur’evich Iakubovskii. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.

Central Asia and Muslim Culture department, Iakubovskii and Dudin catalogued the photographs and other documents stored in the Academy, and compiled a database of negatives and photographs.²¹ In the report on the 1926 expedition, Iakubovskii noted the lack of detailed images of Bukhara at the Academy’s disposition, and indicated that he had tried to fill this gap.²² It is worth noting the high quality of his photography, both in 1926 and in subsequent years, as well as the reports containing lists of photographs that he compiled, which greatly facilitated the work of attributing the images and entering them into archival inventories.

In a report on the 1926 expedition Iakubovskii described the lamentable state of the monuments at Shahrīsabz and Bukhara as follows:

The monuments at Shahrīsabz are not protected at all. Neither the local authorities nor the local residents show any care towards them, and evidently do not recognise their historical and artistic value.²³ [...] In terms of the protection of monuments, Bukhara makes a

²¹ Farmakovskii 1926: 14.

²² Department of Manuscripts in the Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences F. 2. Op. 1.1926. D. 132. L. 5.

²³ Department of Manuscripts in the Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences F. 2. Op. 1.1926. D. 132. L. 4.

dire impression [...] such large monuments as the madrasas of Ulugh Beg and Divan-Begi have been rented out for housing in recent years, which is why, in the absence of basic housing amenities, they have become hugely spoiled. The renovation of the Divan-Begi madrasa in 1926 and its transformation into a hotel resulted in a number of inexcusable alterations to the monument (the gates were expanded, windows were widened, doors were broken in the *hujra*, etc.).²⁴

Iakubovskii captured the entire sorry state of affairs in his photographs.

Iakubovskii's expedition to the lower Syr-Darya valley in 1927

In 1927 Iakubovskii once again added important photographs to the Academy's collection. On the Academy's instructions, Iakubovskii took an expedition to the valley at the lower reaches of the Syr-Darya, during which he visited and examined the settlements of Sygnak, Uzgent and Sairam. He photographed their architectural monuments in detail, and all his photographs were incorporated into the Academy's photographic collection (Figure 11.7).²⁵ As the scholar himself noted, his



Figure 11.7: “A security guard at Sygnak, Chirakchi, 1927”. Photo by Alexander Iur'evich Iakubovskii. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.

²⁴ Department of Manuscripts in the Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences F. 2. Op. 1.1926. D. 132. L. 5–5r.

²⁵ Department of Photography, albums O. 121 and O. 122, all negatives 55, prints 55. Materials received in 1927.

photographs of Sygnak were the first ever taken of the site. Images from this expedition were only partially included in the published results of the project.²⁶

The Khorezm expedition, 1928–1929

In 1928 the Academy's Khorezm expedition, in conjunction with Uzkomstaris (the Uzbek Committee for the Affairs of Cultural and Natural Monuments), began in Kunya-Urgench, the capital of medieval Khorezm. During this expedition, researchers mainly collected topographical and epigraphical data, ceramic materials and, of course, took photographs.²⁷ The following year, the work at Khorezm continued. The tasks of the 1929 expedition included: making architectural measurements of the main monuments at Kunya-Urgench; conducting a number of test excavations in order to clarify the boundaries of the pre-Mongolian city; determining an accurate instrumental and topographic layout, without which it would be impossible to conduct systematic excavations of the monument; and the collection of epigraphical material. The development of a robust photographic account of the settlement and its monuments also became one of the main objectives of the study (Figure 11.8).²⁸ In 1929, at the start of the expedition,



Figure 11.8: “Overview of Kunya-Urgench, 1929”. Photo by Alexander Iur’evich Iakubovskii. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.

²⁶ Iakubovskii 1930b.

²⁷ Iakubovskii 1930b: 23.

²⁸ Department of Manuscripts in the Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences F. 2. Op. 1.1929. D. 119.

problems arose that threatened to disrupt the planned work. Udalenkov was to be in charge of obtaining the architectural measurements, but after learning that it was impossible to ensure the safety of the research expedition's members from the actions of the *Basmachis* in the Kunya-Urgench area, he returned to Leningrad, while some of the expedition's party had already arrived at the site.²⁹ The Academy quickly sent the architect Nikolai Borisovich Baklanov (1881–1959) to replace him, and the planned research took place.³⁰ In addition to Baklanov and Iakubovskii, another colleague from the Academy, Alexander Nekrasov, also took part in the expedition.³¹ Although Nekrasov died prematurely, he had already garnered a reputation as a talented orientalist and linguist. The photographic collection of the expedition includes rare shots in which the young scholar is depicted conducting his research (Figure 11.9).

From the survey based on several excavations in different parts of the settlement – including the fortress of Ak-Kala in the south-eastern part of the monument – it was concluded that the town and fortress were founded in the pre-Mongol period.³² Architectural surveys of the mausoleums in Kunya-Urgench, the citadel of Ak-Kala and Tash-Kala, and settlements and caravanserai (roadside inns for caravans on the trade route) were conducted. For two years, significant scholarly material was collected, including excellent pictures of the ancient settlement and architectural monuments, and a beautiful series of ethnographic images (Figure 11.10).³³ After the expedition was completed, a small book titled *Ruins of Urgench*³⁴ was published, in which, as Iakubovskii writes, “in essence, for the first time, the beautiful monuments of the rich and deeply cultural city of

²⁹ Alekshin 2007: 23.

³⁰ Nikolai Borisovich Baklanov (1881–1959) was an artist, architect and held a doctorate in architecture. He was also a specialist in the medieval architecture of the North Caucasus, Crimea and Central Asia. From 1928 he worked in various departments at the Institute for the History of Material Culture, and in the 1930s and 1940s he headed both the Department of Architectural History at the Leningrad Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture and the Department of History of Architecture and Art at the Leningrad Institute of Industrial Construction.

³¹ Aleksei Alekseiévich Nekrasov was an orientalist. From the age of thirteen, he took part in architectural and archaeological expeditions in Central Asia. At the age of sixteen, he attended the Institute of Oriental Languages, and aged twenty he joined the Central Asian section of the State Academy for the Institute for the History of Material Culture, researching ancient Merv and Kunya-Urgench under Iakubovskii's supervision. He died suddenly in 1932 at the age of twenty-three. He was highly respected by his colleagues, and the Academy prepared a collection of scholarly papers in his memory, which remain unpublished.

³² Dluzhnevskaja 2011: 130.

³³ Department of Photography at the Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture. Albums O. 223 and O. 224, all negatives 117, prints 117. Materials received in 1930.

³⁴ Iakubovskii 1930b.



Figure 11.9: “A Khorezm cart in Mizdakkhan, containing members of the expedition (Aleksei Alekseevich Nekrasov is sitting on the left side of the cart), 1929”. Photo by Alexander Iur’evich Iakubovskii. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.



Figure 11.10: “Kunya-Urgench, Aral-Uzbek, 1929”. Photo by Alexander Iur’evich Iakubovskii. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.

Urgench – the capital of pre-Mongol and Mongolian Khorezm – are introduced to the scholarly world”.³⁵ This book included some of the photographs taken in 1928.

During the expedition, Iakubovskii visited the Mizdakkhan settlement, recording in detail the remains of ruins located on two hills between Kunya-Urgench and Amu-Darya. Although his stay at this site was very short (two days in 1928 and two days in 1929), the material Iakubovskii collected allowed him to make a detailed description of Mizdakkhan in a special publication,³⁶ which was illustrated with his photographs. A separate series of photographs contain images of the architectural monuments of ancient Merv,³⁷ which the expedition visited in the summer of 1929.

Photographic collections from expeditions in the 1930s

Under the auspices of the Institute for the Study of Soviet Peoples (founded in 1930) at the Academy of Sciences, a number of expeditions were organised dedicated to studying the work and lives of peasants to determine progress in the establishment of collective farms.³⁸ These expeditions were conducted in many regions of the Soviet state, including the territories of present-day Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The Academy of the History of Material Culture actively participated in these studies.

³⁵ Iakubovskii 1930b: 18.

³⁶ Iakubovskii 1930a.

³⁷ Department of Photography at the Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture. Album O. 260. All prints, 69. Received in 1930.

³⁸ Novozhilov 2012.

Alexander Natanovich Bernshtam's expedition to Turkmenistan in 1930

At the beginning of April 1930 Alexander Natanovich Bernshtam (Figure 11.11),³⁹ a young member of the Academy's ancient history division, submitted an application to the ethnography department requesting to be sent to Turkmenistan for two and a half months to observe the process of collective farm construction on different lands ranging from Ashkhabad to Kyzyl-Arvat. In addition, he intended to survey the homes of the Turkmens and study their customs and language.⁴⁰ From this, he developed a unique series of photos of an ethnological nature.⁴¹ The resulting photographic materials are stored in the Department of Photography at the Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Sciences.⁴² Photography was clearly a great passion for the twenty-year-old researcher: in his report on the expedition, Bernshtam wrote that he contributed some 172 negatives to the Academy's photographic archive. At the same time, he regretted that "too few were furnished with plates [glass negatives] (from the Academy's five *diuzhin*, ca. 60)".⁴³ In a postcard sent from Ashkhabad to the Academy, he writes that "[...] the work is going well. I took about 100 pictures, and still have another 60–80 pieces, I think."⁴⁴

In Uzbekistan, Bernshtam photographed the mausoleum of Shah-i Zinda in Samarkand, the house of an Uzbek farmer, a courtyard and a mud platform for wrestling. In Turkmenistan, in addition to general views of villages, he photographed various types of dwellings and buildings (details of a mosque, the house of a wealthy farmer, the houses of middling and poor folk, mud buildings, furnaces, types of cave dwellings, the general appearance and interior of

39 Alexander Natanovich Bernshtam (1910–1956) was an archaeologist, held a doctorate in the historical sciences and was one of the most important Soviet researchers on Central Asia. He worked at the State Academy for the Institute of Material Culture from 1930, and from 1931 to 1934 he undertook postgraduate studies. In 1934 he became a member of the Institute of the History of Feudal Societies. He was also a researcher at the State Hermitage Museum, taught at Leningrad State University and worked in the Kazakh and Kyrgyz branches of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. From 1936, he led research projects on the valleys of Talas, Chu and the Issyk-Kul basin.

40 Alekshin 2010: 10.

41 Dluzhnevskaja 2011: 130–131; Bernshtam 1931.

42 Department of Photography in the Archive at the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences. Albums O. 278 and O. 279. All negatives 123, prints 126.

43 Department of Photography in the Archive at the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences F. 2. Op. 1.1932. D. 123. L. 82ob.

44 Department of Photography in the Archive at the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences F. 2. Op. 3. D. 56. L. 23.; Smirnov 2011.



Figure 11.11: “Portrait of Alexander Natanovich Bernshtam, 1931”. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.



Figure 11.12: “Nokhur village during the production of silk fibres, Turkmenistan, 1930”. Photo by Alexander Natanovich Bernshtam. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.

wagons) and traditional occupations and crafts (weaving, the production of silk fibres, carpet production, blacksmithing, a water mill, a pen for sheep and goats, milking goats) (Figure 11.12). The photographs vividly capture “signs of modern life”: a dairy station, a car on a square (signifying a connection to Ashkhabad) and “collective farm camels”. Special mention should be made of the images that characterise the social and ideological process of building the Soviet way of life in Turkmenistan. These include the judgement of a visiting “Troika” in the village of Bagyr, a meeting of collective farmers in the village of Upper Bagyr (Figure 11.13), a collective farm chairman and his deputy and the treasurer and secretary of the Zakhmet collective farm cluster.

A separate group consists of photographs taken in the village of Nukhur (Nokhur) in the foothills of Kopet-Dag, which was inhabited by the Turkmens of the Nukhur mountain tribe. In the photographs we can see the village, various Turkmen-Nukhurs, local residents and border guards (Figure 11.14), the celebration of the public holiday of Iuvar, farmers working together on the harvest and images of the sacred stone and the sacred plane tree.



Figure 11.13: “A meeting of collective farmers at the Zakhmet collective farm, in the village of Upper Bagir, Turkmenistan, 1930”. Photo by Alexander Natanovich Bernshtam. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.



Figure 11.14: “Border guards and the chairman of the village council at Nokhur village, Turkmenistan, 1930”. Photo by Alexander Natanovich Bernshtam. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.

Alkei Khakanovich Margulanov's expedition to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in 1932

In 1932 Alkei Khakanovich Margulanov,⁴⁵ another young specialist and postgraduate student at the State Academy for the History of Material Culture, was sent on a research expedition by the Academy to collect ethnographic information on Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. During this expedition, he developed a series of interesting photographs, which show the collective farm villages in the Merken and Alma-Ata districts of Kazakhstan, cattle breeding, the creation of bricks and the cultivation of corn fields. Margulanov photographed the collective farmers themselves, as well as the magnificent mountain landscapes of Kyrgyzstan with its alpine meadows, views of Lake Issyk-Kul and local residents. In one of the photographs, “the Kyrgyz epic storyteller of Islamkulov” (Figure 11.15) is depicted.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, for reasons unknown, Margulanov never provided a written report of this expedition.

Bernshtam's expedition to Central Asia in 1933

Bernshtam's second expedition to Central Asia, during which he discovered the monuments of Semirechie, took place in 1933. In the Department of Manuscripts of the Archive there is a report and diary of this expedition, which records in detail its chronology, the events of each day, routes and details of the expeditions taken, reflections and conclusions, contacts, and drawings of objects that the researcher studied in the museums of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.⁴⁷ And, although these records make constant references to photographs, these materials are unfortunately not available in the Department of Photography and their location remains unknown.

⁴⁵ Dluzhnevskaja 2011: 132. Alkei Khakanovich Margulan (1904–1985) was a scholar at the Academy of Sciences of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic, the founder of the Kazakh School of Archaeology and Ethnography and a broad-ranging Kazakh scholar. Between 1931 and 1934 he was a postgraduate student at the Academy for the History of Material Culture. In the documents of the Archive, the spelling of his surname is given in the Russian variant, –ov.

⁴⁶ Department of Photography in the Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences. Album O. 777. All 42 prints and negatives were admitted into the archive in January 1933.

⁴⁷ Department of Photography in the Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences, F. 2. Op. 1. 1933. D. 245–246.



Figure 11.15: “The Kyrgyz epic storyteller of Islamkulov, Frunze, Kyrgyzstan, 1930”. Photo by Alkei Khakanovich Margulanov. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.

The Kazakhstan expedition of 1936

In 1936 Bernshtam (Figure 11.16) led two expeditions to the Semirechie region (Semirechenskaya and Kazakhstani expeditions to Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan), with the support of the Committee of Science of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Kazakh branch of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. These projects marked the beginning of the large-scale studies to which the scholar would devote his career. The Archive contains various materials pertaining to the Kazakhstan expedition:⁴⁸ numerous photos depict the excavation of the medieval city of Taraz (Figure 11.17) in southern Kazakhstan. In addition, photographs show the remains of residential buildings of the tenth and twelfth centuries, the eastern

⁴⁸ Department of Photography in the Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences. Albums O. 1255 to O. 1264 and O. 1464 to O. 1466, negatives I 32652, II 43496–43503, 48270–48281. Negatives 640, prints 619. Photographs of Lavrov and Bernshtam were printed in the photographic laboratory of the State Academy for the History of Material Culture/Institute for the History of Material Culture.

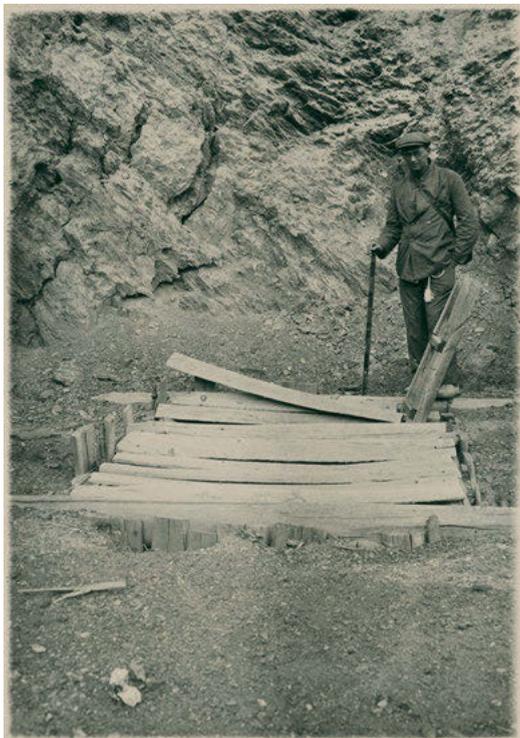


Figure 11.16: “Bernstam near the adit in Achiktash, 1936”. Photo by Vitalii Alekseevich Lavrov. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.



Figure 11.17: “Excavation 2 at Taraz (Mirzoian), 1936”. Photo by Vitalii Alekseevich Lavrov. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.



Figure 11.18: “A group of workers at the excavation site of the fortress at Lugovoe, 1936 (Bernstam is second from the left)”. Photo by Vitalii Alekseevich Lavrov. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.

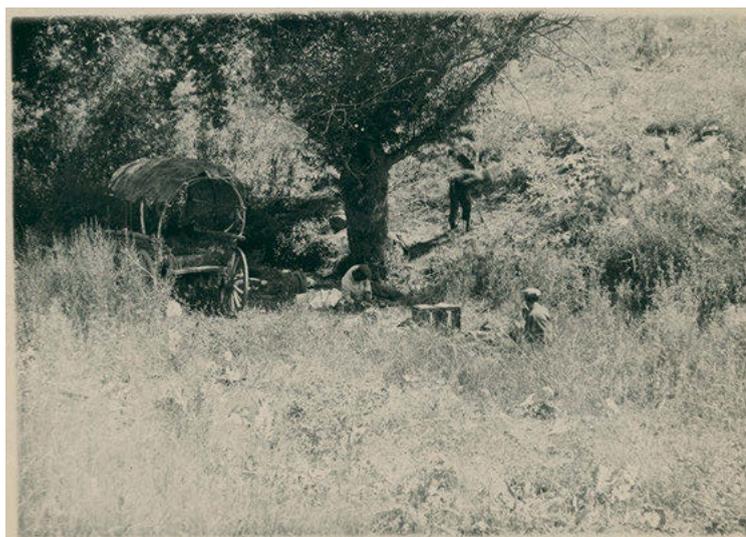


Figure 11.19: “The expedition’s camp at Kyzyl Kainar, 1936”. Photo by Vitalii Alekseevich Lavrov. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.

gate, the southern wall, the plumbing system and baths with frescoes. Among the documents, there is also a record of the archaeological sites in the valleys of the Talas, Ili, right bank of the Chu River; various excavations of the settlements of Golovachëvka, Kosh-Tyube and Lugovoe (Figure 11.18); photographs of exhibits from the Alma-Ata museum; and photographs of the findings of the expedition (ceramics and other products). The collection also includes materials from the survey of the Aisha-Bibi and Babaii-Khatun *mazars* (tombs): photographs of the exteriors of monuments, murals, ornaments, tiles and drawings. The value of this collection lies in the high-quality photographs of both the expedition (Figure 11.19) and the researchers themselves, who were rarely depicted in later years.

The Ferghana expedition of the early 1930s

Archaeological research related to the economic development of the territory of Central Asia began in the 1930s. In 1930, 1933 and 1934, the Academy for the History of Material Culture – with the Central Asian Museum of History and History of the Revolution (1930), the Sredazigiprovod, and the Hydroelectric Project (1933–1934) – organised several expeditions in the Ferghana valley (Kokand-Sokh, Khakulabad, Uch-Kurgan, Namangan) along the Naryn river in the area of the Kyzyl-Iar and the Uch-Kurgan steppe and Isfara river valley.⁴⁹ Boris Alexandrovich Latynin, a member of the Academy, supervised the work.⁵⁰ Explorations and excavations were mainly aimed at identifying archaeological sites and the remnants of ancient irrigation.⁵¹ As a result of this fieldwork, a large number of photographs were taken, which did not exclusively depict the expedition's archaeological research.⁵² The programme of work conducted in 1934 included a separate project involving workers and engineers: lectures and talks intended

⁴⁹ Dluzhnevskaja 2011: 130.

⁵⁰ Boris Alexandrovich Latynin (1899–1967) held a doctorate in the historical sciences and was an archaeologist and ethnographer at the State Academy for the History of Material Culture from 1929 onwards. From 1932 he was a member of the Academy's Committee for works on new buildings, from 1934 he was involved in field research and in 1935 he became a member of the Institute for the History of Pre-Capitalist Society. He was arrested in 1936, released in 1946 and rehabilitated in 1957. From 1956, he worked for the State Hermitage Museum, specialising in the Iron Age of Central Asia and the Bronze Age of the steppe regions of Eurasia.

⁵¹ Department of Manuscripts, F. 2. Op. 1.1930. D. 180; F. 2. Op. 1.1933. D. 97. L. 224; F. 2. Op. 1.1934. D. 219–221.

⁵² Department of Photography, albums O. 294, O. 976–978, O. 1044 to O. 1045, O. 1124 and O. 1271. Negatives 692, prints 491. Material admitted in the 1930s.



Figure 11.20: “Researchers and a group of workers at the excavations of the Shaari-Khyber settlement, taken during the Ferghana expedition of 1934”. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.



Figure 11.21: “The *omach* (plough) on the Kyzyl-larskaia steppe, taken during the Ferghana expedition of 1934”. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.

to explain the importance of registering and protecting ancient monuments.⁵³ Perhaps that explains why in the photographs, apart from the archaeological monuments and the process of excavation (Figure 11.20), we also see general views of the area, the *tepe* and the fortress, as well as interesting pictures of an ethnographic nature, which depict local residents, scenes from their everyday life, city streets, a mill, a journey on an *arba* (cart) and the process of ploughing with an *omach* (a special type of plough used in Central Asia) (Figure 11.21).

Bachinskii's work in Turkmenistan, 1936

One of the previously unknown and unpublished photographic collections associated with the Academy's projects on the restoration of architectural monuments in Central Asia includes a set of photographs taken by the architect Nikolai Mikhailovich Bachinskii (Figure 11.22) – a member of the Academy in the 1930s.⁵⁴ In the mid-1930s the Academy actively tried to organise studies of the restoration of architectural monuments in Bukhara. In 1936, the preparation of a large and complex Uzbek expedition in collaboration with various Uzbekistani institutions became the main scholarly project at the Institute of Historical Technology of the State Academy for the History of Material Culture. The expedition included studies of medieval ceramics, fabric dyes, metal products, textiles, plumbing systems and the restoration of architectural monuments. The expedition intended to commence a systematic historical and technical study of the antiquities of Central Asia with a scholarly and organisational base in Bukhara. Bachinskii, who already had extensive experience in the restoration of architectural monuments in Bukhara, was appointed deputy chief of the project. Due to funding constraints, the expedition did not take place and Bachinskii was sent to Turkmenistan rather than Uzbekistan to carry out restoration work at Anau and ancient Merv. He led the expedition of the Institute of History under the Central Committee of the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), which began in May 1936 and lasted four and a half months. Bachinskii carried out conservation and research at ancient Merv in the mausoleum of Muhammad ibn-Zeid and in the twelfth-century mausoleum of the Sultan Sanjar. He performed significant work at Anau on the restoration of a fifteenth-century mosque. The pictures show general types of monuments and different types of repairs (Figures 11.23 and 11.24). For the remaining fortnight, Bachinskii led the

⁵³ Department of Manuscripts, F. 2. Op. 1.1934. D. 220.

⁵⁴ Nikolai Mikhailovich Bachinskii (1896–? no earlier than 1965) was an architect, art historian and conservator. From 1929 to 1933 he worked in the Bukhara branch of Uzkomstaris, and from 1933 to 1937 he worked at the Institute of Historical Technology at the Academy.



Figure 11.22: “Portrait of Nikolai Mikhailovich Bachinskii, published in *Turkemenskaia Iskra*, 13 April 1941 No. 87 (4945)”. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.



Figure 11.23: “Fifteenth-century mosque at Anau, 1936”. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.



Figure 11.24: “Work on reinforcing the structure on the right-hand side of the mosque’s door, Anau, 1936”. Photo by Nikolai Mikhailovich Bachinskii. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.



Figure 11.25: “Restoration of the tile facade of the monument to Vladimir Il’ich Lenin at Ashkhabad, 1936”. Photo by Nikolai Mikhailovich Bachinskii. Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences.

restoration of the facade of the monument to Vladimir Lenin in Ashkhabad for a commission of the Turkmen SSR's government. This is also depicted in the photographs (Figure 11.25). A small but important set of photographs reflecting the Bachinskii restoration research in Turkmenistan in 1936 was incorporated into the Academy's photographic archive in 1937.⁵⁵

Conclusion

Following the Imperial Archaeological Commission, those working at the Academy for the History of Material Culture continued to study and preserve the historical and cultural heritage of the Asian peripheries of the former Russian Empire. Several thousand images on a wide variety of subjects on Central Asia between 1920 and 1930 are a result of their concerted scholarly efforts. They include archaeological excavations, monuments of ancient architecture and restoration studies, as well as the daily life and activities of local residents. Of these, the materials produced by the architect Alexander Petrovich Udalenkov stand out first and foremost. The documents produced by Udalenkov, Iakubovskii and Bernsh-tam, along with Bachinskii's and Margulan's smaller collections, also have great documentary value. Of course, there were other expeditions conducted by members of the Academy for the History of Material Culture, but they do not provide such a profound and broad-ranging photographic heritage.

Today, the research projects conducted by the Institute for the History of Material Culture at the Russian Academy of Sciences are primarily archaeological in nature, but the scope of its predecessor, the Academy of the History of Material Culture, was much wider, so the photographic collections contain documents not only on archaeology but also ethnography, oriental studies, epigraphy, architecture, restoration and other humanities subjects. From the 1920s to the 1930s, due to the reform of the organisational structure of the State Academy and the ensuing adoption of new ideological topics and projects, many of the Academy's activities were curtailed. In 1937, the number of specialists in fields outside archaeology was reduced, and the areas of scholarly activity were limited. This was due to the transformation of the Academy into the Institute of the History of Material Culture and its entry into the Academy of Sciences. All these changes can be observed in the examples and types of photographic collections. In terms of Central Asia, we can see how ethnographic photography first

⁵⁵ Department of Photography, album O. 1228. All 72 prints and negatives were admitted in 1937.

acquired an ideological colour, and then disappeared altogether.⁵⁶ From the late 1930s, the focus on restoration also gradually declined, and after the closure of the Institute of Historical Technology, only architectural archaeology remained part of the Institute. Along with this, the variety of subject matter in the expeditions' photographic documents disappeared. Photography became more and more specialised, subordinated exclusively to archaeological purposes and it no longer depicted the people behind the scenes. The stages of development and the types of objects that were to be depicted and submitted to the archaeological report were formalised according to on-the-ground instructions. These included the types of archaeological objects, the kinds of work, stratigraphy and planigraphy, as well as individual and group finds. At the same time, the quality of the photographic equipment and supplies decreased, and as a result the quality of the images produced also deteriorated.

In contrast to this, the photographic collections from the Central Asian expeditions of the 1920s and 1930s contain many *tableaux vivants* of local life, enabling us to ascertain the specifics of on-the-ground organisation of expeditions and scholarly work in those years, as well as to observe the researchers themselves. A special category of non-staged shots of collective farm life represent the state of Soviet construction in Central Asia much more realistically than the well-known propaganda materials of the time. The images also show the transformation and preservation of local traditions and beliefs in the context of the ongoing "Sovietisation" of the region. Photographs from these collections are published to a limited extent, and researchers have used them most frequently as illustrative material in articles and monographs on archaeology – yet they possess a much broader range of data that would be interesting for a modern researcher. The documents are not purely scholarly or archaeological but also contain valuable information of a general historical nature, including images of local residents and their occupations and sites of lost cultural heritage. The scholarly potential of this assortment of visual sources remains untapped.

⁵⁶ The subject matter of the photographs has changed, reflecting the transition from "bourgeois ethnology" to "Marxist ethnography", in accordance with the change in subject matter of Soviet research after the turning point of the 1920s and 1930s. Instead of traditional craft and costume, images favoured collective farm life, collectivisation, meetings of *troikas*, portraits of collective farm chairmen and local millionaires.

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Svetlana Gorshenina

12 “Ethnographic types” in the photographs of Turkestan: Orientalism, nationalisms and the functioning of historical memory on Facebook pages (2017–2019)

Abstract: This chapter analyses the discussions surrounding photographs of the so-called “ethnographic types” of the Turkestan of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the pages of three dedicated Facebook groups. The perception of these images, bearing the imprint of colonialism, is constructed according to three overlapping frameworks: anthropological classifications of “peoples and tribes” of the period of the Turkestan governor-generalship; Soviet concepts of “nation” (*natsiia*) and “ethnicity” (*ètnicheskaia prinadlezhnost'*); and the post-Soviet understanding of “nationality” (*natsional'nost'*) as a criterion of authenticity (allegedly) confirmed by history. These online discussions of photographs resemble real “memory wars”, which contribute to the formation of collective digital memories marked by various manifestations of nationalism, nostalgia and imperial ideology. Reflecting the need for the personalisation and visualisation of history, these groups create alternative popular history on the pages of Facebook, thus producing knowledge in the new media and new conditions for the creation, preservation and interaction of memories.

Keywords: social networks, memory wars, ethnic and national classifications, nationalism, digital collective memories, photographs of Turkestan

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“Ethnographic types” against the background of the boom of imperial photography: Between racial theories and classifications of “nationalities and tribes”

It is not easy to discuss racial issues in the context of Central Asian history. While in the 2010s–2020s the problems of racism and ethnic prejudice have again climbed to the top of the agenda in many Western countries, in Central Asia these questions have only been heard as a faint echo.

Does this mean that racial theories did not play a significant role in the history of these countries, which were formerly part of the Russian Empire? Or that the Soviet Union managed to create an antidote to them, thanks to official anti-colonial rhetoric, the principle of the “fraternity of peoples” (*druzhiba narodov*) and the absence of racial segregation between “blacks” and “whites”? Or is such a problem, despite its numerous ramifications, not relevant today in this vast region?¹

Most likely, the answer is no. Racism and racial theories – organised in the second half of the nineteenth century into a whole system of ideas, pseudo-scientific ethnic classifications and social practices – functioned as global ideological tools to legitimise the imperialist policies of many Western powers in the nineteenth century, including the Russian Empire, and to establish relations of colonial dependence, including in Central Asia.

The first racial classifications were invented by physical anthropologists according to the same organisational principles used by linguists to create the concepts of language families: using tools from natural and social sciences with the pretence of mathematical exactitude in the data analysed. They were based on a so-called scientific taxonomy, which claimed the existence of “races” through numerous anthropological parameters (from skin, eye and hair colour to skull size and height), which were sometimes supplemented by linguistic characteristics. Their number, taking into account “small races”, “racial types”, “sub-races” and “mixed races”, varied from three to at least thirty. Within this framework, “races” were described as unequal not only in their external physiological characteristics but also in their moral qualities, intellectual potential, ability to progress, level of “civilisational development” and “contribution to history”. In accordance with

¹ I refer, in particular, to the various nationalisms formed in the post-Soviet space, to the ethnic conflicts and to the aversion in Russia for the so-called guest worker (*gastarbaiter*) from Central Asia and the Caucasus, contemptuously called “black”.

these pseudoscientific ideas, it became possible to integrate races into a hierarchical pyramid of values, at the top of which was the “Caucasian” (“white”) race and at the bottom the “negroid” (“black”) race. This justified, among other actions, colonial expansion, racial segregation and the institution of slavery. Moreover, “undeveloped” non-European peoples were initially the exclusive object of physical anthropology.²

In addition to scientific and political discourses (and sometimes legal regulations), these theories were visually supported by numerous photographs of representatives of different “ethnographic types”, which accompanied the pseudoscientific descriptions. These images were widely replicated in the form of postcards and engravings in various publications, and established visual clichés about these groups. These images of “ethnographic types”, along with “views”, occupied a central position in the photography of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

These visualisations of the categorisation of humanity survived the collapse of the colonial system, becoming a coveted collector’s item and an important part of a growing interest in old photographs and their reinterpretation. In this, often biased, rereading of images from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, “ethnographic types” continue to act as a pretext and argument for different (often racist or nationalistic) discourses in the present day. The range of these discussions is wide: from the identification of the ethnic identity of the photographed character to the moral and ethical condemnation of the very creation of such images, and the demand for the restitution of “stolen” images of the “ancestors”.

Although protests against systemic racism have not found ground in Central Asia (maybe because it doesn’t exist there in the “classical” western forms), and although the debate about the (non-)colonial nature of the Russian Soviet presence in the region has not yet subsided, questions about the relationship between photographs of “ethnic types”, racial theories, linguistic and other rationalised hierarchical classifications of the population are important for this region as well.

In the global panopticon of racial classifications, the peoples of Central Asia were assigned a specific place: with rare exceptions, they were included mainly in two large categories of “Aryan” (Iranian) and “Turanian” (Turkic-Mongolian) races. At the same time, more detailed classifications, comprising linguistic, cultural, racial and religious criteria, emphasised categories of “national character” (*narodnost*), “tribe” (*plemia*), “clan” (*rod*)³ and “type” (*tip*). In Soviet times these were complemented by the categories of “national belonging” (*natsional’nost*),

² Mogilner 2008: 113.

³ Presupposing a particular lineage.

“ethnos” (*ètnos*) and “ethnicity” (*ètnicheskaia prinadlezhnost'*), which quickly took a dominant position.⁴ All these categories referred to disparate and often incoherent classifications, and had complex interrelationships. Despite that, they were widely used to rationalise knowledge about the different groups of the Central Asian population in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and, accordingly, to create their visual images.

Today, these pictures have once again acquired relevance in Central Asian countries, which have been caught up in a boom of imperial photography. The reinterpretation and reuse of visual images of the population of the Turkestan governor-generalship unfolds now at different levels, from official museology to private internet projects. This is in varying degrees informed by the specific nationalisms of the people involved.

Facebook has become one of the media platforms where photos of imperial Turkestan, in particular “ethnographic types”, are actively discussed. Its structure influences the modes of the discussion and discloses the mechanisms at play in the reuse of images created in the Turkestan governor-generalship. Of particular interest to these interpretations is the specific lens used by the vast majority of those involved in the discussions. Being largely unfamiliar with the intricate classifications of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the discussion participants do not evaluate “ethnographic types” through concepts of national character (*narodnost'*), tribe or clan, used in the literature of that time to categorise the population of Turkestan. As a rule, they most often resort to the concept of national belonging (*natsional'nost'*) devised in the Soviet era, which in modern ideological constructions acts as a principle of authenticity, unambiguous and confirmed by history. At the same time, they start from their own experience (which is often still Soviet), from memories inherited from older generations of relatives, friends or acquaintances, and from knowledge formed under the influence of artistic, scientific or political reconstructions. These Postmemories and intergenerational transmissions⁵ are intertwined in

⁴ All these terms, without exception, emphasised belonging to a particular ethnic type, rather than to a nation (as “nation” is understood through the concept of the nation state in the Western world). This difference, which seemed fundamental in Soviet and post-Soviet contexts, was manifest in citizens’ passports: while the passports themselves indicated membership of a state (Soviet Union, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, etc.), within this document the ethnicity of the bearer was systematically indicated (Russian, Uzbek, Jewish, etc.).

⁵ Several terms (post-, prosthetic or fantasy memories) define this particular form of interaction with the past, which goes beyond the personal trajectories of life and takes into account the memories of previous generations. The subjects relive the catastrophe that happened to their predecessors thanks to oral retellings or preserved personal artefacts. Marianne Hirsch’s (Hirsch 1997, 2008, 2012) research on the Holocaust was one of the first references to this form of memory, which she called “Postmemory”.

different proportions with the changing ideological attitudes of the post-Soviet republics. These republics, in turn, are occupied with creating their own national histories and determining their position in relation to the former metropole.

This article focuses on the reuse of photographs of “ethnographic types” in the context of online discussions in dedicated Facebook groups. I analyse the characteristics of these online communities and show how photographs of the Turkestan region enter the cycle of digital memories, how they are perceived by users and how they are integrated in contemporary nationalist, anti-colonial, imperial, nostalgic and (anti-)racist discourses online. It is also important to understand how digital collective memories are formed in this online framework, taking into account the peculiarities of new digital media. Different discourses often lead to frontal collisions, or, in fact, to real memory wars.

Aware of the specific nature of the material analysed, I will now focus on a few basic concepts that will help to link different streamlined classifications of the population of Turkestan with visual documentation and digital practices in the discussion of “ethnographic types”.

Memory wars in the internet space

The understanding that the past could be described through the prism of memory wars emerged in the mid-1980s.⁶ Digital network memory or connective memory,⁷ which are formed from images and texts and are associated with (and dependent on) new internet technologies and media, have been the subject of research since the early 2000s. The scholars working in this field drew inspiration from concepts of *cultural memory*,⁸ *collective memory*,⁹ *communicative memory*¹⁰ and

6 Stora 2008.

7 This concept implies a memory produced, mediated and mediated in the online space, the very existence of which changes the understandings of memory and the past due to its constant variability and interconnectedness. By changing what is regarded as the past, we modify the very act of remembering it, the memories themselves and the commemorative practices associated with them (Hoskins 2009, 2011; Rutten 2013: 219).

8 A. Assmann 1992, 2011; J. Assmann 2011; Misztal 2003; Rothberg 2009; Etkind 2013.

9 The concept of “collective memory” complements the idea of individual memories and was first proposed by Maurice Halbwachs (Halbwachs 1950). Now it is defined more as “collective cultural memory”, which implies the existence of “collective forms of relaying and actualizing cultural meanings which refer to the past, and which are pivotal to social and cultural identity formation” (Rutten/Zvereva 2013: 3).

10 The concept of “communicative memory” implies “informal, verbally shared recollections of living generations” (J. Assmann 1992, 2008; A. Assmann/Conrad 2011; Rutten/Zvereva 2013: 3).

*place des mémoires*¹¹ while incorporating the features of the new media. These were the constant circulation of information, transnationalism and the simultaneous variability and stability of digital content. In the wide multi-vector transfer of information, this content stretches over time and space and is open to instantaneous, spontaneous and constant modification.¹²

The first studies in which the issues of the memory wars were projected onto digital networks appeared at around the same time, from the end of 1990s to the early 2000s. In these studies, Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia (much earlier in the timeline) is present in its most contrasting form.¹³ As Adi Kuntsman observes, this is not simply the simultaneous coexistence of multi-voiced discourses but the coexistence of discourses that are extremely contradictory. By provoking explosive situations where verbal violence is permitted, and owing to the instantaneity and limitlessness of the new information technologies, these discourses are unprecedentedly visible in the public media space of the internet. These "mass-scale, long-term discussions, whose dominant tone is one of insults and mutual hatred, and whose participants defend predetermined sociopolitical positions rather than search for consensus",¹⁴ were subsequently identified as one of the main features of online discussions. In parallel with the French *guerre de mémoires*, English definitions of *holy wars*, *flame wars* or *flaming*,¹⁵ entered Russophone internet jargon as direct English transliterations.

These network conflicts became the subject of a special project called "Web Wars",¹⁶ which had its geographical focus on the countries of Eastern Europe and the western regions of the former Soviet Union (Belarus, Georgia, Poland, Russia, Romania, Ukraine). The researchers involved in the project combined the theory of "historical trauma" formulated in Western scholarship,¹⁷ with a new

11 The concept of "sites of memory", which defines "the concrete spaces, people and objects that embody a national memory", was formulated by the French historian Pierre Nora in the 1980s and 1990s (Nora 1986, 1989).

12 Garde-Hansen/Hoskins/Reading 2009a: 1–3, 6; Hoskins 2011.

13 Bakhtin 1981; Stivale 1997; Kuntsman 2009: 195.

14 Rutten/Zvereva 2013: 7.

15 On the phenomenon of flaming, see Oegema et al. 2008; Kuntsman 2009: 191–193; Rutten/Zvereva 2013: 7.

16 "Web Wars" was one of the strands of Alexander Etkind's project "Memory at War: Cultural Dynamics in Poland, Russia and Ukraine (2010–2013)": <https://politicadelamemoria.org/en/2015/06/memory-at-war-cultural-dynamics-in-poland-russia-and-ukraine/>; https://heranet.info/projects/hera-i-cultural-dynamics-inheritance-and-identity/memory-at-war-cultural-dynamics-in-poland-russia-and-ukraine/?fbclid=IwAR0M1asGCdw3G64i6MgxW90ne4NwpO6_ch-Hkx8jCMmhcdYa7Gcmf6Aj2 (12 December 2019).

17 Edkins 2006; Bell 2006; Lebow/Kansteiner/Fogu 2006.

theory, developed specifically for the analysis of the post-socialist landscape. They identified in the post-Soviet space a melancholic and sorrowful “mourning”, a “loss” that was unspoken and not evident in the public sphere.¹⁸ They also observed that, while in Western Europe memories have been fixed “in stone”, in the post-Soviet countries the reinterpretation of history has taken place at the level of publications, films and public debates. Focusing mainly on the textual forms of memory on online platforms,¹⁹ they analysed how the Soviet experiment – to which society assigned the ontological status of “trauma” – was discussed, reinterpreted and mediated in the internet space, starting from the Stalinist repression and the Second World War.²⁰ At the same time, Uilleam Blacker and Alexander Etkind suggested that, in relation to the Soviet experience, the concept of Post-memory postulated by Marianne Hirsch should be understood more as a process of mourning a loss than a trauma or a post-traumatic state.²¹

In this context, my topic does not simply complement the ongoing discussion by expanding the geographic scope of research. Firstly, it draws attention to Facebook, a platform that has now become widespread in Central Asia.²² In most studies,²³ Facebook has been relegated to a secondary position, owing to the prominence in the post-Soviet space of other social networks such as YouTube, VKontakte and Odnoklassniki.²⁴ Nonetheless, despite being fourth in the ranking of most used social networks, Facebook actively participates in the memory boom in Central Asia, playing the role of an important media and communication space that is easily accessible to almost everyone. It was here that groups dedicated to the photography of Central Asia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries emerged, together with their own specific audience. Facebook pages,

18 Blacker/Etkind 2013a: 5, 9.

19 Blacker/Etkind 2013a: 5; Rutten/Zvereva 2013.

20 Blacker/Etkind 2013a: 3.

21 Blacker/Etkind 2013a: 9–10.

22 According to data from Internet World Stats referring to the global statistics of internet usage (<https://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm>), at the end of 2019 in Russia, out of 109,552,842 internet users (representing 76.1% of the total population) 13,100,000 were Facebook users. In Kazakhstan, out of 14,669,853 internet users (representing 78.9% of the total population) 2,500,000 were Facebook users. In Uzbekistan, out of 17,161,534 internet users (representing 52.3% of the total population) 800,000 were Facebook users. In Kyrgyzstan, out of 2,493,400 internet users (representing 40.1% of the total population) 650,000 were Facebook users. In Tajikistan, out of 3,013,256 internet users (representing 32.4% of the total population) 170,000 were Facebook users. In Turkmenistan, out of 1,262,794 internet users (representing 21.2% of the total population) 20,000 were Facebook users.

23 See, for example, Zvereva 2011; Rutten 2013: 222.

24 <https://www.web-canape.ru/business/socialnye-seti-v-2018-godu-globalnoe-issledovanie/> (2 February 2020).

designed according to the platform's different principles of organisation (personal pages, open, closed or secret groups), have been a place in which individuals and groups share, comment on, remember and forget the photos.

Secondly, my article focuses on the visual component of online discussions, which has been less investigated than the texts. Notwithstanding that Facebook structurally encourages written rather than visual production, the groups chosen for analysis build their discussions about the past on iconographic evidence. Moreover, these groups explicitly declare themselves a community for the discussion of history. According to the results of the "Web Wars" project, this is an exceptional case, contradicting a central myth about digital culture and Facebook ("Be young, be digital, be equal, be free from history"²⁵). In addition, while issues around archiving and transforming personal memories into collective ones have already been analysed,²⁶ the process here is somewhat the reverse. Starting from photographs of the tsarist period, group members discuss the colonial past of the Russian Empire and Central Asia, weaving their own memories and elements of Postmemory into a historical narrative. This narrative reflects past and present versions of collective and/or official memory, thus forming new versions of hybrid historical cultural memory.

Lastly, the region selected for analysis offers an opportunity to move our thoughts beyond the exclusively Soviet past. Examining the south-eastern periphery, rather than the western and central regions, of the former USSR allows us to focus on understanding how digital memory functions in relation to the tsarist empire and its colonial periphery. In this case, "Soviet trauma" is not paramount, nor are the problems associated with the Second World War, on which historians still concentrate. The focus here is on the "colonial situation", which is usually less present in discussions about the post-Soviet space. This colonial dimension clearly structures the "memory wars" around postcolonial issues, particularly around the significance of the Russian and Soviet presence in Central Asia and around nationalist and (anti-)colonial discourses. Therefore, the theories built for the project "Memory at War" using material from Eastern Europe and the western regions of the former Soviet Union are as irrelevant for my analysis of the mediatisation of memory conflicts in postcolonial Central Asia as the Western schemes for studying memories that that project rejected.

The Central Asian case requires a broader and more nuanced analysis in order to understand how photographs of the Russian colony from the tsarist period can be evaluated from the point of view of the Soviet experience. This is

²⁵ Mosco 2004: 81.

²⁶ Garde-Hansen 2009: 136.

sometimes perceived as traumatic, sometimes as positive and modernist. At the same time, we should not ignore the hypertrophied nationalism of the independence period, nor should we discard the specifics of these users’ groups, whose composition is post-Soviet, post-socialist, post-catastrophic and, almost without exception, postcolonial.

This article is dedicated to one aspect of this topic: the reinterpretation and mediatisation of photographs of so-called “ethnographic types”. This allows us to consider the extent to which these images today are vehicles of rationalised classifications of the population of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and how they are intertwined with Soviet and post-Soviet ideological constructions.²⁷

The names of the participants in these discussions have been omitted. References to the discussions have been made in accordance with Central European time. The style of the quoted statements has not been changed, while the spelling has been adjusted, where necessary, to current literary norms.

Prelude

The creation of visual basic documentation

According to the French expert Chahriyar Adle, the first instances of photography in Central Asia probably occurred as early as in 1841–1842. This was only a few years after the Frenchman Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre (1787–1851) and the Englishman William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877) patented their technologies, respectively the daguerreotype in 1839 and the calotype (talbotype) in 1841. British officer Arthur Conolly (1807–1842), on his second mission to Turkestan, tried to bring a camera with him to Bukhara, which, however, did not save him from being executed by the emir in 1842. This first appearance of photography in Turkestan was not significantly later than its neighbouring countries. However, according to the dates of the conquest of the Central Asian khanates by the Russian Empire, the development of photography was delayed in Turkestan by two decades,²⁸ if compared with India.

²⁷ More complete and detailed research, analysing the reception of other photographs of Turkestan from the tsarist period, particularly the so-called “views” (*vidy*), will be published soon by myself in book form. For moment see Gorshenina 2021b.

²⁸ For a more extensive reconstruction of the history of photography in Turkestan, see Gorshenina 2021b.

This delay, however, did not change either the nature or the favoured subjects of imperial photography, the main purpose of which was to obtain accurate information about Turkestan and its population in order to develop the most suitable strategy for managing the new territories.

The racial background of these images is not always evident, as shown in the very first album made in Central Asia by the professional military photographer Anton S. Murenko (1837–1875), called *From Orenburg through Khiva to Bukhara*.²⁹ The album was made during the diplomatic mission of the adjutant of Colonel Nikolai P. Ignat'ev (1832–1908) to Khiva and Bukhara in 1858. The twenty-eight photographs taken by Murenko represent different social groups in their habitual entourage, from important dignitaries and mullahs to soldiers and Russian prisoners. The compositions, subjects and captions of the shots mostly indicate social status, and do not allow us to consider these images as an example of explicit ethnic categorisation of the local population.

However, just over a decade later, after the conquest of part of the territories of the Central Asian khanates, the *Turkestan Album* (1869–1972) displays more explicit ethnographic classifications of the population of Central Asia. The *Album* was compiled by Alexander L. Kuhn (1840–1888) and Nikolai V. Bogaevskii (1843–1912) under the directive of Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufman (1844–1882), the first governor-general of Turkestan. The *Album* consisted of around 1,400 photographs, maps and drawings,³⁰ and one of its four volumes presented photographs of several ethnographic types in Turkestan. Departing from the criteria of physical anthropology, which required frontal and profile photographs of nude models, the photographs of the *Turkestan Album* represented the “natives” from the standpoint of civilisational ethnography. Focusing on the depiction of costumes, everyday life, crafts, social, cultural, religious and economic practices, these images were intended, in Kaufman's view, to give an accurate picture of Turkestan and to contribute to the development of a rationalising policy of coexistence with (and management of) Central Asian society.

At the same time, the *Album* clearly outlined the tribal and ethnographic categorisation of “natives”: ‘Kirgiz-Kaisak’, ‘Kara-Kirgiz’, ‘Cholak-Kazaks’, ‘Uzbeks’, ‘Khivins’, ‘Sarts’, ‘Tajiks’, ‘Yaghnobis’, ‘Karategins’, ‘Iranians’, ‘Gypsies (Mozang, Lyuli)’, ‘Indians’, ‘Afghans’, ‘Arabs’, ‘Jews’.³¹ This anthropological classification of “types of peoples” (*narodnost'*) was implemented according to the requirements of the Moscow

²⁹ Morozov 1953: 14; Devel' 1994: 259–271; Dluzhnevskaiia 2006: 282–291, 2011: 32–34.

³⁰ Gorshenina 2007.

³¹ The order of the “peoples” (*narodnost'*) is reproduced in accordance with the *Turkestanski al'bom, chast' ètnograficheskaiia: tuzemnoe naselenie v russkikh vladeniakh Srednei Azii*. 1872: 3.

Anthropological Society³² and the requests of the leading Russian anthropologist of the time, Anatolii P. Bogdanov (1834–1896). During the Moscow Polytechnic Exhibition of 1872, for which the *Turkestan Album* was officially commissioned, Bogdanov gave preference to photographs of ethnographic typology. These were shots showing the full and costumed body, which emphasised the exotic aspect of the image (more “classic” anthropological images were supposed to be created, published and sold separately).³³ It is possible that the preference for visualisations of ethnographic and tribal classifications over racial typologies was due to the fact that, in Russia, an understanding of ethnographic types as racially mixed was gradually gaining weight. Across the whole empire, it was impossible to correlate pure racial types with ethnic groups, languages, cultures and territories. This impossibility later prompted Moscow anthropologists, in particular Aleksei A. Ivanovskii (1866–1934), to create a basic category of “mixed race types”, designed to replace the concept of “race”. Consequently, the task of anthropologists was not to distinguish “pure races” but to discover the degree of mixing between them. Such hybridity, accepted as the universal structural framework of the natural history of mankind, complicated all ethnographic classifications, making them even more uncertain and vague.³⁴

Notwithstanding the fragility of ethnographic constructions, the *Album* was perceived as “an exact impression” of Turkestan and immediately became Turkestan’s official business card, suitable for use at different levels inside and outside the empire. Copies of the *Album* were sent to several scientific societies, supplied to leading specialists “in the East” and presented at exhibitions. The classifications of the “nationalities” (*narodnost’*) of Turkestan, proposed in the *Album*’s pages, became an object of imitation. At the Vienna World’s Fair in 1873 the *Album* was displayed in the “Education” section,³⁵ and at the International Geographical Congress in Paris in 1875 a dozen artists made sketches from the *Album*’s photographs every day.³⁶ Lastly, the photographs from the *Album* acquired by anthropologist Charles-Eugène de Ujfalvy (1842–1904) served as the basis for the engravings of a book by his wife, Marie Ujfalvy-Bourdon (1845–1904), which described the first scientific French expedition to Turkestan.³⁷

³² NA RUz. F. I-1. Op. 20. D. 2519. L. 2; IVR RAN, Spb Office. F. 33 (A. L. Kuhn). Op. 1. D. 267. L. 220.

³³ NA RUz. F. I-1. Op. 15. D. 96. L. 132.

³⁴ For a good overview of the understanding of “race” in Russia in comparison with other European countries, especially France, see Moussa/Zenkine 2018.

³⁵ NA RUz. F. I-1. Op. 20. D. 6652. L. 59; *Catalogue de la section du Turkestan 1873*: 635; Sonntag 2012: 18.

³⁶ *Izvestiia imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva*, vol. 12, No. 2 (1876): 174.

³⁷ Ujfalvy-Bourdon 1880.

After implementing such a large-scale project, Kaufman became a recognised expert in the classification of the peoples (*narodnosti*) of Turkestan and continued to influence the formation of ideas about them. In 1876, at the request of the Organising Committee of the Third International Congress of orientalists, he appointed his subordinates Georgii A. Arendorenko and Shpitsberg (first name unknown) to help the photographer Vladislav F. Kozlovskii (b. 1845) to prepare an album of the types of Turkestan.³⁸ Their task was to select four typical representatives (two women and two men) of each ethnic type (such as Tajiks, Yaghnobis, Uzbeks, Afghans, Lyuli Gypsies and Jews) and send them to the photographer with a note indicating their name, age, place of residence and *narodnost'* (and for Uzbeks, also their tribe).³⁹ Given the criticism of the ethnographic part of the *Turkestan Album* in which sitters were photographed in three-quarter view, in festive robes and with their heads covered, Kaufman stipulated that the portraits be front and profile on a neutral background.⁴⁰ This was in accordance with the requirements of anthropological taxonomy and partly followed Ujfalvy's work in 1873.⁴¹ Kaufman was under the instructions of the Paris Anthropological Society, compiled by the influential French anthropologist Paul Broca (1824–1880).⁴² At the same time, it was necessary to avoid any nude models.

Thus Kaufman's assistants made the initial selection of ethnographic types and their identification as *narodnosti* for scientific research. The first photo-classifications of the population of Turkestan were already available to them, also carried out by order of the governor-general. In turn, the roots of such classifications went back to earlier work, particularly a set of photographs of ethnographic types that Bogdanov used to produce mannequins for an ethnographic exhibition in Moscow in 1867 (the organisers of this event had been inspired by an exhibition at Crystal Palace in London).⁴³ Several local identities – regional, tribal, religious, social, economic and cultural, which were much more important than ethnic and linguistic characteristics – were largely ignored.

This practice of constructing ethnographic types according to already established typologies was not unique: Ujfalvy had used almost the same principle.⁴⁴

38 For more details, see Gorshenina 2007: 334–337.

39 NA RUz. F. I-5. Op. 1. D. 263. L. 1–2, 6.

40 Lerkh 1874: 97–99.

41 Ujfalvy de Mezö-Kövesd 1879.

42 Broca 1865.

43 Knight 2001.

44 For more details on Ujfalvy's anthropological research, see the paper in this book by Felix de Montety and Laura Elias's article on the role of photography in the development of racial classifications in Turkestan.

Not having managed to complete all the photos of anthropological types during his trip due to his photographer's⁴⁵ sickness and departure to Tashkent, Ujfalvy had commissioned the same photographer to complete (later and on his own) the photo collection with the missing types of Uzbek women, Kara-Kirgiz women (Kyrgyz women) and Lyuli. The choice of types had been decided following the sketches of the Tashkent-based Swiss teacher Emile Müller, who accompanied him on his journey using the recommendations of Bogdanov and Paul Broca.⁴⁶

In the following decades, the number of photographs of ethnographic types increased significantly, forming a peculiar stock and involving their commercialisation (special mention here should be made of [Vasily A.? F.?] Orden [Ordè], the author of the four-volume album *Caucasus and Central Asia*).⁴⁷ Photography ceased to be exclusively a matter for the colonial administration. Photographs were now taken by independent Russian photographers as well as Western travellers. However, even if more dynamic in terms of frame construction, these representations still followed the same speculative and reductive classifications of *narodnosti*.

The issuing of Turkestan postcards, starting in 1898–1899,⁴⁸ marked the beginning of a new era in the reproduction of the ethnographic stereotypes of Turkestan. Publishing houses in Turkestan, Russia and Western Europe published postcards often in large numbered series and, depending on the intended market, in different languages. These publications used reproductions of images from renowned albums or photographers, and the works of almost unknown and often unnamed authors (for example, a large part of Hugues Krafft's photographs were published without mentioning his name).⁴⁹

With the rare exception of photographs from personal archives, these images of types, created by the colonial administration and replicated through the postcard industry, have become the main material of the discussions about the characters' *natsional'nost'* on the pages of Facebook.

45 Perhaps Kozlovskii.

46 Ujfalvy de Mezö-Kövesd 1878: 90. Müller was a professor at the imperial boys' college in Tashkent.

47 Prishchepova 2011: 57–68.

48 Golender 2002: 14.

49 See in particular the postcards of Voishnitskii's edition.

The national delimitation of 1924–1936: Soviet *natsional'nosti* and ethnicities versus races and *narodnosti*

Implemented by the Soviet government with the active participation of local elites between 1924 and 1936, the national delimitation shaped the borders of the Central Asian states, which have barely changed after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Despite the complex and multi-stage process, the incomplete and flawed population censuses, the gaps in the statistics, the contradictory plans and their dubious implementation, these nations were created with all the factual and symbolic attributes of a nation state.⁵⁰

In the course of this process, the classifications of the *narodnosti* of the tsarist period were revised. The most official of these classifications consisted of the results from the first general census of the Russian Empire in 1897, based on racial, ethnic and tribal parameters. In the results of this census, Kirgiz-Kaisaks, Sarts, Uzbeks, Turks, Tajiks, Turkmens and Kara-Kirgiz were mentioned in descending order. The tsarist classification was modified and only partially considered during the progressive listing of the Soviet *natsional'nosti*. This started with the *List of Nationalities of the Turkestan Region* by Ivan Zarubin (1887–1964),⁵¹ which served as a foundation for the *List of Nationalities of the USSR* in 1926.

During this bureaucratic normalisation, *narodnosti* were replaced by the new Soviet “nations” (*natsii*). *Natsii* used different criteria for classifying the population, and these were primarily language and culture. For groups that no longer appeared in the official lists of *natsional'nosti*, Soviet functionaries determined *natsional'nost'* from the top down, often based on the groups' locations. Thus, all residents of Charjui (Chardzhou) and its district were recorded as Turkmens regardless of their own tribal definitions. Similarly, the Turkic- and Iranian-speaking Sarts, Lyuli Gypsies, Turks, Chagatai and Turkmens who lived in the territory of the newly created Uzbekistan were registered as Uzbeks. The Kipchaks were registered as either Uzbeks, Kyrgyz or Kazakhs, depending their relationship with the new borders. “Kirgiz” with numerous clan lineages were transformed into Kazakhs, and “Kara-Kirgiz” became Kyrgyz.⁵²

The conventionality of the new ethnonyms was clear to the specialists. Iosif P. Magidovich (1889–1976), responsible for the statistical analysis of Bukhara and Khiva, discussed the existence of more than 150 tribes (*plemia*) behind the generic

⁵⁰ Haugen 2003; Gorshenina 2012: 243–257.

⁵¹ Zarubin 1925.

⁵² Gorshenina 2012: 260–263.

term “Uzbeks” who did not identify themselves as such.⁵³ Likewise, Zarubin warned that the term “Tajiks” should be distinguished into Galchas (Yaghnobis, Jazguljami, Shugnani, Wakhani, Ishkhashimi), Mountain Tajiks (inhabitants of the high regions of Zeravshan, Karategin and Darvaz) and Lowland Tajiks.⁵⁴ *Natsional’nost’* turned into a defining marker, stemming from established state codifications.⁵⁵ At the same time, the number of *natsional’nosti* in the official lists decreased as the Soviet republics were formed: from 172 in 1927 to 106 in 1937.⁵⁶ The number of the main ethnic groups was determined by the apparatus of the national republics. Despite the fact that “ethnicity” was not equal to “race” in this new Soviet classification, over time it began to be perceived as a “natural” category, deeply rooted in history but changing under social influences.

In addition, the anti-colonial language shaped in the 1920s, and the concept of the “fraternity of peoples” established in 1932–1938, removed from Soviet practices the specific segregation that existed in the Russian Empire. This segregation, which is difficult to define as racial, was based on the “indigenous/other” category. This was both social and ethnographic but at the same time did not reject attempts to highlight the physical (“racial”) characteristics of groups within the population. The imperial categorisation was replaced by Soviet creolisation, comprising almost total Russification and unadvertised discrimination on the basis of nationality. Consequently, the various relational inequalities that existed between the centre and the Central Asian periphery did not disappear. As a reaction, anti-colonial and nationalist discourses could be clearly observed in all Central Asian republics already by the late Soviet era. With independence, they developed into a variety of state nationalisms, based on particular interpretations of history, new state symbolisms and reforms of the national languages. However, the specific Soviet understandings of *natsional’nost’* and ethnicity have not disappeared, and the lists of *natsional’nosti* formed during the Soviet era have not been revised.

The Soviet official lens, together with the users’ direct experience of life in the republics of Soviet Central Asia, has determined the perception of visual images of ethnographic types of the nineteenth century. These images have been sought after by the official propaganda of the independent republics as well as by a wider audience.

53 Gorshenina 2012: 261; NA RUz. F. R-1. Op. 1. D. 703. L. 61–62.

54 Zarubin 1925: 6; Bergne 2007: 10–14.

55 Blum/Mespoulet 2003: 266.

56 Hirsch 1997: 251, 260, 264, 266, 269.

Old photographs of Central Asia on Facebook pages

The “photographic boom”: Between high technology, migrants’ nostalgia, urban voluntarism and historical revision

The photography of Turkestan has become a subject of discussion on the pages of numerous social networks, including LiveJournal, Telegram and Instagram. This has occurred in parallel with the emergence of large digital archives of photo collections owned by museums and libraries, and physical publications, which have been issued since the 1990s.⁵⁷ Despite the obstacles put in place by the authorities of a number of countries, these websites are actively visited from all over the world, and have become places for collecting, presenting, sharing and discussing photographs. In fact, they are a real alternative to traditional museums, archives and libraries.

This “photographic boom”, which manifested itself clearly in the early 2010s, is the result of a number of interrelated factors, both technological and sociopolitical. It is fuelled by the nostalgia for youth and the lost country experienced by former residents of the Soviet republics of Central Asia who migrated after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Moreover, it is driven by a sense of the irreversibility of the loss experienced by the people living in the region now. This is due to the authorities’ inappropriate urban policies in Central Asian cities, which have affected the preservation of architectural monuments. The politically engaged re-writing of history and the manipulation of collective memory in the development of the independent states’ new national ideologies push many to search for their “roots” on a visual level in an attempt to validate or refute these new concepts. Politicised imperial nostalgia and “post-imperial” ideology, which underpin the neo-imperialist projects of Putin’s Russia, stimulate interest in the pre-revolutionary photographs of Turkestan. Lastly, the widespread use of advanced technology, such as smartphones, enables people to take high-quality images and upload them to the internet immediately. Technological advancement has also opened up exhibitions, museums and, to some degree, archival spaces (including family archives) to a wide audience of internet users.

Old photographs and postcards have now become interesting to a much wider circle of people, losing the connotation they once had of coveted items for a narrow circle of collectors, or as the subject of professional activity for historians, artists and curators of museums and archives. However, the reception

⁵⁷ See Gorshenina in the introduction to this volume.

of these images is far from unambiguous, despite the dominant desire to view the old image as an “undisputable documentation”. Thanks to digital technologies and the internet, the ease of manipulation of visual data has transformed photography not only into a topic for debate but also into a pretext for all sorts of memory wars.

Facebook groups dedicated to old photographs

Today, there are several websites and groups on social networks dedicated exclusively to photographs of Turkestan from the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁵⁸ For my analysis, I selected a few interconnected Facebook groups and observed their activity from the beginning of May 2017 to the end of February 2019.⁵⁹

Most of my attention was devoted to the group “Old Photos of Turkestan and Central Asia” (*Starye fotografii Turkestana i Srednei Azii*), which many users identified as “the most scandalous”. It was created as an open community on 2 May 2017 by AA, a Muscovite who has never been in Central Asia. Its aim was to “popularise the history and culture of the inhabitants of the Central

⁵⁸ Without claiming to be exhaustive, I note that one of the most active is the site “Letters about Tashkent” (<https://mytashkent.uz>), which, in addition to its own material, regularly republishes historical photos that appear on Facebook. On the Uzbek Facebook branches, old photos periodically appear in the following groups (all as of 3 February 2020): “Tashkent i vse-daokolo” (<https://www.facebook.com/pg/tashkentvsedaokolouz/photos>, 32,440 subscribers); “Old Tashkent” (<https://www.facebook.com/OldTash>, 27,197 subscribers); “Starii Tashkent” (<https://www.facebook.com/pg/backtotashkent/photos/>, 7,016 subscribers); “Bukhara Photo Gallery” (<https://www.facebook.com/shavkatboltaev12>, 480 subscribers). The group “Bukhara: Historical and Architectural Monuments of the Old City” by Rakhmatillo Sharifov is an exception, and regularly posts old photos of the city (<https://www.facebook.com/RahmatilloSharifov>, 1,544 subscriber). Several groups on <https://ok.ru/> relate to more topical subjects and deliberately do not publish photographs of Turkestan in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the exception of periodic reprints on personal pages or in groups: e.g. “Moi Tashkent”: <https://ok.ru/group57921462403126/topic/69069246251062>; “Old-Tashkent”: <https://ok.ru/oldtashkent>. Other important sites include: <http://oldtashkent.com/>; <http://www.etoretro.ru/>; <http://sobor.ru>; <http://oldprints.ru/pictures/cards/>; these sites act as image banks, and periodically publish informative content. See for example Tatiana Vavilova on LiveInternet: “Tashkent in Old Photos” (<https://www.liveinternet.ru/users/bo4kameda/post364557460/>); see also descriptions of individual architectural objects, such as Andrei Gagarin’s post: (<https://www.dropbox.com/s/wj3rgx5sx6k8kn6/%D0%92%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%B0.pdf?dl=0>).

⁵⁹ In all cases, the groups analysed were neither commercial nor monetised.

Asian region of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through documentary and artistic photography”.⁶⁰ However, due to the regular skirmishes on its pages, it moved quite quickly to a closed or private group.⁶¹ In parallel, AA created another private group, “Archive No. 1”, dedicated to photographs of one of the expeditions to Central Asia, which did not experience further development.⁶² The conditions set by the administrator of “Old Photos”, according to which “it is strictly forbidden to insult anyone on national or any other grounds”,⁶³ were disrespected. So were the requests to remain tolerant of all points of view,⁶⁴ with the exception of Nazi ideology.⁶⁵ Equally ineffective were his regular interventions in the comments, the most provocative of which were often destroyed by him or by direct participants in the discussions (even the administrator does not have a complete screenshot of all the group’s discussions). Many members of the group spoke about the need for more active moderation. This implied shutting down debates, closing certain topics for discussion, blocking access to *flaming* instigators and removing the harshest comments.

After several sharp exchanges of a nationalistic nature, AA, who did not have time to moderate all the daily wars on the group, was forced to close it. The group was just over eleven months old. On 15 April 2018, the group was moved to archive mode.⁶⁶ After being on standby for six months, it reopened on 13 October 2018. From that moment on, it was moderated by two administrators: while retaining the nominal status of administrator, AA handed over the group to BB, a Muscovite of Tashkent origin who studied finance. AA hoped that BB would moderate the

60 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/682887498550984/>. I sincerely thank the administrators of the AA and BB groups for giving interviews on 19 October 2018 and 13 February 2019 respectively. All comments and quotations are my own translation unless otherwise stated.

61 The status of a closed or private group means that only the group members accepted by the administrator can see the posts in the feed and comment on them.

62 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/289798308185300/> (162 members as of 16 September 2020).

63 25 October 2017, 12:14.

64 “Opinions are different, correct and erroneous [...]. Everyone has their own truth. We respect other people’s opinions, mistakes and truths, and do not hope for understanding [of] our own [...]. Time will put everything in its place. Without the past, there is no future, but how the future will be depends on the present. Here are more photos, with links and documents explaining them. Through visualisation to the study and understanding of culture and life, from understanding to interest, from interest to partnership, from partnership to friendship” (13 April 2018, 21:00).

65 “How is this ‘we respect other people’s opinions and other people’s misconceptions’? Do we have to respect the opinion of nationalists, or fascists, or paedophiles or leeches? Do we have to respect fake publications? Do we have to respect derogatory comments?” (14 April 2018, 00:06).

66 When a group is in an archive state, it means that members of the group can see content that has already been published, but they can’t add any comments or post.

discussions more authoritatively. At some point, the number of its members fell from 14,004 (as of 1 October 2018) to 13,604 (as of 1 February 2019), but then increased again to 20,106 (as of 16 September 2020). To date, the group still retains the status of a private group. On 20 December 2019 BB modified the group’s name to “Old Photos of Central Asia” (*Starye fotografii Srednei Azii*), and changed the title image on the group’s page. On the same day, BB opened a new group – open to the public – called “Old Photos of the Turkestan Region” (*Starinnye fotografii Turkestanskogo Kraia*) (3,733 subscribers as of 16 September 2020).⁶⁷ This group, which was more oriented towards collectors of antique photography, inherited the title photo from the first group. To co-moderate both groups BB invited CC, a Muscovite among the most active participants of groups dedicated to old photography. Not limiting himself to the activities of moderator, on 13 December 2019 CC created his own group called “Ethnography of Central Asia in Old Photographs, Lithographs and Watercolours” (*Ėtnografiia Srednei Azii na starykh fotografiakh, litografiakh i akvareliakh*) (2,223 subscribers as of 16 September 2020). The purpose of this group was declared as “the promotion of ethnography, history and culture of the inhabitants of the Central Asian region of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through photographs, lithographs and watercolours of the period”.⁶⁸

Another important example was the community “Tashkent Retrospective” (*Tashkentskaia retrospektiva*) (56,008 subscribers as of 16 September 2020). It was created by DD, a former history undergraduate, on 1 December 2017,⁶⁹ seven months after AA’s group. “Tashkent Retrospective” was not associated with AA in any way, except that its administrator actively shared his photos on the pages of AA’s group.

A specialised group called “Tashkent Retrospective: Old Photos of Central Asia and Turkestan” (*Tashkent Retrospective. Starye fotografii Srednei Azii i Turkestana*) (10,732 members as of 16 September 2020) soon spun off from DD’s community.⁷⁰ It was created on 24 April 2018, nine days after AA’s group was transferred to the status of archive. The activities of this group were administered by two enthusiasts in the study of photography in Central Asia, Tashkent-based DD and Moscow-based NN.⁷¹

⁶⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/804072056687037/?fref=nf>.

⁶⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ethnographyturkestan/>. The original title “Ethnography and History in Old Photographs of Turkestan and Central Asia” was possibly modified to create a greater distance from the two previous groups, where CC acts as moderator.

⁶⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/tashkentretrospective/>.

⁷⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/179399492874859/>.

⁷¹ I sincerely thank DD, the administrator of this community, for the information provided during our interview on 11 February 2019, as well as NN, the group’s second administrator, for

The “community” and the “group” functioned differently: the community allowed only the administrator to publish, and the group allowed all its members to publish. These two structures were adopted to avoid open memory wars, while the ethos for their creation was almost identical to that of AA’s group. Moreover, the main reason for the creation of the “group” was the closure of AA’s group and the disappearance of interesting posts and contributors from news feeds. This met the desire of many users and a significant number of the members of AA’s group moved to this new platform.

By closely monitoring the activities of the community and the group, DD and NN have implemented a strict moderation policy from the very beginning. Leaving the statuses of the community and the group “open” (later the group moved to “closed” status), they methodically removed inappropriate comments and blocked violators (about 200 profiles were blocked in the community by 11 February 2019, i.e. in the first thirteen months of its existence). Administrators also made sure that there was no significant leakage of photos or small videos to other groups or social networks. However, such blocking of the distribution of material already posted in the public domain is essentially contrary to the very nature of social networks, where one of the indicators of efficiency and success is the rate of sharing.

Memory keepers: A collective portrait of users of dedicated Facebook groups

A better understanding of the structure and functioning of the groups’ transnational audience came from daily monitoring of the activities of the groups, interviews with their creators and administrators, and analysis of users’ profiles. My main focus was AA’s group, as it was the most significant in the context of the memory wars. The “Tashkent Retrospective” group and community⁷² helped me to correlate details in the reconstruction of both a collective portrait of users and an algorithm of photograph circulation.

My conclusions are based on a sample of 1,000 profiles of members of the “Old Photos of Turkestan and Central Asia” group, as randomly shown by Facebook on top of the list of group members. The group had 14,004 members at the time, and the methods used to collect and analyse data did not include any special

the interesting discussions we had during the conference “Another Turkestan: Unknown Photography from the Asian Periphery of the Russian Empire”, held in St Petersburg in May 2019.

72 The administrators of which gave me access to internal information.

software algorithms. Moreover, Facebook does not always offer the opportunity to accurately determine the geographical location, professional affiliation or true identity of users. For these reasons, my conclusions as an outside observer do not claim to be mathematically accurate. At the same time, they are confirmed when compared with other groups analysed.

Social and professional parameters

From a socio-professional point of view, data show this subgroup of 1,000 randomly selected members as a fairly intellectual community. From a large fraction of historians and orientalists (150) to five specialists in the history of photography, experts constituted more than one-quarter of the subgroup, in which representatives of the natural and hard sciences also featured. This core was complemented by local experts (*kraevedy*), known for their publications in the Central Asian media or on their own Facebook, LiveJournal and LiveInternet pages. These can be described as “guardians of traditions” and “person-resources”. These users, like “*humus*” and “*rus-turk*” for example, amassed on their LiveJournal pages unique textual/visual libraries and archives.⁷³ Among the members of the group were also around thirty professional journalists, more than fifty representatives of the creative industries (artists, writers, film directors, musicians), about ten professional photographers, more than ten tour operators, guides and translators, about twenty school teachers, and several booksellers and owners of antique shops and galleries. The chief engine of this community consisted of enthusiastic collectors of photos and postcards (at least fifteen people). Lastly, many “history fans” completed this social stratification. Their role is no less important in the formation of digital network memory, which, by definition, is not the prerogative of intellectual elites and functions regardless of recognised expertise.

A core of experts formed in the group in the first few months, comprising mostly collectors of old photographs and postcards and local historians and specialists. These users carried out a professional examination of the images uploaded to the feed, identifying the subjects photographed and determining the topographical localisation of buildings and landscapes.

For the majority of these specialists, the group represented an important platform for professional interaction and a vital source of visual and historical information that they could easily use for their own scientific, creative and commercial purposes. This engagement contributed to the transformation of the

⁷³ <http://humus.livejournal.com/>; <https://rus-turk.livejournal.com/>.

users into amplifiers of the visual images circulating in the group. Thanks to them, the images not only spread across various Facebook pages and groups, but also reached the wider, no longer virtual, public spaces of different countries, where old photos were fitted into new historical, political, artistic and economic contexts.

Geographical parameters

The prevailing opinion among experts of digital network culture is that it is technically impossible to determine state borders online in relation to internet users and, consequently, it is equally impossible to use geography as an analytical tool.⁷⁴ In my case, however, the geographical affiliations of members could be determined, although, perhaps, with a degree of error.

AA created the group as a generic Central Asian group, without any specific geographical preference. Nonetheless, the group soon became mainly Uzbek, or, more precisely, Tashkent-based. According to the approximate statistics of the analysed subgroup, Uzbekistan was represented by at least 240 users (155 of them from Tashkent, twenty-eight from Samarkand, twenty-six from Bukhara, five from Andijan, three from Nukus). Kazakhstan was represented by twenty-two users, Tajikistan by eighteen, Kyrgyzstan by eighteen and Turkmenistan by two. An important place was occupied by Russia, with at least 100 members. More than fifty of them were residents of Moscow, which has been the major migration point from Central Asia. Twenty were residents of St Petersburg, where a large number of institutions dealing with the Central Asian region are concentrated. Sixteen were residents of Kazan, which shares aspects of history with Central Asia. Single users, possibly emigrated from the Turkestan region, were identified in Samara, Voronezh, Lugansk, the Uralsk and Altai. At least twenty-six users were located in the United States, where a large diaspora of Central Asian immigrants has formed. Then, in descending order, users were identified in England (ten), France (nine), Germany (nine), Holland (seven), Israel (six), Turkey (five), Poland (five), Azerbaijan (four), Armenia (four), Switzerland (three), Italy (three), Austria (three) and Canada (three). Lastly, one user each was identified in Norway, Finland, Latvia, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Ukraine, Belarus, China, Singapore, Japan and Australia.

⁷⁴ Paulsen 2013.

A similar picture emerged in relation to other groups,⁷⁵ evidencing a general pattern of Facebook groups dedicated to the old photographs of Turkestan and suggesting that the geographical composition of the group’s members was determined by three interrelated factors. Firstly, the personal stories of the members of the groups, approximately 95 per cent of whom are from (or remain associated with) Central Asia and their life trajectories, both personal and professional. The vast geography of the groups, which spans the world’s continents, is a reflection of: (1) the mass exodus of members of the non-titular⁷⁶ peoples of Central Asia, which followed the surge in nationalism of the 1990s and the collapse of the Soviet Union and declaration of independence in the countries of the region in 1991; (2) the migration of labour, constant since the first post-perestroika crisis, which created conspicuous communities in other countries (especially in Russia, the United States, Israel and Turkey); (3) the increased mobility of younger generations, which went to study or train in foreign countries (this often does not coincide with the main migration flows).

Secondly, the geographic distribution of the groups corresponds to the geographic distribution of the world’s largest institutions engaged in the study of Central Asia, most of which are concentrated in Western Europe, the United States, Russia and Japan.

Thirdly, the density of this geographic distribution is determined by the content of the images themselves. These images related to the geopolitical situation of Central Asia as part of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Consequent to the spatial hierarchy of the Russian Empire, Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara were the most photographed sites, acting as a kind of showcase of the Russian (then Soviet) presence in the region. Accordingly, the current inhabitants of this region have been the most involved in the discussion of the visual objects shown in the groups. This conclusion is not particularly surprising: old photographs are most requested in the place in which they were taken, and are of interest to those who were connected with (or remain within) that region.

75 Gorshenina 2019: 122–127.

76 A “titular nationality”/“nation” (*titul’naia natsional’nost’/natsiia*) corresponds to the dominant ethnic group in a given state. This ethnic group’s language and culture determine the state language policy and education system, and its name determines the name of the state (for example, in Uzbekistan the titular nation is Uzbek and the state language is Uzbek). The presence of a “titular nationality” implies a large number of its members and a high level of national identity. At the same time, it also implies the existence of “non-titular nationalities” (*netitul’nye natsional’nosti*), which means that the ethnic community did not meet the criteria in terms of population compactness, homogeneity and number to be recognised as an “autonomous” republic or region. In practice, belonging to a non-titular nationality can lead to a situation of discrimination, in particular the inability to achieve high social positions.

Thus, while the groups' object of interest was Central Asia, the composition of the groups' members was undoubtedly transnational and cosmopolitan, regardless of the fact that almost all the members were united by a common Soviet past and a common Soviet memory (or Postmemory).⁷⁷ This created a decentralised space for online social communication. The space was outside of a single geographical reference and outside the borders of a single country. Consequently, it did not presuppose the existence of a single policy for the development of collective memory, or a single official version of history, or a single "national narrative". Accordingly, the functioning of memories in this globalised context was more complex than the binary opposition between official and rejected/marginal stories and memories. On the pages of the group, people living in different countries⁷⁸ clashed because of different and at times incompatible political memories, and because of different versions of tsarist and Soviet periods of shared history. The radical changes that followed the fall of the Soviet Union comprised the disintegration of Soviet national identities and the creation of new ones. The Central Asian element of these new identities was built on a necessity to emphasise independence from Russia and the importance of the independent state. The Russian part, instead, was built on the desire to legitimise Russia's messianic mission in Central Asia, while distancing itself from any characterisation as a colonial power. Although users could accept or reject various versions of nineteenth- and twentieth-century history, their (post-)memories were still largely influenced by several official historical theories circulating in public discourses, according to country. The network space, on which national feelings were projected, was traversed by internal and inherent borders that did not mirror national borders. Moreover, these boundaries were determined primarily by a range of nationalisms,⁷⁹ but not by language: the current linguistic situation of the post-Soviet space, in which Russian continues to dominate, meant that Russian-language texts could originate from any geographical location and be ideologically antagonistic. In addition to these multiple boundaries, another important divide was the intergenerational gap, complemented by the pro- or anti-Western orientation of the users.

77 A. Assmann/Conrad 2011: 2.

78 The moderators of the groups were generally Muscovites, Muscovites of Tashkent descent and residents of Tashkent.

79 In addition to feelings of national identity, collective identity can encompass a variety of realities, among which are territorial, socio-economic, generational, professional, ethnic, gender, sexual, religious, political, activist, philosophical, linguistic, artistic, cultural and physical realities.

Linguistic indicators

The colonial situation of Turkestan within the Russian Empire and, later, the republics’ position in the Soviet Union were marked by the active policy of Russification of the inhabitants of Central Asia. The consequences of this were reflected in the fact that the Russian language became a structuring element of all the groups. The appearance of comments in the local languages of Central Asia, in particular Uzbek, was rather sporadic, and usually signalled an aggravation of the situation during the discussion. Rare remarks in English came either from Western or Eastern users who did not understand Russian well, or from the most aggressive participants in the dispute, who used English as a means of insult (see p. 385–386).

Gender and demographic indicators

The gender proportions of the groups show that 60–70 per cent of users were men and only 30–40 per cent women. This percentage becomes more or less equal among users above fifty-five years of age, perhaps as women’s duties related to childcare decrease. The largest category of users were men from twenty-five to forty-four years of age, which contradicts the stereotype of older people being the majority within groups of old photography fans.

To summarise, we can say that, despite the problematic nature of this term, the average member of these groups is a young and relatively well-off man, a native of Central Asia who lives, has migrated from or often visits Central Asia. At the same time, this average member is usually based in a large city. His economic well-being correlates with his ability to spend a certain amount of time online looking for photos and commenting on them, in the evening or during the day and for leisure or work. By interacting with and/or confronting older members of the group, the average user becomes in practice the most active custodian of Postmemory. Despite the lack of personal Soviet experience, his perception of the photographs of Turkestan is not independent from Soviet schemes or from nineteenth-century concepts. Likewise, his perception is also affected by his personal relationship with Central Asia and the traumatic (or not) nature of his personal experience. In this activity, the Russian language acts as a sort of entry card to participation in the debates, and a limiting barrier for non-Russophones.

The circulation of photos in the groups: Number and Subject

Number of photos

Determining the exact number of pre-revolutionary photographs circulating on the pages of the groups analysed is quite a difficult task (in the framework of this study, I did not touch upon Soviet photography, which is different in both its ideological objectives and its style). According to the Facebook statistics regarding the “Tashkent Retrospective” community, in which only the administrators were allowed to post, a total of 6,675 photos were published in the thirteen months of its existence. There was no distinction between pre-revolutionary photos, images of the Soviet era and modern photos.

For the associated group “Tashkent Retrospective: Old Photos of Central Asia and Turkestan”, Facebook does not provide such statistics. However, in the first nine months of the group’s existence, 2,169 posts were published on its page, each of which contained between one and twenty photographs. Consequently, the number of photos may vary from about 2,200 to 4,000, again without an exact chronological division of the time in which the photos were taken.

Not having access to the internal statistics of the “Old Photos of Turkestan and Central Asia” group, I can roughly assume, based on my own calculations, that during the first period of its existence (from 2 May 2017 to 15 April 2018) between approximately 3,600 and 4,000 photos were published in the group, without chronological distinction.

We should also take into account that some photos could be published several times in all three feeds, flowing from one group to another. Sometimes the same photo could appear two or even three times, due to searches for a better quality of preservation and scanning among users or users deciding simply to republish photos (with new material, because they just wanted to, or because they forgot or did not know that it was previously published, etc.). Moreover, in parallel with the old photos, the group members often published recent pictures. Thus, the total number of pre-revolutionary images circulating in the group may actually vary from between 2,000 to 4,000 (excluding Soviet era photos).

This is just a sample related to the personal preferences of group members, photo owners, or re-posters of images freely available on various internet platforms. Despite the original idea of publishing only unknown (mostly private) collections, many photos were already well known, having been repeatedly published on other social networks, on the feeds of other Facebook groups or on museum websites. The conspicuous traffic of images across the different

websites dedicated to old photos and postcards ensures their circulation in the internet space. In this regard, the *Turkestan Album* is extremely revealing because its photos constantly pop up on the internet. The official photographs of tsarist Turkestan, mentioned at the beginning of the article, have become the most widely reproduced in this segment of online space. Very popular photographs that feature repeatedly are by Paul Nadar (1856–1939), Leon Barszczewski (1849–1910), Sergei M. Prokudin-Gorskii (1863–1944), Grigorii A. Pankratiev, Ole Olufsen (1865–1929) and Annette M. B. Meakin. At the same time, a detailed presentation of photos or postcards on Facebook pages should not be expected, nor a coherent history or accurate information about location and authorship (though I note that most photos in the “Tashkent Retrospective” groups are usually accompanied by accurate and detailed captions).

My own analysis involved at least 842 pre-revolutionary photographs, excluding several duplicates and their modern analogies. All these photos appeared on the pages of the “Old Photos of Turkestan and Central Asia” group. It was on the basis of this corpus of photographs that I built statistical observations, analysed discourses and drew conclusions.

The subject of the photographs: “views” and “types”

The most popular subjects were photos and postcards of urban landscapes (“views”) and ethnographic portraits (“types”), and to a lesser extent photos of natural landscapes and historical events.

“Views” were definitely the most numerous in the group (554 photos in my image corpus). The large number of “views” was not only due to the fact that this material was the most widespread and, accordingly, the most easily accessible, but depended also on the destruction of the urban landscape that has recently unfolded in Central Asia, particularly in Uzbekistan. This generated strong nostalgic feelings for the disappearing cities, which helped consolidate the group.⁸⁰

Contrary to the photos of “views”, photos of “types” regularly served as a detonator for heated discussions. The original photos were correlated with the imperial ethnic classifications, and the rare identifications of the photographed subjects tended to ignore the local identities that existed at that time, which

⁸⁰ See the resource created by Boris Chukhovich within the project of the *Alerte Héritage* international observatory, called “Architecture of Uzbekistan of the Twentieth Century: Black and Red Book”: <http://archalert.net/>.

were much more graded (local, regional, tribal, religious, etc.). At the same time, they also diverged from the classifications established in Soviet times, and referred to non-existent classifications of *narodnosti* and tribes, behind which elements of racially rationalised schemes were hidden. The captions were equally incompatible with the understanding of *natsional'nosti* and *natsii* of the independence period. These inconsistencies in classification manifested themselves regularly in the course of discussions, provoking sharp verbal exchanges and accusations of chauvinism and nationalism.

Moreover, the problematic term “ethnographic types” emphasises the colonial character of this visual series, since in this case the “types” were the native inhabitants of the Turkestan region: out of 288 recorded “types”, natives featured in 209 photographs, while the number of European/Russian “types” was limited to seventy-nine images (it is worth mentioning that fifty-seven of these images were photographs of the Russian military, which emphasises the coloniality of this visual sample).

In addition, the term “types” itself turned out to be extremely vague, since it allowed the combination of all types of photos of “natives”. These were, in particular: costumed anthropological and ethnographic photographs; individual or collective official portraits, taken according to the same rules as salon photographs in the Russian capitals; “reportage” shots, representing collective (most often official) portraits; and genre scenes featuring so-called “street types”.

Finally, it should be observed that the analysis of this visual material goes beyond racism or ethnographic classifications and moves to the level of a discussion about the war (or the reconciliation) of memory.

The attempt to systematise the types: Basic documentation about the classifications of users

Based on what has been described above, I have tried to avoid analysing photographs of “types” according to the Soviet classifications of *natsional'nosti*, widely used in museum collections (for example, in the Russian Ethnographic Museum in St Petersburg). Reflecting the heterogeneity of the material itself, I have attempted to structure it according to the internal and fluid gradations that are identifiable within this subcategory of photos.

Thus, in this article, focused on the re-evaluation and reuse of ethnic classifications, I have left out pictures of non-titular ethnic minorities (see note 76),

though the most serious controversies in the assessment of the colonial past of Turkestan emerged in the course of their discussion.⁸¹

Gender gradations

Male types

Turkestanian male types represented the vast majority of photos in this category. Approximately 130 images included both individual and group portraits, as well as the so-called “street types”, on the cusp between types and genre scenes (around sixty photos).

The most recurrent photographs were of dervishes (twenty-three, see *infra* p. 367), followed by images of the last two emirs of Bukhara, Sayyid Abd al-Ahad Khan (1859–1910, r. 1885–1910) and Sayyid Mir Muhammad Alim Khan (1880–1944, r. 1910–1920) (fourteen photographs). These ranged from the famous photographs taken by Paul Nadar and Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii to the reportage photographs of Sayyid Abd al-Ahad’s trips to Russia,⁸² and photographs taken by Karl Bulla (1855–1929) during the ceremony for the laying of the foundation stone of the mosque of St Petersburg in 1910.⁸³

Most of the comments conveyed a positive perception of these historical characters.⁸⁴ Numerous comments suggested a re-evaluation of the role of the last emir Alim Khan and the arrangement for the transportation of his ashes for reburial in Uzbekistan.⁸⁵ At the same time, awkward situations regularly arose. These involved images connected to the wrong emir, multiple ways of writing the emirs’ names,⁸⁶ ignorance of the sequence of their rule⁸⁷ and family history. This happened despite the fact that detailed biographies of the emirs were regularly attached to these photos.⁸⁸

Less numerous were the images of both the khan of Kokand (the same page from the *Turkestan Album* appeared several times) and the khan of Khiva with his

81 This part of the analysis will be presented in detail in my forthcoming book.

82 These included photos – subsequently transformed into engravings – of him present at a show in his honour at the palace of A. V. Priselkov in 1893 (*Niva*, No. 6, 1893).

83 For example, 18 February 2018, 17:58; 18 June 2018, 10:15.

84 21 December 2017, 16:06.

85 3 March 2018, 06:22; 18 February 2018, 17:58; 1 March 2018, 21:13.

86 19 February 2018, 17:46.

87 19 February 2018, 17:46.

88 18 December 2017, 15:56.

entourage (two engravings and two photographs). The small number of images, however, did not prevent the formation of a narrative encompassing sorrow for the tragic fate of the last khans, information about their descendants⁸⁹ and discussions which were often completely illiterate from a historical point of view.⁹⁰ An insufficient knowledge of history⁹¹ was also obvious to many members of the group. Some of them linked it to the lack of a detailed and truthful research at the official level: “Uzbek historians are in great debt to the population. About Khudayar Khan, about Alim Khan, about the khan of Khiva [we] know only from foreign sources.”⁹² At the same time, the interest in photographs of the Turkestan ruling elite fits perfectly into the general post-Soviet interest in tsars and emperors.

Individual male portraits of the civilian population of Turkestan were abundant (thirty-eight photographs) (Figure 12.1). Most often anonymous, they were



Figure 12.1: “Samarkand. Merchant of bread. No. 15”. Postcard published by the photo print shop Scherer, Nabholz and Co., Moscow. 1903. Author’s property.

⁸⁹ 22 November 2019, 07:38.

⁹⁰ For example: “[the khan of Kokand] surrendered to the Soviet authorities without a war” (2 February 2018, 13:49). In fact, the Kokand khanate was conquered as early as 1876 by the tsarist generals.

⁹¹ “Once I heard that name [Khudayar Khan], but I didn’t know who it was. Our old people said: ‘Even Khudoyorkhon [Khudayar Khan] can’t solve this problem’” (1 February 2018, 18:16).

⁹² 1 February 2018, 18:26.

made in accordance either with the norms of “studio” portraiture or with the rules for the creation of ethnographic types. Examples of the latter are the portraits by the French traveller Hugues Krafft (1853–1935). After being completely unknown in Central Asia for a long time, Krafft has become the most cited Western photographer in the internet space dedicated to this region since the appearance of many posts reproducing his photos.⁹³

In addition to speculation about their identification, anonymous images often gave rise to discussions about ethnicity (see *infra* p. 372). Subjects that were already recognisable provoked, typically, historical reconstructions and assumptions about the dates of the photos.⁹⁴ Very rarely were they accompanied by detailed family biographies (for example, the biography of the great-granddaughter of the merchant and amateur archaeologist Mirza Bukhari). More frequently, descendants communicated their degree of kinship with the subjects depicted, as did the great-grandson of the Istaravshan (Ura-Tyuba) qadi Mahmud Khan or the great-granddaughter of chief qadi of Tashkent Muhammad Muhitdin Khoja (Khwaja) (d. 1902).⁹⁵ The interconnecting of family histories occurred on the part of the Russians as well, though these were isolated cases.⁹⁶

Several images (at least twenty-four) depicted the Turkestan military. These were individual and collective portraits showing mounted horsemen, infantry, local police at the command of the *volost'* administrator, exercises and demonstrations of uniforms and weapons.⁹⁷ The main topics of discussion surrounding these photos were the identification of the characters, the uniforms, the military armour of the soldiers and the Turkestan horses (Figure 12.2). The tone of discussion was set by those interested in military history.

In regard to the value of the Turkestan armies, the opinions of the participants reflected the dismissive tone of certain publications of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, quoted by users from all countries and all nationalities. For example, the drawing of P. S. Vasiliev for the article “Bukhara Infantry”, published in the *Niva* magazine, was presented together with quotations from the books of Georges K. Meyendorff (1795–1863) and Martyn V. Lyko. These quotations stated that, as a rule, the instructors and commanders of the artillery

93 See a selection of photographs from the book by Hugues Krafft (1902) with Russian and Uzbek translations: <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=oa.1315967175243010&type=3>.

94 The debate about the date of one of the photographs from Leon Barszczewski: 1 April 2018, 01:04.

95 23 December 2017, 18:58.

96 “Probably my great-grandfather has a Silver Star because of this emir” (18 December 2017, 20:40).

97 19 December 2017, 08:01; 11 January 2018, 21:11; 27 January 2018, 08:15; 6 March 2018, 17:28.



Figure 12.2: “Views of Turkestan. Kirgiz in the Steppe”. Postcard published by B. A. Schnaider, Odessa. Author’s property.

of the Emirate of Bukhara were Russian prisoners or fugitive soldiers,⁹⁸ which implied a low level of training in the Turkestan armies. At the same time, other replies indicated a sense of pride among members of “titular nationalities”, especially in relation to the images of mounted Teke warriors: “I am proud to be a representative of the Teke tribe of the Turkmen people.”⁹⁹

With rare exceptions, historical reconstructions associated with photographs of officials were based directly on publications from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This tallied with one of the group’s principles – “to restore real history”. For example, in the case of the photo taken by Stanislav F. Nikolai of the qadi of Tashkent, Muhammad Muhitdin Khoja (Figure 12.3), details were drawn from the Turkestan publicist Evgenii L. Markov (1835–1903).¹⁰⁰ According to the source used, an explanation of the portrait of this important person could mention his cooperation with the tsarist colonial administration. The importance of the qadi of Tashkent in the Turkestan governor-generalship, as well as its official recognition in St Petersburg, engendered a double reaction. On the one hand, it caused pride and admiration in the group members: “We need more of this material and we need the youth to read it.”¹⁰¹ On the other, though more rarely, it prompted accusations of collaboration: “He served the invaders.”¹⁰²

⁹⁸ *Niva*, No. 3, 1889: 80, 87; Meiendorff 1975: 140; Lyko 1871; 6 March 2018, 17:28.

⁹⁹ 07 February 2018, 17:50; 21 December 2018, 14:00.

¹⁰⁰ Markov 1901; Golender 2007.

¹⁰¹ 26 February 2018, 06:13.

¹⁰² 27 February 2018, 04:01.



Figure 12.3: “Muhammad Muhitdin Khoja, head qadi of Tashkent”. Photo by Stanislav F. Nicolai. In: Markov 1901.

Likewise, contrasting evaluations surfaced during the discussion of the photograph of Seyid Karim Seidazimbaiev, deputy of the Tashkent Duma, who founded the first business newspaper *Tüccar* (The Merchant) in 1907, and visited the tsar in the Anichkov Palace in St Petersburg in 1895.¹⁰³

Opposing views were also expressed about the photo of Shoqan Valikhanov (1835–1865): “an outstanding educator, scientist and thinker, a real Russian officer” and “a spy”.¹⁰⁴

In these memory wars, the positive appraisal of cooperation with the Russian authorities, clearly echoing nostalgia for the lost empire, was accompanied by comments on the pedagogical potential of these episodes, defined as significant for Central Asian history,¹⁰⁵ and by criticism of collaboration with the Russian authorities.¹⁰⁶

103 20 February 2014, 12:02.

104 10 February 2018, 06:58.

105 About Mirza Bukhari: “There are so many impressions from this story! The merchant tells everything in detail, you can feel his special interest, his special attention to everything. There is not even an ounce of envy or contempt for the colonisers, so to speak; on the contrary, respect and reverence, gratitude for the preservation of what they themselves did not even think to preserve. Such a document, indeed, should be studied in schools, not to mention the history departments” (4 March 2018, 16:46). “We need to tell the history of Uzbekistan through such personalities; intelligent, energetic, inquisitive, receptive. Many notable merchants contributed to the development of the motherland, to the entry point for a new formation” (4 March 2018, 16:33).

106 27 February 2018, 04:01.

Female types

The discussions around a little more than twenty photos of female types of Turkestan invariably revolved around several recurring topics: ethnic belonging, scene setting and arrangement, social status (mainly whether the women were prostitutes or not) and their costumes.

The only exception, perhaps, was the Photochrom Zurich (1880),¹⁰⁷ advertised for sale in the feed for 10,000 roubles (an extremely rare phenomenon). This picture, taken by Dmitrii I. Ermakov (1845–1916), was regularly reproduced in the group's feed in the forms of photograph, postcard and engraving (Figure 12.4). It provoked discussions as to the date of the appearance of colour photos and the author of the picture. This, however, did not prevent the participants from actively discussing the ethnicity of the young woman (“Bukharian”, “Jewish” or “Russian”) and of the two boys (“Bukharian Jew” or “Muslim”).



Figure 12.4: “Woman with children”. Postcard based on a photograph by Dmitrii I. Ermakov. Photochrom Zürich. 1880.

The description of costumes and headdresses, which rarely appeared in the feed, did not cause much controversy, although there were several specialists on this topic in the group. The exception was the discussion about the *paranja* (burka), the wearing of which was perceived either as a terrible tradition or the norm of the time. In either case, it was always connected with the “Hujum” Soviet campaign, conducted to liberate Turkestan women in the 1920s.¹⁰⁸

Very active discussions concerned the extent to which it was possible to photograph women without a *paranja*. The assumption that the models were prostitutes (Figure 12.5) constantly provoked *flaming*, even though it was based on the direct evidence of Hugues Krafft,¹⁰⁹ whose female portraits were constantly presented in the feed. In these skirmishes, the discussions invariably turned to questions regarding the “nationality” or “ethnicity” of these women, with an emphasis on their “natural modesty” or “innate promiscuity”. Depending on the user, such characteristics were attributed either to Tajik or Uzbek women.



Figure 12.5: “Tashkent. Sart women on a visit”. Postcard published by A. Kirsner and reprinted by the Granberg Joint Stock Company, Stockholm. Sergei Priakhin’s archives (<https://ca-photoarchives.net/photos/23483/>; <https://ca-photoarchives.net/photos/23405/>).

108 9 March 2018, 06:16.

109 26 November 2019, 06:32.

A few of these photographs of women gave rise to the lengthiest and most strident debates about the colonial nature of the Russian presence in Central Asia. They broke out after a female user published some posts dedicated to the “forgotten peoples of Central Asia” (Teke, Karluks, Kungrads, Turkmens). These posts made several references to the works of Soviet ethnographers (in itself a rare instance).¹¹⁰

Child types

Five photographs of children appeared in the group without causing much discussion.¹¹¹ These included a portrait (possibly of a Jewish boy), a small boy and collective portraits of Sart children.¹¹² Usually, members of the group exchanged views on the ethnicity of the children and their economic status.¹¹³

A more active exchange of views was caused by a photo of the Russian/local school, which was discussed several times in parallel groups as a positive aspect of the Russian conquest.¹¹⁴ Users mainly tried to identify the teacher, leaning towards either the orientalist Nikolai P. Ostroumov (1846–1930) or the poet Pavel S. Porshakov (1888–1930s).

Genre photos

“Street types”

Approximately fifty photos represented “genre scenes”, which were often defined in the original captions as “street types”. These exclusively represented men and boys. The largest in number were photos of the merchants of Bukhara, Samarkand, Andijan and Tashkent in the bazaars or on the streets. These merchants constituted a popular nineteenth-century oriental subject, but, however, did not stimulate many comments, except for a clarification on

110 26 February 2018, 05:05 and 14:33; 27 February 2018, 05:05, 15:30 and 19:56.

111 Sixteen family photos (depicting mostly Kazakh-Kirgiz families) were excluded from this category.

112 27 December 2017, 19:27; 28 December 2017, 09:35; 27 January 2018, 08:16.

113 “What a grey life it was. [...] And how difficult it was for our ancestors to live.” “No, this is not a poor boy from that time: boots, dressing gown, hat, belt” (27 December 2017, 20:23 and 20:35).

114 The group “Tashkent i vsedaokolo.uz”, 17 October 2018, 04:10.



Figure 12.6: “Old Bukhara. Merchants”. 1917. François Guichard’s archive (<https://ca-photoarchives.net/photos/23316/>).



Figure 12.7: “Tashkent. Tea-house at the Tamasha feast in a mosque. No. 51”. Postcard published by A. S. Suvorin and Co.’s Contract Agency, Moscow, and printed by the photo print shop Scherer, Nabholz and Co., Moscow. 1916. François Guichard’s archive (<https://ca-photoarchives.net/photos/23315/>).

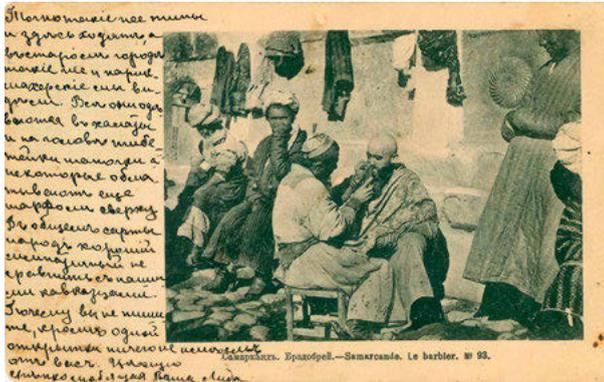


Figure 12.8: “Samarkand. Barber. No. 93”. Postcard published by the photo print shop Scherer, Nabholz and Co., Moscow. 1907. Iulia Pelipai’s archive (<https://ca-photoarchives.net/photos/23914/>).

the date of one of Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii’s photos.¹¹⁵ Images of Tashkent bazaars and caravanserais, usually postcards, were the most common (eleven photos) (Figure 12.6).¹¹⁶ Perhaps this was due to both orientalist clichés and the colonial administration’s intention, channelled in the mass production of photographs, to emphasise the economic potential of Turkestan.

Three photos of groups of men in a teahouse (Figure 12.7) also passed almost unnoticed. The same applied to images of celebrations involving the distribution of pilaf, or other scenes of everyday life. These portrayed, for example, water carriers in Bukhara, a storyteller in Bukhara, a group of men in a Teke village near Ashkhabad, horseshoeing, carts and donkeys (including a white donkey awarded at an agricultural exhibition of 1910).¹¹⁷ Three postcards featuring camels were also considered ordinary, even though many photographers of the Turkestan region regarded the camel as a marker of exoticism.¹¹⁸

Two photographs depicting barbers were the most discussed (Figure 12.8). In the stories of most European travellers visiting Turkestan, barbers were associated with executioners. The same narrative occurred in the group: “And for

¹¹⁵ 6 March 2018, 10:21; 15 March 2018, 12:33.

¹¹⁶ 19 November 2017, 18:23; 22 November 2017, 14:55; 17 January 2018, 19:41; 5 January 2018, 17:38; 31 January 2018, 02:27.

¹¹⁷ For example: 18 December 2017, 06:10; 26 December 2017, 02:17; 26 December 2017, 15:02; 4 March 2018, 11:35; 14 March 2018, 05:25; 15 March 2018, 07:49; 15 March 2018, 08:50; 15 March 2018, 20:11.

¹¹⁸ 19 November 2017, 18:23; 19 November 2017, 18:24; 27 January 2018, 08:17.

them, there was no difference between shaving a head or chopping it off.”¹¹⁹ In a similar guise, a member of the group narrated his personal story. According to him, in the 1960s, the former apprentice of the chief executioner of the emir of Bukhara was a barber in his village.¹²⁰

Members also discussed the places where dish repairers could be found in Tashkent or in Samarkand,¹²¹ revealing once again the interest of the group members in creating a localised topography of memory.

Dervishes

The dervishes (*Qalandars*) of Samarkand, Kokand, Bukhara, Pamir and Kazan appeared in the feed twenty-three times in the form of photographs, postcards and engravings between 1872 and 1913. These images were reproduced, for example, from the *Turkestan Album* and the works of Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii and



Figure 12.9: “Views and Types of Central Asia. Dervishes”. Early twentieth century. Iulia Pelipai’s archive (<https://ca-photoarchives.net/photos/24003/>).

¹¹⁹ 19 November 2017, 19:42; 19 December 2017, 12:04.

¹²⁰ 19 December 2017, 13:14.

¹²¹ 17 January 2018, 07:42.

Annette M. B. Meakin. They consisted of a range of representations: individual portraits (five), group portraits (sixteen) or street scenes (one) (Figure 12.9).¹²²

However, the discussions did not go beyond superficial definitions of the social status of dervishes¹²³ and the members' opposing opinions about them. On the one hand, users defined them as "saints"; on the other, they were deemed "bad guys", "informers of the emir" and "drug addicts".¹²⁴ Almost all photos were "borrowed" from publications about Sufis on other websites,¹²⁵ thus indirectly reflecting a broader interest in this topic.¹²⁶ In general, questions around the ethnicity of dervishes were not raised.

***Bacha* (dancing boys)**

The group's discussions about the extremely rare images of *bacha* (no more than three) were limited by Soviet and post-Soviet taboos. *Bacha* were young boys, dancing and sometimes prostituting themselves or being subjected to child abuse (*bacha bazi*). Discussions about them were mostly reduced to imprudent comments, mutual insults, condemnation of "vicious morals", accusations addressed to the Russian colonial presence (allegedly guilty of encouraging young male prostitution) and responses to such unfounded attacks.¹²⁷ It is no coincidence that several comments, regarded by participants as "inciting ethnic hatred", were removed during the discussion.

Due to the gap concerning these topics in comparison with studies of Ottoman and Iranian societies,¹²⁸ the participants were unable to find a neutral

122 For example, 26 November 2017, 19:55; 2 December 2017, 18:56; 9 December 2017, 20:15; 24 December 2017, 17:29; 25 December 2017, 18:18; 26 December 2017, 17:14; 3 January 2018, 18:54; 13 January 2018, 18:13; 14 March 2018, 18:54; 24 March 2018, 17:13.

123 "The Sufi sheikh is the one wearing the turban; his disciples are the ones wearing kulah khuds" (10 January 2018, 19:01).

124 19 November 2017, 13:03.

125 <http://www.darvishi.ru/> (4 March 2020).

126 See one of the latest studies: Papas 2019.

127 "Alas, they not only danced, but were also used for sexual pleasures." "Always f***ing blaming the Russians [...]. And what did your grandfather do at that time? Who made him dance?" "100 years under a violent Russian culture? Poor you, poor you! Where and when did the Russians make you do *Bacha bazi*? Is this a Russian word? Playing with the boys? What a patient man you are: you've been patient for a hundred years, and then for another twenty-five, and only now you're talking!" "It's good that tsarist Russia and then the Soviet government crushed this abomination at the root." "For someone this is a moment of recorded history, and for someone else it is a reason to bark and bite!" (28 February 2018, 07:04).

128 Rowson 2012.



Figure 12.10: “Types of Tashkent. Bai-bacha”. Unknown publisher.

angle from which to discuss these images. Not without exoticism, some participants attempted to switch the discussion to the fabrics of the boys’ clothing, the location of the house, the social status of its owners, the dance itself and the type of celebration. This action permitted the evaluation of the historical context of the photography rather than its taboo subject.¹²⁹

During the debate regarding the second photo, which was an individual portrait of a Bai-boy (Figure 12.10), the discussion was divided into those who saw him as a *bacha* dancer, and those who viewed him as the son of a rich man.¹³⁰

The third photo of *bacha* was almost immediately removed from the feed. Comments, however, were left up. These read as a reproach for paedophilia, shame for “some of the country’s disgraceful events”, proposals to ban the ap-

129 “That’s the yard of a very rich man. The yard of a Bai.” “This is just a theatrical dance with costumes.” “A beautiful old photo, a theatrical performance, a bright page of history. All creative people have charisma. And that’s great! The world should be bright, like an oriental mosaic” (28 February 2018, 22:54).

130 18 February 2018, 22:02. “The golden youth. That’s a major of Tashkent. The son of a Bai, not a bacha dancer!!!” (2 October 2017, 12:02).



Figure 12.11: “Samarkand. Asian dance”. Unknown publisher. Postcard based on a photograph by Gottfried Merzbacher.

pearance of such images and gratitude to the Soviet system.¹³¹ The removal of the photograph turned the discussion in a different direction, and several points of view intersected: the innocence of photography, the importance of the context, the negative impact of destroying controversial images¹³² and the ineradicable nature of human vices, which “exist everywhere and at all times”.

In addition to these photos, three images representing traditional dances appeared in the feed (Figure 12.11).¹³³ In relation to one of these images, it was suggested that the dancer on the postcard was likely to be “a *bacha* with a mask or some make-up”, because “Asian women never danced in front of men”.¹³⁴ As for the second photo, where the dance was clearly performed by girls, participants immediately suggested that these were prostitutes. Only the images of three male musicians in Samarkand in the 1880s–1890s (from the collection of the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Kazan) and a group of Sarts celebrating Nowruz¹³⁵ in Samarkand (photo by H. Krafft) did not cause reactions in the feed other than congratulations on Nowruz.¹³⁶

131 “No man in his right mind would have allowed his son to dress up in a woman’s dress. *Bacha bazi* was really a very widespread phenomenon in those days. Many men’s gatherings were accompanied by such dances, and then followed by such things.” “Thanks to tsarist Russia and the communists that eradicated this in Central Asia” (25 January 2018, 19:48).

132 “Any photo is beautiful [...] another five years, and no one will understand what this is all about” (5 January 2018, 19:51).

133 8 February 2018, 15:22.

134 14 February 2018, 01:07.

135 The Iranian/Persian New Year.

136 29 November 2017, 10:49; 21 March 2018, 04:56.

Diseases

Despite the fact that a description of the diseases found in Central Asia traditionally occupied a significant place in travellers’ journals, the group had only one postcard portraying people with leprosy (Figure 12.12), and one photograph representing the entrance to the leprosarium in the village of Mokhau.¹³⁷

Anxiety about this disease was palpable in the comments, several of which extensively cited Wikipedia. They mentioned a hardly treatable disease that “lives in the ground for thousands of years and [remains] contagious”. Based on the assumption that “it is not recommended to dig up these [infected] places, and, even more so, to erect buildings there”, the group members tried to identify the geolocation of former leper colonies, such as the village of Mohau near Tashkent¹³⁸ or a specialised settlement in Karakalpakstan.¹³⁹ Side stories took shape during these discussions. One concerned Vozrozhdeniia island, where Soviet bacteriological weapons were buried. Another regarded a different etymological interpretation – connected with leprosy – of the Aral Sea, which unexpectedly led the discussion to



Figure 12.12: “Lepers near Tashkent”. Postcard published by A. Kirsner. Early twentieth century. Sergei Priakhin’s archive (<https://ca-photoarchives.net/photos/23472/>).

¹³⁷ 26 February 2018, 08:17.

¹³⁸ “The textile factory was built in 1932 on the site of the Makhau village; now it is the Kushbegi complex” (26 February 2018, 09:19).

¹³⁹ “At the ‘Telman Fork’ [place], near Nukus, in the district of Urgut, and in the district of Bakhmal in the region of Jizzakh” (26 February 2018, 10:05).

toponymical speculations.¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the outcome was the traditional polarisation of viewpoints, in which criticism of Soviet power was opposed by fiery remarks in defence of Soviet medicine.¹⁴¹ Only one comment tried to frame the postcard in the historical context of the time, drawing a parallel with the “human zoos” of Western Europe and the United States.¹⁴²

Prison

The famous *Zindan* jail in Bukhara appeared in the feed three times during the period of my analysis. The most substantial debates arose around a photo taken by Prokudin-Gorskii in 1907. After discussing the guard’s weapon (a Berdan rifle with a curved bayonet), Sadriddin Ayni’s description of *Zindan* and other brief historical accounts of the jail, the conversation focused on the number of people living in Bukhara at that time.¹⁴³

Discussions on ethnicity

Participants identified most of the photos on the basis of ethnicity. As a consequence, ethnicity occupied an extremely important place in the discussions of “types”, and provoked heated disputes. The main argument of the interlocutors was caused by intuitive assumptions about the photographed subject’s “similarity to” or “dissimilarity from” a given “ethnic group”.¹⁴⁴ This mechanism relied on personal experience,

140 “Even before the Mongol attack on Central Asia, people with leprosy were sent to the islands of the Caspian Sea. And the sea, by the way, was called ‘Khazar’ by the inhabitants of that period (mainly Tajiks), [perhaps] from the word ‘Khazar’. In Tajik, the expression ‘khazar kardan’ means ‘to be disgusted’.” “It was called ‘Khazar’ because of the name of the Khazar people, the Tajiks have nothing to do with it” (26 February 2018, 10:15).

141 “Medicine in the USSR was systemic. For everyone. Totalitarian states have their own positive aspects as well. If in the former USSR medicine had been s**t, then you would not be on this planet. Smallpox, leishmaniasis, etc. This is your fault; your small mind makes you ingest anything you find. Apparently you simply can’t put it in your head. Find the pre-revolutionary statistics of child mortality in Central Asia and try to find out what the centres of epizootics were and how the [animal diseases] spread! Quarantine systems were in place already under Genghis Khan. Medicine in the former USSR was advanced and accessible, even for your ancestors” (26 February 2018, 09:10).

142 26 February 2018, 10:17.

143 14 January 2018, 12:54; 16 April 2018, 12:12.

144 “That’s not the right type” (24 February 2018, 05:53; 20 December 2017, 12:08).

memories of loved ones or image captions reproducing the ethnic classifications of the Russian Empire (nonetheless outdated and irrelevant in current reality).

Such assumptions occurred even when the original captions did not concern “the national question”. For example, both sides assertively offered their ethnic definitions in the case of engravings depicting four “types”, represented as “Samar-kand warrior with our medal; a Central Asian merchant; a Samarkand street type; a resident of Bukhara”.

The unfounded character of these national classifications was wittily exposed by one of the group members, ZZ, who proposed to determine the *natsional’nost’* of a “famous wrestler and circus performer” (Figure 12.13). More than 250 people entered the game, offering a wide range of guesses of nationalities, far beyond the limits of Central Asia. The Lithuanian Vladislav K. Ianushevskii (1867–1970), known in circus circles as Kadyr-Guliam and a fluent speaker of Uzbek, Tajik and Kyrgyz, was consistently (mis)identified as Tatar, Uzbek, Tajik, Uyghur, Arab, German, Italian, Chinese, Dungan, Indian, Macedonian, Bashkir, Gypsy, Mongol, Armenian, American, Brazilian, Circassian, Lakh, Ukrainian, Albanian, Hungarian, Japanese, French, Greek, Chuvash and “Indo-European from old Iranian tribes of a non-Mongolian race”. To the sensible question raised at the end of this unforeseen quiz (“What difference does it make what nationality he is?”), the author replied laconically: “None. It’s just that in the group people often try to determine a person’s nationality from old photos. People can make mistakes.”¹⁴⁵

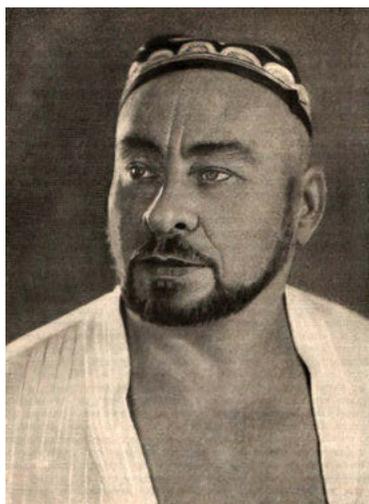


Figure 12.13: “Vladislav K. Ianushevskii (Kadyr-Guliam)”. In: Shirai 1959.



Figure 12.14: “The Sart Woman”. Unknown publisher. Postcard based on a photograph by H. Krafft.

Equally revealing of the problematic definition of *natsional’nost’* was a comparison of four photographs of women (Figure 12.14)¹⁴⁶ and three photographs of men¹⁴⁷ taken by H. Krafft in which the same subject was photographed in different costumes and presented with various captions attributing different locations or ethnicities.

Thus the man with traces of skin leishmaniasis on his face was presented in one of the photos as an “Uzbek of Khujand” (Khodzhent). During the discussion, however, Khujand was defined as a Tajik city and, accordingly, the man was transformed into a “Tajik”.¹⁴⁸ In another photo the same subject was captioned as “Uzbek of Jizzakh” (Dzhizzakh), which immediately allowed users to categorise him as a “true Uzbek”. In a third photo, the same man appeared as a “resident of Samarkand”, which made it difficult for members of the group to identify him “ethnically” as either “Tajik” or “Uzbek” (Figure 12.15; see also Figure 8.26).

The classification based on costumes became even more speculative when the model was presumably a Western traveller’s companion who wore national clothes

¹⁴⁶ 23 February 2018, 22:26.

¹⁴⁷ 20 December 2017, 12:08.

¹⁴⁸ “Khujand is a Tajik city. This says everything.” “That is not an Uzbek! Uzbeks have kind eyes, ready to give everything. He’s a *Basmach*. Uzbeks were not *Basmachi*” (20 December 2017, 12:08 and 21 December 2017, 03:33).

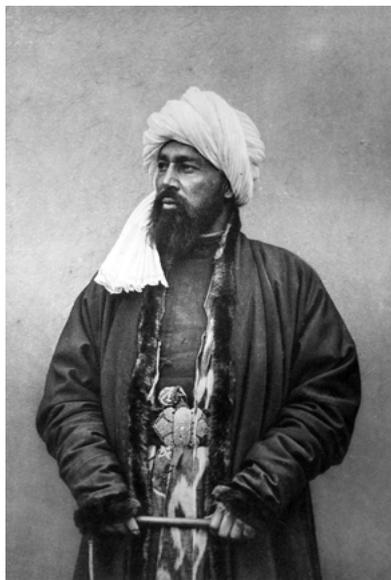


Figure 12.15: H. Krafft. “A Tajik from Samarkand in a fur-lined khalat”.

according to her own understanding and unaware of traditions. This can be seen in the portrait of a “Sart Women”, taken by either Albert Watson (1889) or Henri Moser (1880), in which a young girl with light-coloured hair and eyes wore, as experts immediately noticed, a *tilyakosh* tiara without a scarf and with the skullcap sideways.¹⁴⁹

Despite exposure of the shortcomings of this costume-based anthropology, the debate about nationality did not subside. Almost every publication of individual or collective portraits became an occasion for such discussions, which flared up even more if the “wrong” *natsional’nosti* were indicated in the photos.

One of the recurring conflicts concerned the captions that classified the photographed subjects according to already defunct ethnonyms that do not correspond to post-Soviet classifications of *natsional’nosti*. One instance of this problematic inconsistency was a postcard presenting the “local types” of the city of Charjui (Chardzhou, now Türkmenabat). The original caption described the three people on the photo as “a Persian, a Sart and a Khivan” (according to ethnic, state, cultural, economic or regional characteristics). The group members quickly transferred these classifications into the more familiar Soviet terminology: “a Persian, a

Tajik and a Turkmen”. It was suggested that “the Persian” could be not only a Persian person captured by the Turkmen and sold as a slave but also “an Armenian” fleeing the Ottoman genocide, and “the Sart” could also be “an Uzbek”.¹⁵⁰

Participants attempted to reconstruct the etymology of ethnonyms, the degree of kinship with other *natsional’nosti* and the history of “forgotten” or “lost” peoples of Central Asia. In doing so, participants invariably discussed the national and territorial divisions of 1924–1936: at some point in the discussion someone would remark that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was no such thing as a republic of Central Asia.

Likewise, for many users this political process was clearly associated with the appearance of the Soviet Central Asian republics on the political map.¹⁵¹ The formation of such republics, users claimed, triggered an “ethnocide”, during which several ethnic groups were forced to abandon their cultural traditions, language and self-identification in the name of the new political entities.¹⁵²

Others rejected the very thought of dating the emergence of the Uzbek state to this time, and classified it as a “fairy tale from the Russian world”.¹⁵³ They instead espoused the idea of the ancient Uzbek state, allegedly corroborated by the term “Uzbekia”. This term featured in maps of the eighteenth century, particularly in the work of the German cartographer Matthäus Seutter.¹⁵⁴

Despite such differences, Soviet terminology remained the most familiar to users, who tried to transfer onto it the various ethnic classifications of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At the same time, the group members loosely interpreted the concepts of ethnos, *natsional’nost’*, *natsiia*, tribe, clan and race.

Uzbeks/Tajiks

One of the most common examples of the alignment of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century classifications with Soviet schemes is the consistent transformation of Sarts (as they are often indicated on the images) into “Uzbeks” or “Tajiks” (Figure 12.16).¹⁵⁵

150 21 March 2018, 01:17 and 05:10.

151 3 March 2018, 19:09–19:39.

152 In this context, such personal observations are also interesting: “My relatives became Turkmen, some Armenian, and some Azerbaijani. In the [19]20s, everything became mixed. But I now understand all these people – [they] had to survive” (24 February 2018, 09:20–09:24).

153 24 February 2018, 09:29.

154 24 February 2018, 08:47.

155 24 February 2018, 05:49.



Figure 12.16: “Tashkent. Sarts at home”. Postcard published by M. I. Svishulskii, Tashkent. 1914–1917 (?). Sergei Priakhin’s archive (<https://ca-photoarchives.net/photos/23562/>).

Discussions about the Sarts were peppered with references to sources of varying reliability, from untrustworthy and/or extremely politicised publications¹⁵⁶ to the reflections of Vasiliĭ Barthold (1869–1930). Barthold’s ideas, once canonical, are now outdated. As a rule, the recent body of research, comprising the works of Ingeborg Baldauf, Sergei Abashin, Adeeb Khalid and Aida Alymbaeva, was overlooked or ignored.¹⁵⁷ Many participants were dependant on Soviet criteria of *natsional’nost’*, and were influenced by post-Soviet and state-endorsed ideologies, according to which the borders of the modern independent states correspond to those of ancient states. Consequently, during the discussions, participants had difficulty accepting the idea that the term “Sart” was used in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries not simply in the ethnic sense but often as a social, professional, cultural or economic marker. In the Russian census of 1897 “Sart” primarily described the settled and urbanised population allegedly speaking the Sart language. This population was spread over the territories comprising South Kazakhstan, the Ferghana valley, the Tashkent oasis and South Khwarazm. In the group, Sarts were sometimes referred to as an “autonomous *natsional’nost’*” that existed before 1924, sometimes as Uyghurs, and sometimes as one of the “forcibly Turkified Persian peoples”.¹⁵⁸ Alongside this, users barely connected the strained

¹⁵⁶ Abdullaev 2011.

¹⁵⁷ Baldauf 1991; Abashin 2007; Khalid 2015; Alymbaeva 2016.

¹⁵⁸ “They really wanted to be recorded as Turks, but they were refused. As a result, a small number of them were recorded as Tajiks and Kazakhs, but most were recorded as Uzbeks”

Uzbek-Tajik relations with the transformation of Sarts into the Soviet *natsional'-nosti* of “Uzbeks” and “Tajiks”.

At the same time, the tensions characterising Uzbek-Tajik relations were felt in the group on several occasions and resulted in a polarisation of points of view. On the one hand, it was claimed that Tajikistan was “artificially created on Uzbek/Turkic territories” and that “70 per cent of Tajiks were actually Turks”.¹⁵⁹ On the other, it was argued that the Soviets “erased the entire history of the Tajiks”. This was followed by territorial claims based, allegedly, on history and toponymy.¹⁶⁰ Offense even bubbled beneath calls to end the arguments.¹⁶¹

In this context, issues concerning the term “Aryan”, which in turn relates directly to racial theories, appeared in a dichotomous opposition. On one side, some stated that Tajiks are “Aryan” and, accordingly, representatives of an ancient civilisation (this also reflects the official discourse in Tajikistan). On the other, this statement was met with a sharp rebuff and a warning about the connection of Aryanism with Nazism.¹⁶²

The distinction between “Uzbeks” and “Tajiks” in the discussion of “types” was problematic (especially with reference to the photos of H. Krafft). This confusion could affect depicted characters of all social levels, starting with the emir of Bukhara, Sayyid Abd al-Ahad Khan. His “Iranian” mother gave some members of the group a reason to define him as “Tajik”, while his father – a representative of the Manghit dynasty – allowed others to speak of him as a “typical Uzbek”.¹⁶³ In this act of verbal balancing, residents of Uzbekistan preferred to say that there are “Tajiks and Iranian Uzbeks or Uzbeks of Iranian origin”, while residents of Tajikistan insisted on using only the term “Tajiks”.¹⁶⁴

(24 December 2017, 12:25). “In the Eastern Chinese part of Turkestan, the Uyghurs of Kashgar were called Sarts [...] they had already been resettled under the Russian Empire in the areas of today’s Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan for the development of agriculture” (28 December 2017, 00:46).

159 25 February 2018, 13:40–13:46.

160 “Merv – Marv is the current Mary, originally an Iranian city like Ashkhabat-Ishkobod, Chardzhou [...] etc.” (20 March 2018, 06:56).

161 “Despite the fact that our history is stained with the blood of millions of Tajiks, slayed by the Mongols and the Turks (the Tajiks didn’t attack them, they attacked us), I’m sure that between today’s Tajiks and Uzbeks there are more unifying than separating factors” (28 February 2018, 16:19).

162 “After Hitler, ‘Aryan’ was a term no longer used in science” (28 February 2018, 06:39, 20:10).

163 “His mother is Iranian, that’s why he has an atypical face for an Uzbek.” “According to Sadridin Ayni, before the revolution only Bukhara emirs and their relatives from the Manghit dynasty were called Uzbeks in Turkestan” (21 December 2017, 18:16–18:40).

164 “Uzbeks of Iranian origin lol??????? Is it hard to say Tajik?” (25 February 2018, 14:11–14:31).

This constant bickering bothered the participants themselves,¹⁶⁵ and in the skirmishes there were often calls to stop defining “nationality through face”.¹⁶⁶ When discussing one of Krafft’s photos, a member requested to “cross out the indication of the nationality [Tajik] and replace it with the inscription ‘native’”.¹⁶⁷ Such a request sounded half-humorous, as the discussions moved relentlessly in circles, repeating the same scenarios with different photos, and only sometimes leading to unexpected conclusions.

On one occasion, during the discussion of a postcard of a young mother with a child, the woman was identified as an Uzbek, a Tajik, a Sart, a Bukharan Jewess and a “mixed Uzbek-Tajik-Jewess”. The debate eventually became populated with requests to look at the person, not the nationality: “we only need to admire a beautiful photo that reflects the mother’s beauty and harmony, and not look for what nation it belongs to”.¹⁶⁸ As a result, members proposed to define the young mother depicted in the photo as the “Madonna of Turkestan”, thus reviving a toponym with a complex semantic history and contemporary political implications.¹⁶⁹

Turkmens

A small number of photos were dedicated to Turkmens (eight), almost exclusively in military settings. Even upon the publication of a group portrait of Turkmens at the Geok-Tepe station (taken from Isabelle Mary Phibbs’s book *Visit to the Russians in Central Asia*),¹⁷⁰ the location itself recalled one of the largest battles during the Russian conquest of the region.

Disputes about ethnicity were rarer here. Only once was it suggested that an anonymous portrait of a Turkmen with the caption “Central Asia 1903” could represent a “native of the Caucasus” because of his uniform.¹⁷¹ In response, other members of the group noticed that the so-called “Caucasian uniform” was widespread among the military in Central Asia, and that these soldiers were not necessarily natives of the Caucasus.¹⁷² In one of the replicas, the photographed subject

165 “You shouldn’t have written ‘Tajik’, for some it is like a red rag to a bull, soon they will come running and shouting ‘you can’t prove it’, ‘you’re all liars’” (27 November 2019, 16:00).

166 27 November 2019, 17:59.

167 27 November 2019, 17:49.

168 19 November 2019, 02:52.

169 Gorshenina 2014: 450–459.

170 Phibbs 1899.

171 28 December 2017, 07:50.

172 “The orchestra of the emir of Bukhara was dressed in Circassian uniforms.” “*Gazyrs* [little tubes holding rifle ammunition] were sewn on *beshmets* [traditional garment, similar to a

was identified as a “Teke man from the Turkmen irregular cavalry”, according to the description of the outfit for members of the regiment, approved in 1895. This identification was in turn questioned on the basis that the uniform looked very indistinct in the photo, to which more criticism immediately followed.¹⁷³ The search for the “right ethnic roots” of the photographed subject according to his “facial features” led back to the starting point of the discussion, in which he was defined as “Persian or Iranian”, or as a “native of the Caucasus”.¹⁷⁴ Even the appearance on the feed of a postcard of the same person accompanied by the inscription “Bukhara station. Soldier from the Emir’s Guard” (phototype by Scherer, Nabholz and Co. [in Russian: *Sherer, Nabgolts & Co.*], 1903), did not put an end to the discussion, demonstrating once again Facebook’s cyclical and non-linear narrative (Figure 12.17).

Kyrgyz/Kazakhs

Thirteen photos were explicitly associated with the Kyrgyz and the Kazakhs. This generally occurred without acknowledgement of the fact that, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Kazakhs were defined as “Kirgiz”, and the Kyrgyz were called “Kara-Kirgiz” and sometimes “Kirgiz” (this “naming” peculiarity was mentioned in discussions only once). The dominant images of types in this subgroup, covering the territory from the Pamir Mountains and Zhetysu to Samarkand, were collective family photos representing all ages and social layers (Figure 12.18).

kaftan], while there were matchlocks, such a tradition existed also in Kazakhstan. The Soviets artificially created the opinion that the *gazyrs* only belong to the Caucasus” (22 December 2018, 16:30).

173 “Not a single *gazyr* is found on the Circassian uniform, the shoulder straps are sewn at random, instead of a *besmet*, this is a *kosovorotka* [Russian peasant shirt], which is completely unusual for the Caucasus and the Cossack troops. There is no belt, a mandatory attribute for a man, without which he doesn’t go out. There’s no dagger. Is this a household photo? Are these someone else’s clothes? Caucasian or Turkmen? Well, he could be anyone!” This line of thought was immediately followed by a critical remark: “In the Russian Empire, putting on someone else’s uniform, even more so with shoulder straps, meant Siberia, and a wheelbarrow with minerals to roll” (22 December 2018, 16:30).

174 “I am sure that this is not a Turkmen; the clothes are not Turkmen either. The *papakha* [Caucasian furry hat] is clearly Caucasian, and it’s not the *telpek* [traditional Turkmen furry hat] worn by Turkmen. The facial features also speak in favour of the fact that this is a Caucasian (Chechen, Ingush, Alan, but in no case a Georgian or an Azerbaijani)” (21 December 2018, 15:28).



Figure 12.17: “Old Bukhara. A soldier from the Emir’s guard”. Postcard published by the photo print shop Scherer, Nabholz and Co., Moscow. 1913.



Figure 12.18: “Views of Turkestan. Kirgiz family at their yurt”. Postcard published by B. A. Schnaider, Odessa. Author’s property.

The photographed subjects, often shown sitting or kneeling near the entrance of a yurt or inside a yurt, were usually discussed from the perspective of the “Kirgiz way of everyday life”. The composition of the images, inspired by the *Turkestan Album*, encouraged such discussions. In these images, people and yurts were presented together, revealing the clear ethnographic intentions of the photographer to capture a comprehensive picture of nomadic life (only one photo displayed several yurts and a herd of sheep with shepherds in the background).¹⁷⁵

Disputes about ethnicity in this subgroup erupted only once, over a photo by Leon Barszczewski. Even though the photo was signed by the author as “Kirgiz of the Samarkand district”, the group members discussed the nationality of the two women depicted for a long time, identifying them as Kyrgyz, Kazakh, Turkmen, Turkmen-Yomut, Uzbek, Tajik, Sart, Lyuli and Arab women from Jeynov.¹⁷⁶

Bukharan Jews

Eight photos of Bukharan Jews were posted in the group. Active discussions were raised by three family photos, a group photo of Jewish women and girls, a group of men at prayer, a Bukharan Jew in a synagogue and Michal Kalantarova’s portrait. The discussions were characterised by the following topics: historical digressions about the appearance of Jews in Central Asia; positive assessments of their role in the history of Central Asia; admiration for their outfits (“beautiful costumes”, “noble faces”); etymological reconstructions of the term *jugut* (*dzhugut*), used in Tashkent with similar derogatory connotations as *zhid* in Russia; attempts to describe all Bukharan Jews using the term Iranian; memories of Jews who left Uzbekistan.¹⁷⁷

The most active discussion was caused by a photo of the great-grandmother of one of the group members. This woman, who then migrated to Israel, was called Michal Kalantarova (Mullokandova). She was photographed in 1910 in her school uniform.¹⁷⁸ The main topic of the debate became the list of women who, apart from Bukharan Jews, did not wear the *paranja* in Turkestan (‘Kazakh-Kirgiz’, Mountain Tajiks, Karakalpak women and residents of rural settlements). The discussion then turned into an exchange of impressions about the Kalantarov House in Samarkand (now a local history museum) and memories of the Kalantarov family.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ 17 December 2017, 10:23.

¹⁷⁶ 2 April 2018, 13:54.

¹⁷⁷ 22 December 2017, 12:00; 13 December 2018, 12:12.

¹⁷⁸ The school stood where the Department of Biology of the Samarkand State University is now located.

¹⁷⁹ 29 November 2017, 17:45; 30 November 2017, 05:05.

Dispute mechanisms

My analysis shows that disputes most often arose around (1) assessments of the Russian Soviet (non-)colonial presence in the region; (2) ethnic identifications of the photographed subjects, linked to different classification systems and the different realities of Central Asia during the imperial period and after the national delimitation of 1924–1936; and (3) descriptions of homosexual relationships on the model of *bacha bazi*. Another topic that regularly generated *flaming* was the discussion of the so-called *Basmachi* movement of the 1920s and 1930s,¹⁸⁰ which, however, goes beyond the chronological limits I selected. Similarly, my analysis will not dwell upon the groundless accusations, addressed to the page itself, of being “the most scandalous group”, pervaded by “hatred towards Uzbeks”.

The discussions highlighted those historical events that underwent radical revisions after the independence of the ex-USSR states, forming fractures in the collective memory (it is worth noting that most of these events were already the subject of active discussions in the Soviet era, which periodically led to substantial reassessments).¹⁸¹ These new official perceptions of the past emerged from the interference of the newly formed states of Central Asia in the writing of history and in the formation of collective memory (creation of new museums and textbooks, renaming of streets, TV and media influence, etc.). This was dictated by the need to build a new national historical narrative. In parallel with this process, a new official and imperial narrative took shape in Russia, infused with a significant dose of nostalgia and nationalism, offering traditional readings of the past from the perspective of a former colonial power. These manifestations of state intervention, imbued with different ideological content, prompted some group members (regardless of geographical location or national belonging) to restore the version of history she/he perceived to be “true” without returning to Soviet dogmas but, instead, by correcting the mistakes of historians and of politicised or official schemes of history-writing. These decentralised efforts to “find the truth” have led to the creation of a popular and unofficial history on Facebook pages.

The emergence of this people’s history accorded with the nature of social networks and the rules of Facebook. Here, Facebook acted as a platform that made possible an interaction (conversing, bickering, swearing, observing) between people of different social extraction, personal experience, education, cultural interests, political orientation and nationality. Such people, without Facebook, would most

¹⁸⁰ For example, 17 January 2019, 22:30 (the “Tashkent Retrospective” group); 12 March 2019, 15:36 (the “Tashkent Retrospective” group); 7 November 2019, 12:06; Abashin 2020.

¹⁸¹ Gorshenina 2009.

likely have never intersected in real life. The specific conditions for Facebook discussions were created by simplified basic rules of communication, relative anonymity, interpersonal distance, lack of clearly formulated behavioural norms, quick reactions, interactivity, a constant updating of content (and its erasure), pursuits of simple – or rather simplified – frameworks for complex thoughts, chaotic navigation between stories and genres, constant variations of register and purposeful changes of subject. These specific aspects of social media allowed for aggressive and unpunished behaviour, characterised by outbursts of verbal violence, including trolling.¹⁸² In this context, a variety of frustrations – from communist to nationalistic and imperial – were spattered across the feed. They evidenced multiple discontinuities in a collective understanding of the past and assessment of the present, and mirrored individual and collective traumas: experienced or inherited. Moreover, they brought to the fore issues dating back to the conquest of the region by the Russian Empire and the national delimitation of 1924–1936 (for example, the Uzbek-Tajik contradictions), while displaying problems related to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the forced exodus of people from the region amid the surge in nationalism, homophobia and antisemitism. Even though Mark Zuckerberg founded Facebook on principles of friendly relations and community belonging in 2004,¹⁸³ this utopian *pax numerica* was unattainable.

When the outrage grew, all the restraining bolts fell. The group administrators' rules prohibiting obscene statements were ignored; the participants' requests to close posts for comments or ban the most belligerent debaters¹⁸⁴ were not promptly dealt with by the group administrators. Consequently, the return to normative language became the concern of the discussion participants themselves, who tried to re-establish and legitimise boundaries for this “ritual aggression” through “peacemaking” replies.¹⁸⁵

182 Trolling: deliberately provocative messages designed to distract and provoke.

183 Facebook. Terms of Use: <http://www.facebook.com/terms.php>, last modified 31 July 2019 (4 March 2020).

184 “Remove and block the nationalists and all the trash that here insult other nationalities and ethnic groups” (28 February 2018, 08:10).

185 Kuntsman 2009: 193, 206. Attempts to defuse the situation: “Please stop insulting. We’re here to discuss photos, not your or my relatives. OK?” (15 January 2018, 06:56). “You should be ashamed, why do you hate each other? At least respect your dead ancestors. At least respect your common religion” (28 February 2018, 08:35). “When someone has nothing to be proud of, they’re proud of their nationality” (14 December 2017, 22:50). “Why not call people by their name, and not by their national belonging? It is impossible to determine someone’s nationality through their face. They can be anyone and in general now it is not relevant to say [that] I am someone by nationality and even if you do a genetic analysis, you can have representatives of many

Arguments had a self-legitimising tone. Many of the group members compared themselves to “warriors on the battlefield”, fighting for the “truth” and saving other users from amnesia through their “messianic” activities.¹⁸⁶ The presence of professional researchers, who rarely interfered in such disputes, did not hold back the discussions.

Flaming attracted more attention than posts without controversial comments, and incited other users to cultivate an aggressive attitude and voyeurism. The scandals froze the attention of users, who were drawn to the insults and kept coming back to the heated discussions to see what happened next. *Flaming* also enabled the expansion of the audience of the group and invited otherwise uninterested members to comment, for the simple reason that the lengthy inflammatory scuffles often appeared on the users’ personal feeds.

These arguments, one of the most frequent forms of online dialogue, resembled what Adi Kuntsman identifies as a ritual dance. This dance draws everyone into a cyclical movement due to its repetitive nature and its already well-known and well-learned mechanism. It allows group members to easily find their niche in familiar subgroups defined by “similarity” and “difference”.¹⁸⁷

Despite the constant confrontations, the group paradoxically created a kind of “comfort culture” for its members,¹⁸⁸ providing a sense of belonging to a community with which participants could not only share their hobby but also feel their identity (national, regional, professional, etc.). This became all the more relevant because the discussion was conducted in a context implicitly related to “the ruins of the former Soviet Union”. A large proportion of the discussion participants were migrants, and their nostalgic sense of loss concerned not only time (youth and friends) but also place. Moderators amplified these overtones of imperial nostalgia as well. Acting as the main experts from the “centre”, they often outlined rigid ideological convictions. These resembled colonial schemes and reproduced calls for the “Soviet fraternity of peoples”, in which the “big brother” traditionally took on the function of last resort and arbitrator in resolving disputes.

In this prevalently Russophone group, language choice during discussions was not neutral but rather signalled the degree of tension in the situation. On the one hand, “linguistic correctness” played the role of reprimand and emphasised inequalities among interlocutors. Users underlined and corrected –

nationalities in your family” (27 November 2019, 17:59). “After all, racism and ultranationalism are not good”. “Stop talking, I’m tired of these nationalities [...]” (27 November 2019, 16:54).

186 11 December 2019, 03:50.

187 Kuntsman 2009: 191–193, 198.

188 Sturken 2007: 6; Zvereva 2011: 5.

sometimes politely, sometimes harshly – stylistic and grammatical mistakes in the comments made in Russian by the non-Russophone group members. On the other hand, the transition in the feed from the shared Russian language to Uzbek (or, less often, to Tajik) signified that the discussion had escalated to a higher level of verbal aggression. For example, participants instantly started discussing Uzbekistan’s past history exclusively in Uzbek when their views clashed.

Moreover, some claimed that knowledge of the Uzbek language was mandatory for each participant of the discussion, because “the group is about Turkestan, and Russian has long ceased to be studied by everyone”. Likewise, some suggested using any local language of the region.¹⁸⁹ This suggestion was opposed with the view that the use of other languages equalled “disrespect for the rest of the members”, because “according to the rules of etiquette in society – in our case, in our group – people speak in the language that the majority speaks, and that is Russian”.¹⁹⁰ Moreover, one of the posts demanded that the administrators “do not allow comments in other languages [except Russian]”,¹⁹¹ which reproduced, in the form of a caricature, the Soviet policy of total Russification. The proposition to use Google Translate was another reason for contention, particularly because Facebook does not support default translation into either Uzbek or Tajik.¹⁹²

English appeared in the feed not only in the comments of Anglophone members asking for clarifications.¹⁹³ More frequently, the representatives of the so-called “titular nationalities” used it to brutally cut off the discussion, as an instrument of extreme humiliation, usually directed at a Russophone interlocutor.¹⁹⁴

Linguistic clashes revealed the problematic character of the Russian language, particularly in Uzbekistan.¹⁹⁵ These skirmishes were usually followed by claims that only “true” Uzbeks could discuss the history of Uzbekistan, and that any Russian/Western specialist or amateur had no right to debate “someone

189 “Only a small part is fluent in Russian, especially writing. If the group’s goal is to study the history of the photos of the region, then why not let everyone write comments in a language that is convenient for them. Tajik, Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Turkmen can be readily translated on Google. The main thing is not to swear and not to insult anyone on the basis of their nationality” (24 November 2019, 14:15).

190 24 November 2019, 13:39.

191 5 December 2019, 10:08.

192 24 November 2019, 14:15, 15:23, 17:12; 6 December 2019, 09:30, 09:53.

193 This showed the limiting nature of the primacy of the Russian language in the groups.

194 5 March 2018, 06:55.

195 See the strident nationalist discussion about the Russian language and the “inability to integrate” Russian-speaking residents in Uzbekistan: 14 November 2020, 23:39.

else’s history”.¹⁹⁶ This behaviour received a sharp rebuff, with counter-accusations of nationalism, Russophobia and intentions to “bootlick the West for money”.¹⁹⁷

These reciprocal accusations could be addressed both to the citizens of the “titular” Central Asian republics, and to the so-called “European” members of the group (i.e. Russian-speaking). The latter could encompass those who were not part of the “titular” ethnic groups of Central Asia (regardless of their place of residence), and Russophone representatives of the “titular nations”. When the “boundaries” of disagreement were crossed, comments could turn into a battle against the representatives of one nation. Anti-Semitic remarks often arose in the heat of the dispute, and from time to time one of the debaters was declared a “Jew” as a supreme insult. Such remarks were aimed at showing the illegitimacy of their participation in the discussions, while reproducing latent antisemitism, present in the Soviet era and not yet eradicated.¹⁹⁸

Thus the transformation of internal divisions into confrontational factions was a complex process: rather than the language or the nationality of the disputants, they reflected their political orientations and national/nationalistic attitudes. At the same time, linguistic skirmishes revealed an important mechanism: a new orientalising discourse, in the shape of linguistic isolationism, was built as a pillar for the discussion of old photographs. In this, Russian was declared, a priori, the dominant language for remembering and discussing the past of Central Asia.

In the “search for the truth”, many widespread ideas, scientific statements and personal opinions were subject to sharp criticism, as indeed were the individuals making them. By accusing “pseudo-scientists [of] rewriting history and confusing people”,¹⁹⁹ rejecting already existing versions of history and recognising only the oral history of eyewitnesses (i.e. “memory”) as “true”,²⁰⁰ participants often created a situation in which the lack of a recognised authority was evident. Many members refused to believe the results of the studies conducted by Soviet researchers.²⁰¹ Others talked about the opportunism of recent history publications

196 “It is stupid to talk, being somewhere in the forest, [and] discuss the history of a foreign country” (5 March 2018, 06:55).

197 5 March 2018, 12:12.

198 25 February 2018, 11:47.

199 28 December 2018, 08:38.

200 “The real history are the stories of eyewitnesses, not the fairy tales of the conquerors” (3 March 2018, 15:23).

201 “The researcher Sukhareva wrote under dictation [...]. As it is often the case with today’s social polls” (16 January 2018, 03:33).

by local authors. Some referred to foreign experts – mostly American – who supposedly “ultimately proved” something. In the end, however, these experts were also rejected, as were “Western” perspectives, supposed to be “not familiar enough” with the material. Each of the participants defended their right to an expert opinion, sometimes from an imperial point of view, sometimes from a nationalistic one, sometimes from both. These views eventually merged, since belonging to the imperial past and entitlements to a current imperial mission have become features of all post-Soviet states (for the former metropole as well as for the former colonies).

The most active group members called for indisputable authority by repeatedly emphasising that the knowledge of local historians could be more “accurate” than the knowledge of professional historians. Such a way of thinking is symptomatic of the global trend concerning the “crisis” of professional knowledge. References to external sources, with rare exceptions, were again limited to the online publications of the same authors conducting the disputes. This generated a closed circle of self-citations, from which the work of professional historians was practically excluded.²⁰²

As Louise Merzeau, a French specialist in digital network culture, observes, one explanation of the conflict in online discussions resides in the overthrow of established systems of authority and the refusal to acknowledge experts as such.²⁰³ Linked with this is the absence on Facebook of traditional barriers – for example books – designed to filter, validate and organise information. As a result, knowledge is often fragmented, disconnected from a single narrative, emphasising instead divergences in the evaluation of historical events. This overthrow of authority has enabled the emergence of groundless oppositional and one-dimensional contrasts, which could be related either to simplified dichotomies²⁰⁴ or to a more complicated heteroglossia. Multiple narratives about the colonial character of the Russian/Soviet presence coexisted in parallel: extremely harsh condemnations co-occurred with more tolerant relativistic assessments (“the lesser of two evils” principle) and genuine admiration for the tsarist colonial regime and the Soviet system. Ideas continuously changed in the course of the disputes or in the assessments of events, becoming inconsistent. Such inconsistency further blurred the boundaries among ideological

202 This has points in common with Vera Zvereva’s research. She observed that users prefer dramatic journalistic narratives over academic and scientific texts (Zvereva 2011: 4).

203 Merzeau 2008.

204 “The Tajik language is the most ancient [...] [this is not understood by those who] boiled in the cauldron of pan-Turkists.” “The Tajiks never had their own state” (28 February 2018, 08:38 and 08:39).

positions and increased the polyphony in the discussions. Overall, in this arena, “memory” won over “history”.

The nature of the discussion varied depending on the visual material at stake. The perception of the “views” (architectural monuments and urban landscapes) was covertly regulated by the imperial narrative. This was reflected in the large number of images of “European” architecture, depicting straight streets and new institutions associated with the activities of the colonial administration, progress and modernisation.

In relation to “types”, imaginary perceptions of what was “national” prevailed. These set the ground for harsh “memory wars”, which echoed the collective trauma (or, rather, the post-traumatic experience) of colonial conquest. This conquest introduced the first “racial”/“ethnic” classifications and the national delimitation of 1924–1936, which established rigid barriers between titular nationalities and national minorities. Dynamics of mourning and loss found no place in the debate over “types”, which was riddled instead with unsympathetic accusations of bigotry, chauvinism and nationalism that brought to the fore the postcolonial component.

In the course of disputes over ethnicity, some of the group members who lived under the Soviet understanding of *natsional’nost’* used personal perceptions to state what a representative of a particular *natsional’nost’* should look like and where they should live.²⁰⁵ These considerations were supported by personal experience, memories and/or family stories. They acquired the significance of verified proof, backed up by intergenerational memory and moral power, overwriting any documented evidence that could prove otherwise. These observations were periodically complemented in the course of the discussions with elements of scientific or pseudoscientific discourses in history, ethnography and anthropology, demonstrating the hybridisation of oral and written history.

When assessing the physical characteristics of the photographed subjects, most of the group members based their judgements on “European” standards of beauty: absence of “Mongolian features” and belonging to the “typical” Caucasian race were criteria of beauty for many.²⁰⁶ The mention of “Aryan features” was associated exclusively with the Tajiks, who were the only ones to perceive this description positively.

Sporadically, specialists in traditional clothing found inconsistencies in the costumes of the photographed subjects, particularly in commissioned costumed

205 For example: “Tashkent and Tajiks are not compatible” (24 February 2018, 13:06).

206 27 February 2018, 05:05.

portraits of “ethnographic types”. However, their comments were usually lost in the stream of remarks hypothesising the “realism” of the images. The group members, first of all, expected “truthfulness” from the photographs. Any comment with a tinge of doubt was immediately followed by a peremptory judgement about the “authenticity” of the image and its accompanying caption.²⁰⁷

The discussions normally saw a rise in evaluative statements as they progressed. These statements positively or negatively assessed the physical and moral qualities of the depicted characters, and the nations or ethnic groups the characters represented. Together with this, reproaches of a nationalistic nature against some of the participants also increased.

In the course of the discussions, the chronological layers were easily shifted: starting with the discussion of the colonial system of tsarist Russia, the members of the group freely moved their evidence to the Soviet era.²⁰⁸ It is not an exaggeration to argue that the tsarist period was idealised by many members of the group, who contrasted it with the Soviet era. At the same time, the analysis of almost all photographs of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries occurred through the Soviet lens. The language of the discussions was certainly “Soviet”, from satirical remarks to terminology, periodisation, concepts and bibliographic references.

Conclusion

If we assume that any social network reflects “a symptom of a need: for identity, for memory, for stories and for connectedness”,²⁰⁹ then these Facebook groups reflect primarily the need for the personalisation and visualisation of history. If the work of memory in relation to the Holocaust helped shape new norms of human rights over time, it is still too early to determine the impact of these understudied discussions about old photographs of Central Asia. However, it is already clear that, in addition to the clashes of different points of view, these groups produce knowledge in the new media space and under new

207 “Historical photographs are priceless, of course, but only if they are true. The girl’s clothes do not correspond to the building against which she was photographed, with her head uncovered, in short, the photo is a pure invention of the photographer, and not a reflection of reality.” “Today, the photographer himself ‘controls’ the model as she stands, sits, etc. Yes, this is an invention of the photographer, I agree, but nationality is not an invention of the photographer” (26 November 2019, 09:19 and 09:22).

208 A typical shift regarded the discussion of the tsarist army, which regularly diverged into the history of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan: 15 January 2018, 17:49 and 19:17.

209 Garde-Hansen 2009: 148.

conditions for the development, preservation and interaction of memories. This is exemplified by the discovery of photographs and their accompanying documents, their attribution and evaluation, corrections, additions, the insertion of quotations and dissemination of historical particulars. Such a practice is valuable because, overall, there is little scholarship in the field.

The outcome of the work of these dedicated groups was the recognition of photography as an important artefact by a wide circle of people. Moreover, these pages have formed a field in which informal discussions about history are possible. This public, transnational and intergenerational knowledge, despite its problems, has the potential to shake the very core of official history-writing. More generally, the “everyday conversations” on Facebook, by conflating the space of leisure with the space of work, have created an alternative to various official discourses. To some extent, they have compensated for the lack of an open space for public discussion in post-Soviet countries. Indirectly, they have contributed to democratic cultural processes, thanks to their transparency. Globalisation, decentralisation, digital culture and the transnationality of users have radically changed languages, practices and forms of memory around the world.²¹⁰ Even though the countries of Central Asia are not leaders in cyberspace, these reconstructions of history based on visual material are democratic and open to everyone, not only elites and experts. This is an important development in the postcolonial space, whereby the right to speak is given to those who previously could not participate in intellectual discussions.

These alternatives, shaped on Facebook’s templates, are specific, for they are linked with the new media. By mixing geographical spaces together and constantly updating content, new media provide wide circulation and information blending. Regardless of the behaviour of the participants in the network,²¹¹ during the discussions various events of the past were cyclically presented, constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. In this process of remembering, the past is brought into the present and reactivated, thus changing the attitude of the debaters in relation not only to the past but also to the present. The past becomes tangled with social context, communicative memory and ordinary life, supplementing with Facebook-based dialogues and images the popular history that already exists offline.²¹²

210 Morris-Suzuki 2005; van Dijck 2007; Frosh/Pinchevski 2009; Garde-Hansen, Hoskins and Reading 2009b; A. Assmann/Conrad 2011; Reading 2013.

211 Along with active and passionate participants, there are always passive observers.

212 Garde-Hansen 2009: 2. Understanding that Facebook “writes history” is evidenced by the appearance of publications in other media formats. See, in particular, the article by Leila Shakhnazarova (2019), which is built on excerpts of Facebook comments.

In these discussions, individual, collective and hybrid memories coexist. They are built in the majority of the cases on Postmemories and shared Soviet and post-Soviet experiences. The latter gives a distinctive personal overtone to the presentation of almost all past events. These diverse, controversial and alternative forms of memory are in constant interaction, providing circular movement to the reflections on history enclosed in the images and comments. During the discussions, old photos acquire new life and enter the present, which in turn becomes past the next day. This process forms a peculiar archive, stored on the network for an unlimited period of time and referred to as authoritative evidence, as a resource for restoring the remote past, analysing and reproducing it, shifting it to another context and rebuilding it. Time becomes non-linear,²¹³ and conversations about the past become fragmented, flexible, polarised, impulsive, unstructured and ever-changing. On the one hand, this strengthens already established official myths and populist ideas about history (national, religious and political). On the other, it debunks them. In the context of digital media convergence, it creates conditions for the “end of history” and the “supremacy of memory”. The cyclical repetition of images and comments reveals the open-endedness of the functioning of memory in relation to unresolved problems associated with a traumatic past. This unforgotten past has a power defined by Sigmund Freud as “repetition compulsion”, which can form post-memories and feelings of belonging to communities in the present.²¹⁴ Thus, old photographs, seemingly very far from politics and from any resistance to power structures, were placed at the centre of politically charged discussions. Photographs in the context of the “memory wars” almost always serve as a starting point and illustrative material for historical narratives, for reminiscences and accusations, and not as a specific medium capable of carrying its own type of information. Extremely rare were comments that called for an analysis of photos as independent artefacts with their own intrinsic – rather than applied – value.²¹⁵

This somewhat naive attitude towards photographs was often reversed by the fact that the photographs themselves “managed” the discussions, revealing

213 Grosz 1999: 59; Garde-Hansen 2009: 7.

214 Freud [1914] 1964: 154, cited in Kuntsman 2009: 192; Zvereva 2011: 5; Blacker/Etkind 2013a: 10.

215 “History is not hypothetical. It was what it was. It doesn’t characterise negatively the people, or the country, or the presence of certain facts in its history. There were *Bacha bazi*, underground prisons, torture racks, witch fires, the Indigenous Reservation system, the importation of black slaves to America, the hanging of the Indian rebels, and what have you, in the history of different countries and peoples. The presence of a photo of a particular moment in history is great. Regardless of the event it describes. It’s just history. It cannot be changed” (25 January 2018, 19:07).

their hidden potential as an “independent” medium. If, upon a careful reading, photographs could disclose more than the photographer intended, then they could also influence the formation of a visualisation of the past. This occurred thanks to the ideological, scientific, commercial or propagandistic meaning originally embedded in them, but especially because they were taken out of the historical context when discussed. In fact, some users perceived the visual discourse created in the colonial setting as external to criticism, and several contemporary reconstructions of the past were created through the angle set in tsarist times. The nostalgic character of the comments idealised a tsarist era in which none of the group members had lived. The imperial period of Turkestan became a peculiar reference point and at the same time a “golden age”. On the one hand, this happened because the old photos and postcards have significant value as collector’s items. On the other, it is because this period corresponds to the start of the “modernisation” and “Europeanness” of the region, values that are still very important to people linked with Central Asia. At the same time, the Soviet trauma, associated mainly with the national delimitation of 1924–1936 and fully manifest in the discussion of types, faded into the background in the general assessment of tsarist rule in Turkestan.

Starting from “truthful” visual documentation, and in search of “true” history, the members of the group became the creators of a popular history that was, though indirectly, politically engaged. One detail is important. If, according to previous studies, in the post-Soviet space the choice of topics for online discussions of history has usually been influenced by the endeavours of the political authorities,²¹⁶ in this group the choice of topics was dictated exclusively by the photographs. This demonstrated a relative independence from present-day policies of state intervention and official commemorative practices. However, being mostly unrelated to current political events, the discussions in the group showed a significant dependence on the Soviet past and a certain dependence on the official ideas of history specific to each of the countries.

Echoes of nationalisms were clearly observed in the discussions of “types” and linguistic segregation. The mechanisms leading to manifestations of racism as such reflected the peculiar uses of racial categories in the post-Soviet space, in which nationalistic Soviet clichés were reiterated instead of explicit racial discrimination by skin colour. Similarly, by shifting social differences onto a biological plane in the course of discussions, nationalistic judgements revealed their socially constructed character even more clearly. Despite the creolised Soviet past, these judgements regularly referred to “natural” biological parameters,

216 Zvereva 2011.

which were linked to historical memory, identity and moral qualities. By displaying the same strong destructive potential as racial classifications, the Central Asian “types” of old Turkestan postcards repeatedly demonstrated on the pages of Facebook that they can play the role of a powerful social detonator. Their ideological potential, associated with the colonial system, has not disappeared. Rather, it remains one of the components of global coloniality.

Abbreviations

IVR RAN, Spb Office	Institut vostochnykh rukopisei RAN, Sankt-Peterburgskoe otdelenie Instituta vostokovedeniia Rossiiskoi akademii nauk (Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences)
NA RUZ	Natsional'nyi Arkhiv Respubliki Uzbekistan (National Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan)

Archives

- IVR RAN, Spb Office. F. 33 (A. L. Kuhn). Op. 1. D. 267.
- NA RUZ. F. R-1. Upravlenie Upolnomochennogo Soveta Truda i Oborony SSSR v Srednei Azii. Op. 1. D. 703.
- NA RUZ. F. I-1. Office of the governor-general of the Turkestan governor-generalship. Op. 15. D. 96; Op. 20. D. 2519; Op. 20. D. 6652.
- NA RUZ. F. I-5. Office of the head of the Zeravshan District. Op. 1. D. 263.

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13 Afterword: Unmarginalising Central Asian Photography

The historian should show us that the past was, at the same time, trivial like every present, and fascinating like every past.

Nicolás Gómez Dávila (1913–1994), *Escolios a un texto implícito: selección*, 2001: 168.

This volume conveys the complexity, diversity and multi-perspectivity of the research materials, methods, sources and interpretations used in a field of study that is by its very nature heterogeneous. The foregoing chapters describe and analyse a plurality of historical biographies, events and collections related to photography of and in Central Asia between the nineteenth and the first third of the twentieth century. The stories told overlap, intertwine and move beyond the linear account of the region that has prevailed in scholarship to date. The range of case studies and perspectives presented reflects the broad intellectual scope, geographical focus and disciplinary expertise of the contributors. The authors are leading historians, art historians, archivists and anthropologists, working on Western and Central Europe, Russia and the United States. This heterogeneity has brought together disparate elements into an image of Central Asia through the camera lens, not panoramic, but composed of many details. We hope this has allowed the reader to appreciate the intricacy, hybridity and tension of a discipline that is still evolving. With this volume we hope to open up the discussion and make studies in the photography of Central Asia yet more visible.

We have seen from the case studies presented in this book the complex dynamics and politics of photographs and photography, which was a (rather) new and rapidly developing mass communication technology during the imperial and early Soviet period. The authors have demonstrated that photography of the Central Asian region and its peoples emerged at the intersection of institutions and discourses and their dissemination, introduction, reproduction and reuse in different societies and contexts. Photographs played a key role in the production of knowledge, particularly orientalist and orientalising knowledge, just as impactful as written texts. Moreover, the symbolic weight of photographs in developing narratives about the past is perhaps even more significant if we take into account

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claims about the “truth” and “realism” of the photographic image, and its capacity to evoke – in the Postmemory – strong feelings of nostalgia.

The essays in this collection clearly indicate that photographs are not neutral and cannot be regarded as “objective historical documents” about Central Asia. Of course, photography can show the reality of a past era, but it can also reveal how this reality was and is manipulated and staged, as well as uncover what was or is hidden, dismissed or ignored. Thus there is a kind of independence and hidden potential in photography as a medium, which can be observed in the perceptions of the contemporary viewer. This viewer may unexpectedly find themselves guided by the image or questioning it. In the course of iconographic analysis and reconstruction of the historical situation, they manoeuvre between the “visible” and the “invisible”, between the image the photograph seemingly wished to portray and the realities behind it.

This volume also contributes to discussions about methodology and sources. The types of collections analysed here, without exception, belong to colonial archives. Yet the authors resist simplistic interpretations of the imperial, and at times “quasi-colonial” or colonial, situation in the Russian Empire and the first decades of the Soviet Union. Rather, they offer new perspectives in long-standing discussions about the compatibility of postcolonial theories and Russian Soviet history, about the correlation between modernisation and colonisation and about the importance of visual materials in building relationships of dependence and subordination, rewriting history and manipulating post- and collective memories. This urges us to reconsider the principles behind collecting, classifying, describing and displaying collections of Central Asian photography, the history of which has yet to be written.

With different methods, disciplines and national traditions, we see this volume as the first attempt to address the key issues in the field of photography research in Central Asia. With this idea in mind, we attempted to find metaconceptual, interdisciplinary and transnational intersections. We have tried to create, for the first time, a holistic framework within which it would be possible to formulate pertinent questions and conduct relevant reflections on the study of colonial photography at a global level. We have endeavoured to disprove the traditional perception of Central Asia as a marginal region and of Central Asian photography as the most marginal of all marginal subjects. We hope we have started to bring it out of the margins.

It was a long, fascinating and at times tough road between the seminar in St Petersburg in the spring of 2019 where the idea for this book took form and the final result. We hope we succeeded in our purpose, and thank our readers for their interest and support.

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