

## A Different Caucasus Early Triumphs of Photography in the Caucasus

Karina Solovyova and Inessa Kouteinikova  
(Russian Museum of Ethnography, Sankt-Peterburg, Russia)

**Abstract** Many key episodes in the history of Russian colonialism were recorded in photographic images made after the fact, as the events predated the invention of photography. A remarkable example of the shared collaboration and commutative value between photography and architecture is provided by the work of several nineteenth century Russian and international photographers in the Caucasus. Be them skilled photographers of architecture such as Edward Wesley and Dmitri Ermakov, or professionals depicting sites of military and political events, eighteenth century photographers in the Caucasus provide a splendid example of how photography would lay across several fields at its beginnings: from craft to commerce, from political celebration to media purpose, from ethnographic and architectural documentation to mere artistic aims. Following the footsteps of artists travelling in the Caucasus, the paper will show how photographers thus became agents of a complex process by which eyewitness was recorded and became part of a growing body of knowledge about the character of Caucasus. The images they produced belonged to a field of cultural production that concluded inventories and scholarly research, museum collections of ethnographic paraphernalia and architectural fragments; photographic archives and picturesque views of a more commercial nature. Operating on a number of different levels, photographs of architectural monuments and historical sites intersected significantly with the Russian project of colonizing the Caucasian subcontinent.

**Summary** 1 Geography as a Future Vector of Photography. – 2 a Cradle of Russian Photography. – 3 Early Photographers in the Caucasus. – 4 A Lone Photographer: Viktor Vouytzky. – 5 The Vouytzky-Barkanov Alliance Between Culture and Commerce. – 6 Competition from Foreigners: the Case of Vittorio Sella. – 7 Of Amateurs, Portraits and Landscapes in the Caucasus. – 8 Architecture and Photography in the Caucasus. – 9 Theodor Horschelt and His Role in Ethnographic Photography. – 10 Early Albums: the Brothers Rudnev's Case. – 11 Conclusions.

**Keywords** Caucasus. Early photography.

### 1 Geography as a Future Vector of Photography

To understand the fundamental geographic problems facing the Caucasus<sup>1</sup> it is enough to look at the map (fig. 1): situated between the Black and the Caspian Sea, the Caucasian mountain range stretches over one thousand kilometres, forming a geographical barrier between the Russian steppes and the northern parts of the Middle East. Precisely because of its topography, the peoples of the Caucasus are divided into small ethnic entities, with its own language, often unable to communicate with its closest neighbours. Thus, Caucasians live in a rough neighbourhood, if one is to use Tim Judah's words from his re-

view of Thomas de Waal's book, *The Caucasus: An Introduction*.<sup>2</sup> Precisely because of the protective mountain range, the region has attracted peoples and tribes from the earliest of times. It still boasts one of the largest numbers of ethnic groups and languages in the world. Over the centuries, neighbouring powers such as Persia, the Ottoman and the Russian Empires, repeatedly attempted to conquer it, but were always met with Caucasian resistance. The increasing number of revolts and internal collisions that tore the majority of Caucasus apart, contributed to the image of the Caucasus as dangerous and politically unstable.

1 *The Caucasus (Kavkaz)*: the mountain part of Eurasia laying between the Black and Caspian seas, at the crossing of Europe and Asia, the territory covers Russia, Georgia, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Azerbaijan and Armenia (source: Encyclopedia Britannica). The Caucasus remained a part of the Soviet Empire until its dismantlement in 1991. Today, the regions that lie to the south of the mountain range are divided into three independent countries: Georgia and Armenia, both ancient Christian states, and a Muslim Azerbaijan, which was established in 1920 by the Soviet government, and formerly ruled by various foreign powers. The northern territories consist of autonomous Muslim entities within Russia.

2 Cf. de Waal, Thomas (2012). *The Caucasus: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.



Figure 1. Karte des Kaukasischen Isthmus Entworfen und gezeichnet von J. Grassl. 1865. Location unknown

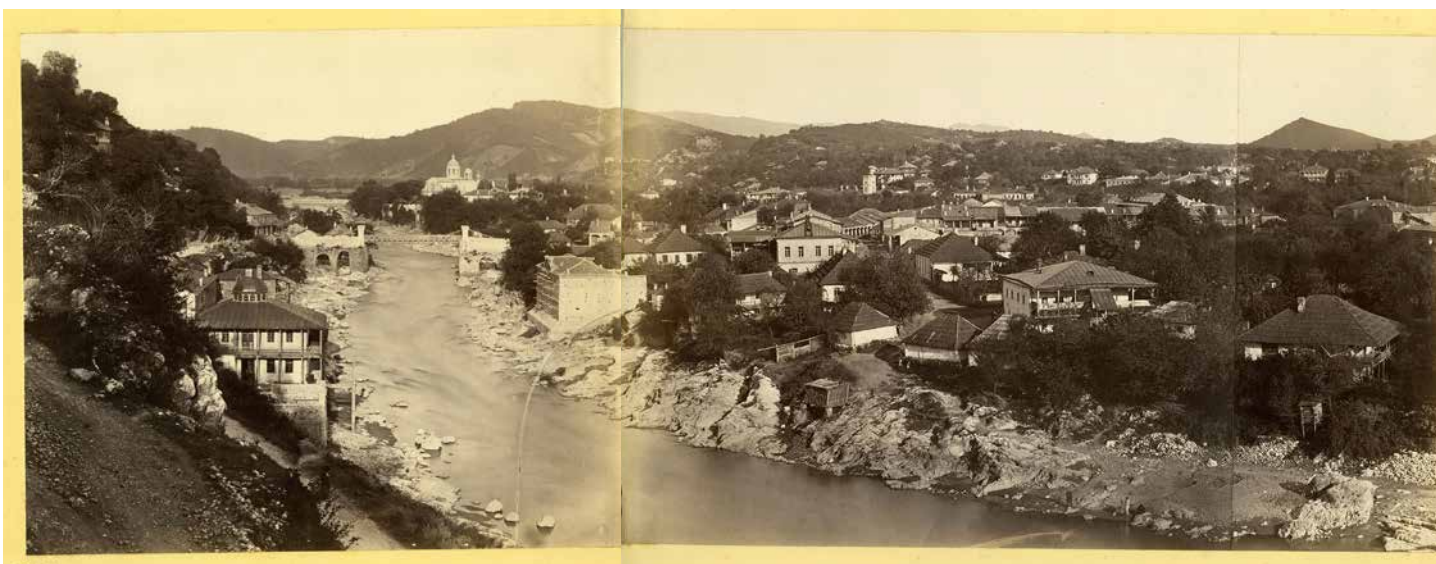


Figure 2. Edward Westley, *The Panorama of Kutaisi*. 1866. From the Album of the Kutaisi region. REM, coll. 5346-1

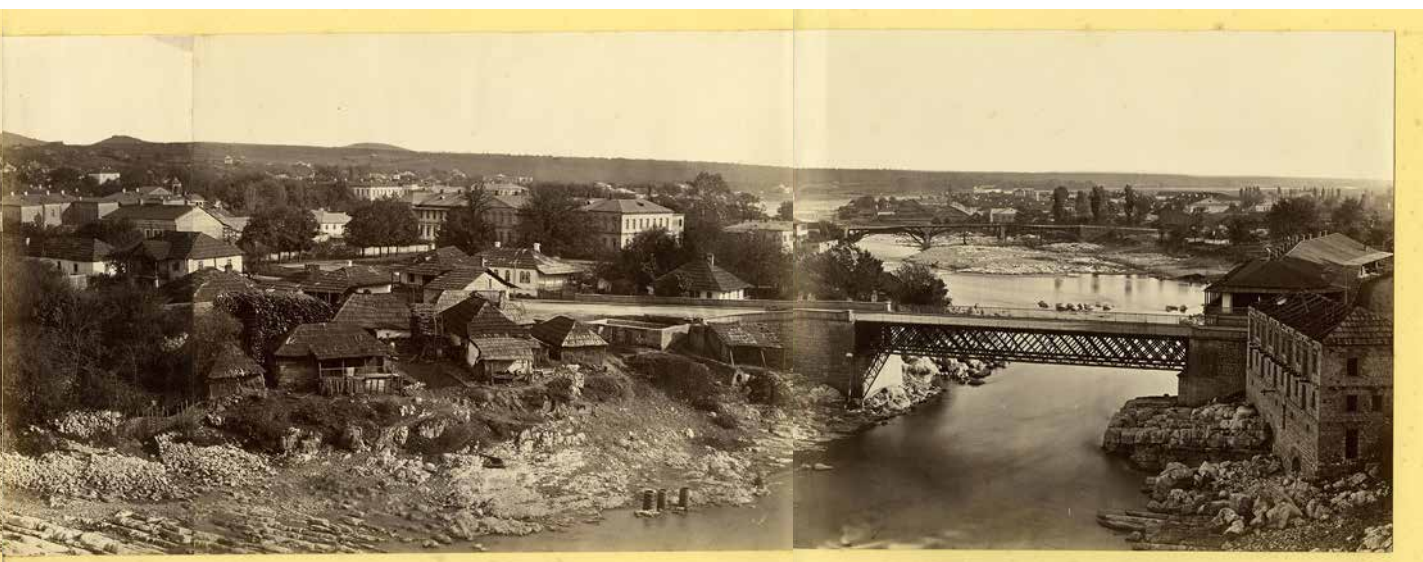
## 2 A Cradle of Russian Photography

Little is known about the early years of photography in the Caucasus. It began as a craft technology that lent its resources to the imitation of an art – portrait and landscape paintings. During 1843, Sergey L. Levitzky marked his sojourn in the Caucasian spa resort, Mineralnye Vody, as a birthplace of the Russian photography. There he conducted myriad experiments in mixing chemicals and light effects. Unlike telephone or the automobile (both unfamiliar entities for Levitzky at the time), photography was not a tool. Rather, it was an unmistakable idiosyncratic formula and aesthetic format. Future graduates of the Russian Imperial Technical Society and the Military Typographic Department of the General Corps in Saint Petersburg, who served in the Caucasus, saw in the craft a lot more. For them it was a knowledge of character, circumstance, the torrent of action and feeling that can be, when necessary, reduced to an evidence of a narrower sort: the appearance of a wound, the condition of a weapon, or the stretched railroad line. The images of the last phase of the Caucasian war (1853-1864) are rare – the full glory of documenting the disasters was given to Roger Fenton's Crimean valise in 1854 (Baldwin 2004). Institutions like the Russian Imperial Technical

Society and the Military Typographic Department, both privileged schools founded and financed by the Russian military government, recognized the power of photography to create accurate historical records.

The period of 1850s is significant for our purposes because it points to an active study of the Caucasian territory and opens the long list of scientific publications about the area, including S. Maksimov's *Russian mountains and the Caucasian mountain people*, P. Nadezhdin's *Nature and People of the Caucasus*, E. Kovalevsky's *Essays on the Caucasian Ethnography*, etc. These works profusely assisted and profoundly affected the first travellers to the Caucasus. Responding to the growing appreciation of the Russian activities in the region, the Russian Imperial Geographic Society opened the Caucasian Department as early as in 1851. Not only were the politics changing, but the process and practice of photography had too. In 1855 the special section of pictorial photography (*svetopis'*) at the Military Topographic Department of the Caucasus was founded, recognizing the rich opportunities for the Russian scientists. Prince Aleksandr I. Bariatinsky (1815-1879), the formidable Caucasian governor, served as a president for both institutions.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Within this context, it is possible to make an initial, though rather moderate, claim for the new role of Caucasian photography carried chiefly by the graduates and the members of the Military Typographic Department.



### 3 Early Photographers in the Caucasus

When the early cameras reached the Caucasus during the last decade of the Caucasian war, they were confronted with a very old culture of well-established traditions and modes of representation, both very different from those into which photography had been born. Until the late nineteenth century the medium spread mostly according to Russian presence, in a few major ports on the Georgian coast and major rivers, which were then the only places that Russian, European and the Middle-East merchants and missionaries were allowed to trade and live. Not until the regaining of complete control of the region and illuminating of Shamil's (the Muslim's religious leader) long-lasting influence after appointing the Prince Bariatinsky as a mighty governor of the region, the successive Russian and foreign treaties 'opened' a growing number of towns and ports scattered along the Black sea and the Caspian coasts to international trade. Among these, Kutaisi (fig. 2), Batumi, Tiflis, Baku soon became the most important centres for foreign trade and, consequently, photography. During this period and up until 1900, photographers generally remained within short range of the ports and where their activities were well accepted: elsewhere, public prejudice against both cameras and foreigners could lead to precarious results. This is why early photography does not cover much of the mountain area, but only a limited number of places scattered over a very large area. This situation was melting down in the early 1900, when Russia re-established control over the territory by reintroducing the position of the *namestnik*, the Tsar's chief supervisor and governor of the region of a (literally) unlimited power.<sup>4</sup> Two successive *namestniks*, Prince Bariatinsky and Prince Vorontzov-Dashkov have fully enjoyed the privileges. The procuracies and the mandate of the governor were given back to the *namestnik* immediately after the tragic events of the Bloody Sunday, on the 9th of January 1905, as the Russian government sought to regain total control in the over-populated territories of the vast Empire.

By that time, local photographers had already started businesses away from ports and major Caucasian cities. However, their number was too small for them to generate on their own an authentic photographic culture.

Although contemporary advertisements from local newspapers give some indication of photographers active in Caucasus from the 1850s, almost no photographs are known to have survived from the first one and half decades. One of the earliest recorded photographers is the Russian merchant, Nikolai A. Heiten, who took over a lithographic printing business in Vladikavkaz in the early 1860s, and opened the first photographic studio in 1864 that remained active until the mid-eighties.

Progress is difficult for us to track as most of the early photographers were visitors of whom, one hundred and fifty years later, no trace or significant work have been identified. What is certain is that the first generation of photographers in the Caucasus was either amateur or itinerant commercial parishioners. A great majority was dispatched from St Petersburg where the young officers have been trained at the Typographic Department of the General Corps, as mentioned here earlier. By creating the Imperial Military Academy at the General Corps in 1832, General A. Neidgardte insisted to open the special typographic department, aiming to train cartographers, geodesists, military engineers of exceptional skills and capacity to serve in the strategic regions of the Empire.<sup>5</sup>

### 4 A Lone Photographer: Viktor Vouytzky

Yet the above distinction is seldom as clean as it sounds in theory. The example of Viktor Vouytzky stands apart from the training pattern at the Typographic Department. One of the earliest known or identified photographers of the Russian Caucasus, Vouytzky was a descent of the impoverished Polish aristocracy who first settled in Vilno, and opened his first photographic studio in Kiev in 1850s on Fundukleev street.<sup>6</sup> Vouytzky departed from the prevailing taste for

4 The governor of the Russian Caucasus was given unlimited power over the political, economic, and legislative affairs, at some periods the financial services were also in his hands. Tsar Alexander II first granted such power to Prince Alexander Bariatinsky, and later to Prince Vorontzov-Dashkov in 1905, bringing them closer to the Prime-Minister seat. None of the Russian colonies, including the prosperous and vast Central Asia (1865-1920), enjoyed the same privileges.

5 On the training of the Russian officers at the Typographic Department, cf. Sergeev Sergej; Dolgov Evgenij. (2001). *Voennye Topografy Russkoj Armii / The Russian Army's Military Topographers*. Moscow: Topografičeskaja Služby.

6 He was entitled to photograph the burial procession of Taras Shevchenko, Ukraine's greatest people poet, on the 7th of May 1861. But even a scene like this, showing the aftermath of one's politically active life, is softened by the description

picturesque subjects, preferring the more rigorous and discipline approach that characterised much of his later work in Vladikavkaz, where he had established his last studio. He chose Vladikavkaz carefully – a relatively young place and remote Caucasian administrative centre at the Russia's peripheries, the city enjoyed many privileges of the active settlement with a rapid economic growth. The railroad branch between Vladikavkaz and Rostov-on-Don was completed by 1875. Built as a fortress in 1784 by Catherine the Great, Vladikavkaz was also the important seat of the Russian Army that only encouraged the displacement of the military officers. The number of photographers grew by year.

Already in 1867, possibly in connection with the opening of the First Ethnographic Moscow Exhibition, Vouytzky together with the Russian artist Aleksandr Rudkovski published the first Photographic Calendar of the Russian Empire,<sup>7</sup> with a strikingly beautiful Caucasian section. For this project, photographer and a painter become plain visual historians of the growing region. Scattered throughout the calendar also are images of the first civil institutions in Vladikavkaz. Vouytzky's early views of Vladikavkaz reveals this tendency, with the deep perspectival lines of the bridges leading the eye to the main subject of the picture, with a focus on the contrasting the sharply delineated links against the softness of details in the foreground. Using the massive structures to divide the composition into unequal quadrants, Vouytzky displayed a daring visual sensibility. These photographs, more than any other from the series, underline the singularity of a vision that set Vouytzky apart from the majority of his contemporaries and compatriots.

## 5 The Vouytzky-Barkanov Alliance between Culture and Commerce

Much of Vouytzky's later work is associated with the most innovative Caucasian photographer, Vladimir Barkanov. Barkanov's photogra-

phy stays for the carefully staged, compositionally balanced and extremely informative (fig. 3). It later inspired the Central Asian military photographers to create updated versions of such pictures in the local context.

After opening their first photographic atelier in 1873 in the Georgian coast town of Kutaisi, the Barkanov-Vouytzky's professional profile was more concerned with giving a personal image to a multitude of the Caucasus. These portraits were cast in an almost uniform generic setting: the framed portrait or portrait locket, done in tintype or ambrotype or as a *carte de visite*. The commercial side of their business (described as "photographic goods") is revealing as it was published in the entrée of "Your Personal Guide and Travel Companion in the Caucasus":

Photographic works by Vouytzky and Barkanov [studio]. Price for a single photograph with an ethnographic type in foreign clothes: 25 silver kopeks (uncoloured), or one silver rouble for a colour print. Public can also purchase photographs from the famous graphic images by [Theodor] Horschelt on various subjects from the Caucasian war. Consider buying them as only they can give a complete true impression of the war events. The quality of Horschelt images exceeds any lengthy [book] descriptions. Price for a single photograph is from one and half to two roubles.<sup>8</sup>

Responding to the growing appreciation of photography's commercial and cultural applications, Barkanov-Vouytzky alliance was part of this generation of hybrid photographers in the 1860s and early 1870s who sought to transform their experience and fascination with the medium into a professional practice, moving it closely to the 'high art' of painting and drawing.

Differences of class as well as circumstances might decide the nature of the portrait. The successful Tiflis studio of Dmitrii Ermakov,<sup>9</sup> whose artistic aspirations were never in conflict with his inventing and business skills, could indeed sell

of the photograph in the newspaper *Kiev's antiquities*: "The coffin with Shvchenko's body brought from St Petersburg was placed on the Church yard, surrounded by the poet's family and the stream of people who came from all Kiev. Not an easy task for a photographer".

<sup>7</sup> The first photographic calendar of Vouytzky-Rudnitzky received a special award from the hands of Tsar Alexander II, a golden watch on a chain.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the website of the Vladikavkaz Museum of Photography and Cinema: <http://www.fotokinomuseum.com/#!vojucki/c1o1a>.

<sup>9</sup> See the link to the exhibition mounted by the ROSFOTO on the Caucasian photography, 57 Bolshaya Morskaya, St Petersburg, October-December 2010.

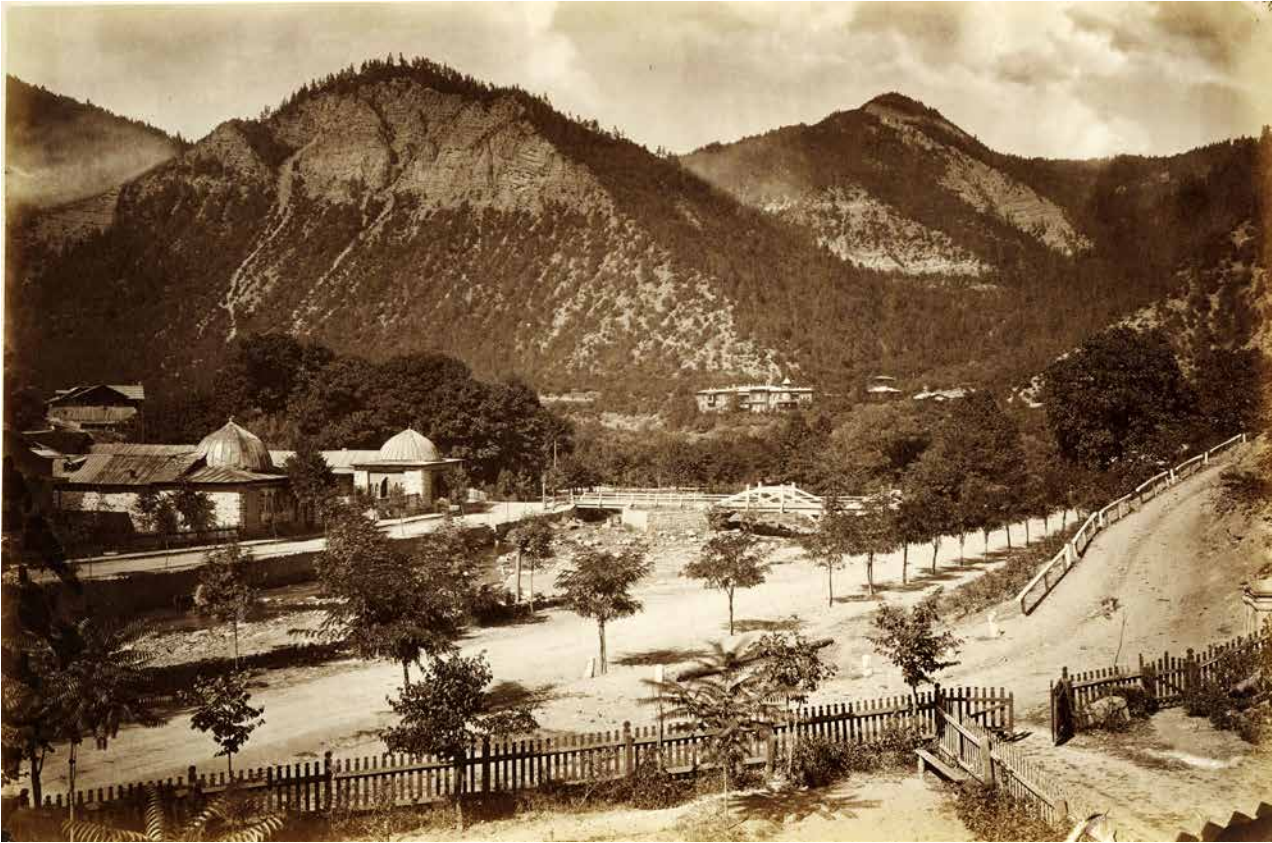


Figure 3. Vladimir Barkanov, *The Panorama of the Georgian spa resort Borzhom*. Early 1870s. REM, coll. 5338-2

several hundred copies of an image where most amateurs only shared a few prints with friends. *Cartes de visite* were cheaper, and sold in quantity, but they required a few days wait.

Early examples of influential typographic and commercial work include the set of the rare diorama of the fort Petrovsk (1859-1860), the images of Edward Westly's of the Georgian capital Tiflis (fig. 4). The authors of this potent, stimulating image for our recollection are unknown, but one looks at a photograph, if one was looking in the 1860s, with an eye trained by the conventional expectations of pictorial realism.

## 6 Competition from Foreigners: the Case of Vittorio Sella

Whether foreign or Russian, most early commercial photographers remained active for only a relatively short period, only a handful of them lasting for decades in the same city. Competition was fierce from the start, with portraits a great success with all communities. Some of these

Russian photographers were very good at their craft and all were aggressive businessmen. The most ambitious of them moved beyond their own market, vigorously targeting customers by advertising lower prices in the local newspapers or directories. After mid-1870s, foreigners thrived as photographers in the Caucasus, and a large number of Turkish, Middle East and European photographers remained active in Tiflis and Baku until the Russian revolution of 1917. The Armenians were driven in flocks to Tiflis as the only close-by cosmopolitan city in the area, well before Erevan, the (new) Armenian capital, came into existence in 1923 with the plans of the local architect Tumanian. And while Western and Russian studios covered the whole range, most early Caucasian ones specialised in portraiture, with some expanding their practices in the mid-1880s to fill the gap left by the vanishing Russian or Western studios.

In addition to local work, photographers enlarged their portfolios and practice by travelling to other parts of the Caucasus, entering into agreements to represent colleagues or amateurs,



Figure 4. Edward Westly, *The Ruins of the Georgian Fortress in Tiflis*. 1869. REM, coll. 5349-9

and in general aiming at offering their customers as wide a range of images as possible. Views of many other places in the Caucasus were available in many ports or cities, as diverse and as far as Berlin, St Petersburg, Paris, or Istanbul.

For photographers freshly arrived from Russia, Europe, or other parts of the Near East, the difficulties of carrying out their business were great indeed. Cameras on this period were simple but bulky wooden boxes equipped with fragile lens. Local conditions were an added challenge. The bright southern light had to be taken into account when estimating exposure times. Making a living also required good business sense. Most photographers active in Caucasus were there for political reasons, and the prospects of a photography business in an outpost like Caucasus could be uncertain indeed. Earlier mentioned Heiten accepted the position of the local bank chairman in 1884, slowly turned his photographic business into the property-renting affair and opened a shop that sold everything, from the kitchen utensils to bicycles. He finished as a proprietor of the Vienna Lingerie Shop; photography was

forgotten. The temporary popularity of the photographic business could not guarantee its long-term success and the structure of the work itself; the elements of the photographic crafts reflected the general conditions of the photographic training in the Caucasus at that time.

The case of the Italian travel photographer Vittorio Sella (1859-1943) is telling in this context. The Italian sources tell us that he turned to photography "when he decided to claim the mountain Everest" (Raffaella, Ceccopieri 1981). Sella's photographic work shows a marvellous technical evolution next to the merits of a formidable formal balance, it is a perfect construct of geometry and emotions with complete precision of beautify and fearlessness (fig. 5). As an adolescent he experimented with the photographic techniques that his father Giuseppe Venanzio had popularized in his 1856 publication of the first treatise on photography in Italy, *Il plico del fotografo*. Vittorio also frequented the photo lab of Vittorio Besso, but when he thought of becoming a landscape painter, Sella took lessons from the painter Luigi Ciardi. He started the Club Alpino Italiano and



Figure 5. Vittorio Sella, *Village of Mazeri – at foot of Ushba (Svanetia)*. 1890

shot his first photographic alpine panoramas. Sella effectively turned photography into his life-style, for a mountain climber the camera was his precious tool. Douglas William Field's admiration for Sella's photography brought him an invitation to join the expedition of Luigi Amedeo di Savoia (Duca degli Abruzzi) to the Mount Saint Elias in Alaska. The trips to the African Ruwenzori chain and to Karakorum followed soon after. Growing up and often photographing the Alps, he remarked after visiting the Caucasus that the air there was frequently hazy and clouded, even under the glorious sun. Sella showed particular awareness as regards the importance of mountain population, especially of their rituals: he particularly enjoyed photographing cemeteries or mourning scenes, and he occasionally mentions these names and locations in the Caucasus. It is a living storage of loss, pain, revenge, memories and a relieve of tears. Part of the impact of these pictures is that they documented a current event – an ongoing event – rather than a presumably finished history.

Sella went to the Caucasus three times (1889, 1890 and 1896), each stay lasting no more than three months, and always in summer. His interest in the geological formations in the central Caucasus and occasional geographical discoveries aimed at telling stories of previously unsung places. Sella's brother Erminio and the two professional guides Daniel Maguignaz and Giovanni Gilardi scaled the Mount Elbruz (5.629 m) together with the summits of the Koshtantau chain. These photographs brought him much attention from the various European geographic societies next to participation in several exhibitions in Lon-

don and the United States<sup>10</sup> (1898). Sella's world is one of the unfamiliar and undomesticated. In the twenties, he moved to Sardinia where he initiated the wine business "Sella e Mosca" together with his brother.

## 7 Of Amateurs, Portraits and Landscapes in the Caucasus

Another group of photographers, which were of a rather intellectual kind, are the members of various scientific expeditions. They are known also for their reports to Russian papers, although none or only some of their photographs taken of the locals resisted up to this date. Their focus on portraiture was not atypical, for the earlier daguerreotypists probably concentrated on portraits. By the 1860s Russian ethnographic photographers tended to be jack-of-all-trades, or Renaissance men, and they also have dabbled in other scientific endeavours. Photographic processes also evolved over time, from the early single-copy daguerreotype available in 1839, to glass plate negatives in the mid-1850s. The early wet plates allowed the production of high quality, multiple prints on albumen paper, but the process was too slow to record a clear image of moving objects. Any movement during exposure resulted in blurred areas known as 'ghosts'. From the beginning of photography in the Caucasus, amateurs had been a valued source of images. Nevertheless, the contribution of their commercial counterparts to a photographic image of the Caucasus was much more effective.

10 By then Sella had given up the cumbersome Dalmayer camera for making 30 × 40 cm plates in favor of a camera with Ross lenses (18 × 24 cm) for plates and size 20 × 25 cm for films.



In the Caucasus, portraiture's original format owed much to contemporary Russian photographic and painterly traditions.<sup>11</sup> The two ways to make a portrait relied on the model's cultural traditions. Russian sitters were soon following the conventions of Russian portraiture, while, simultaneously, an enduring Russian vocabulary of representation emerged on the Caucasian territory in the early 1860s. It stressed the sitter's social status through specific Caucasian forms of representation – full body, sitting or standing, with display of assets such as rich clothing and tastefully decorated interior, covered hair – and blended them seamlessly with the Russian photographic model. The tea and coffee sets, (rare) flowers and (plenty of) armoires displayed on a carpet behind the sitter, or commode, are common in the East of Caucasus, or the low tables and rugs covering the walls of the studios are usual in Baku, Shekin, Karabakh, Kuba, Shirvan and Ganja Khanates whose capitals were Nukha, Shusha, Kuba, Baku, Shemakha and Ganja (fig. 6). These are symbols of time, place, people who inhabited them. They appear again and again in early photography, and belong fully to the Caucasian photographic culture. Later authentically Caucasian styles of portraiture would only emerge with the deep social changes in the 1900s.

By then, Caucasian and Russian portraits served all communities. Caucasian studios were more accessible for the local customers as they were cheaper, more attractive to foreign sailors and traders and less wealthy residents. They can also speak the same language with a photographer: the linguistic quilt of the region counted more than 50 languages, not counting dialects.

The emergence of the urban landscape scenes, *vedute* (cityscapes) and panoramic drawings that replaced the neo-classical and Romantic traditions allowed the mastery of painting technique to be assimilated almost seamlessly into the earlier photography. The hyperbolic likeness of sunrise and sunsets in Maxim Vorob'ev's (1787-1855) work, one of Alekseev's best students and



Figure 6. The atelier portrait of the Khan Reshid Mekhtulinsky with his wife. Photographic studio of the Military Technical Department in Tiflis, for the Moscow Ethnographic Exhibition (1867). 8764-6427-1, the former Dashkov Museum collection, presently REM

the urban lithographic works of Vorob'ev's own pupils, are one of the historically validated examples of direct sensory experience. The *topos* of lifelike reproduction, as applied specifically to portray nature, is not dependent on the photo-

<sup>11</sup> There could be no more striking case of photography inheriting an earlier painting technique than the Caucasian, after the most excellent landscape paintings by Fedor Y. Alekseev (1753-1824), the father of the Russian *école du paysage*. Many nineteenth-century Russian art critics commented further on the several ambitions of the Russian artists to promote the country's natural greatness by securing its reproduction in the new medium of lithography despite the obvious technical difficulties involved in preparing the stones, and ensuring consistent quality throughout the run of prints. The aesthetics of photographic profession closely intertwined with the flourishing architectural lithography in Moscow and St Petersburg during the 1820s and 1830s. Artists such as S. Galaktionov, A. Martynov, K. Begrov and V. Sadovnikov worked for many years in this acquired technique before reproductive photography was adequately developed, and came to view photography as a mean of perpetuating their lithographs in the form of graphic album while standardizing their quality. A close inspection of the major Russian museums leaves no doubt that, in most if not all cases, it is the lithographs that have been reproduced, rather than the original paintings.

graph as such, but the mastery of an artist, the Russian nineteenth-century critics concluded.

The city of St Petersburg had earlier been one of the most historically significant artistic centres since the establishment of the Imperial Art Academy in 1757, the ambitious and challenging institution for the Russian talents. The Academy students often spent time dragging their everyday life in the modest houses next to the magnificent neo-classical architecture of the Russian capital. The difference in lifestyle is perpetuated culturally and may have led to differences in financial and economic management of the Academy. The painful and sentimental journey from the insides of the Academy's classes to the cold and soulless streets outside, from the princely halls into the poor neighbourhoods justified the arrival of the new painterly genre in 1860s - *realism* - of which Vasilii Perov and Ivan Kramskoy are the best-known proponents. Equally, they are the pioneers of the Russian ethnographic art.

Although the field of the Caucasian photography had no clear precedent, and as a consequence all styles of photography were acceptable, the photographer, however, kept struggling with older traditions of representation. This included the vexing question of landscape, the all-important subject of ethnographic portraiture and social genre painting that spread itself across the second half of the nineteenth century. Efforts were made to duplicate the dreamlike quality of traditional painting and its particular styles of framing the scenery with path leading into the image. Such attempts were in vain, since the camera could only show things as they were and not as tradition dictated or as the mind saw them. This rift went deep, and even today landscape remains a major genre for the Caucasian photography.

Unlike other Russian and European photographic innovations, where portraiture was the source of the most important changes, landscape took over for its purity, grand scale and undiscovered timeless and modern qualities. Although portrait photographers used objects to highlight this emergence of a new Caucasian cultural identity, cameras actively recorded the 'new Caucasus' with views of nature, with an emerging infrastructure - transport bridges, railways, even social life *en plain air* seemed more attractive to them than the studio photography.

However, the Caucasus as a whole was not moving at the same pace: Vladikavkaz and Tiflis were at the vanguard of these cultural shifts and set the pace, while in other places recorded changes might be limited to photographing light houses, or perhaps nothing at all.

## 8 Architecture and Photography in the Caucasus

The Russian professional duet of Kondratenko-Vladimirov occupies a special place in the history of nineteenth-century Caucasian photography, not only for their memorable name and rare collaboration, but also for the outstanding body of work they produced in Georgia between 1864-1870 and for the way in which they envisioned a new path for architectural photography.<sup>12</sup> When they took photography at their own expense, instead of beginning slowly and acquiring better equipment as their confidence and experience grew, they immediately bought the largest camera available and one of the finest lenses. The early sense of determination set their subsequent practice in motion, with painstaking care focused on the creation of the negative, which they then often used as a starting point for their own artistic intentions through retouching. They applied layers of pigment with great delicacy directly on the surface of the negative to introduce clouds and other atmospheric effects. This innovative attitude towards picture making gives their work a unique visual identity. Largely isolated from their native Russia, their work was intended to appeal to fellow photographers but firstly to the new Caucasus they loyally served. Today Kondratenko-Vladimirov reputation rests on three groups of photographs - those made in Georgian mountains and villages, as well as the Russian administrative centres.

By working alongside each other, Kondratenko and Vladimirov had to acknowledge that photography and its objective gaze offered a distinct way to visualize the world. Captivated by the richness and beauty of the Caucasian cities and its architectural legacy, their work expressed the belief that photography alone can transfer visibly the reality. Unfortunately, the value of Kondratenko-Vladimirov's Caucasian architectural portfolio is partly undermined by the fact that they did

<sup>12</sup> It has been agreed that both disciples shared several characteristics, the differences between photography and architecture were camouflaged by the common goals and methods shared by the members of both communities. This is particularly evident in architects writing about photography in the 1860s and 1870s.

not write the texts that accompany many of their photographs. Instead, they had to develop technical and aesthetic strategies – in addition to meeting traditional cultural standards in order to make their medium appealing to a broad audience with diverse needs and expectations. Their architectural views of the Georgian churches (fig. 7) played multiple roles within St Petersburg artistic and scientific circles, illuminating many national sentiments and cultural ideas expressed in the national and foreign landscapes. Clearly, their *œuvre* is outside the romantic tourism, more so it is a continuation of the romantic tradition toward anchoring a national architectural identity in the bounded, physical space and culture of the Caucasus in the constant process of discovering it by the Russians. Caucasus was itself the outcome of a complex interaction of human and geographic factors, whereby the original Georgian Christian culture created the first architectural wealth. The photographers' classification of architecture in the wine producing region of the Alazan Valley and their determination of the possibilities of human interaction with nature and architecture stand by the several big themes of social interest throughout their Caucasian career.

Kondratenko's photographs of churches, along with villages and the oriental landscape in other photographs,<sup>13</sup> helped to create a sense of shared traditional values and experiences that contributed to the formation of a Georgian identity, not yet initiated within the Russian tradition. His emphasis on similarities in the history and practice of orthodoxy could bind Russia and the Caucasus together, while simultaneously separating the nation from its Muslim neighbours and rivals. By photographing almost exclusively Orthodox churches, Kondratenko promoted the idea that Georgia was predominantly Russian, which it barely was.

Kondratenko contributed on the subject with his own opinion by means of other photographic works, such as pictures of architecture. Indeed, like many architects of his time, he felt architecture

was an excellent topic for photographers and complained that there were not as many pictures of the Caucasian architecture as there should have been.

By examining Kondratenko's photography, one looks at the way in which photography was employed in the nineteenth century for archaeological documentation and by the Russian government's commission to survey the Caucasian architectural patrimony. As for Georgian architecture, the referential value of the engravings is not entirely abandoned at this stage. Vasili V. Vereschagin's *Streets of Tiflis* (fig. 8) is one of the many blends of architectural ethnography of the period to feature engravings made after photographs. But this does not prevent Vereschagin from making the more general set of graphic sketches and even paintings that work as the inseparable link between the lithograph and the photograph together, an odd harmony has been created between the format, technique and medium.

## 9 Theodor Horschelt and His Role in Ethnographic Photography

No publication can tell an entire story such as the lithography of Theodor Horschelt, the German-born artist who was at the service of the Russian court. The 1873 advertisement of the Vouytzky-Barkanov photographic studio in Vladikavkaz tells us at the beginning of this narrative. Son of a ballet teacher, the Bavarian artist Theodor Horschelt (1829-1871) was sent by the Russian court on several military and ethnographic expeditions to the Caucasus (Vrevsky expedition to Dagestan in 1858, the General Evdokimov expedition to Chechnya in 1859, etc). Horschelt witnessed and depicted the captivity of Shamil, and spent at least five years in the Caucasus before returning to his native Munich. Horschelt produced a great number of the black-and-white and colour lithographs, ravishing drawings that entered a wide circulation after they had become a desir-

<sup>13</sup> Kondratenko's decision to photograph most of the churches in Georgia was typical of his practice in most of the towns in which he worked. Even in small villages he usually made at least some photographs of the local church, demonstrating that religion was an identifying feature of a town as well as a vital common ground between Russian and Georgian orthodoxy. Although there is much less interiors of the religious places – possibly explained by the apparent difficulties of negotiating the entrees with the local priests –, Kondratenko focused on the external liturgy of forms. His discussion about viewpoints, sharp focus, and uniform light level illustrated positivist philosophy of the acquisition of knowledge through the accumulation of detailed facts. Typical of this generation of photographers, Kondratenko arranged his compositions, light, and focus to reveal as much information about the physical fabric as possible. He emphasized sentiment over form – the emotional evocativeness of architecture revealed through atmosphere and fragments, the special angle of focus on a particular church's structure and decoration. Form embodied meaning in the exterior of a church as much as the interior. Using the spire as an example, he elaborates on his belief, based, possibly on Nikolai V. Gogol' *Notes on Architecture* (1836), that architecture possessed both mystical and natural value.



Figure 7. Georgian church. Kondratenko and Vladimirov. November 1864.  
Photographers Main Stab

able target for commercial photographic studios. His album of the *Caucasian Camp Graphics*, or *Kavkazskii Pokhodnyi Al'bom* (fig. 9) served the Russian Caucasian military campaign well, and laid the foundation of the ethnographic visual art of Russia.

At the opening of the Russian Ethnographic Museum in 1903, Konstantin A. Inostrantzev, a Muslim culture specialist and one of the founding curators of the Caucasian Collection, made the claim that ethnography could contribute to future economic developments by learning about the cultures of the vast Russian Empire.<sup>14</sup> The thought was not new, for many museums directors across Europe of similar collections that had emerged about the same time, were the giants of erudition,

given to patient, eye-training labor. They thought of themselves as the direct heirs and gatherers of the colonial knowledge for they assumed that behind each image they discovered and deposited there lay a message. But how did photography contribute into this learning process remains a secondary question. What prompted Inostrantzev to see an important component of the museum's history in photographic material was his intimate knowledge of the Caucasian quilt-like cultures, which he put into perspective. His comparative analysis of Caucasian cultures was the main focus, while anthropological and ethnographic photographs had much to say about these cultures and of the people they portrayed.

The development of the photography in the

<sup>14</sup> The Russian Ethnographic Museum's photographic collection is known as one of the greatest collections of nineteenth-century photography. Together with its library and the preserved material objects of the museum, as well as an equal number of rare books, it was one of the first professional collections gathered by the patrons of photography. Their interests began when they were looking for a method to document the growing number of material in the Russian colonies and grew into an appreciation for the medium itself. The Caucasian Collection was the cornerstone upon which the trustees of the Museum built the photographic collection. Besides the preserved photographs, the museum has a number of useful research instruments, such as an extensive collection of contemporary books and on-going studies on this issue from several Russian provinces, as well as book series focusing on nineteenth-century photography.



Figure 8. Vasilii Vereshchagin, *Vorontzov Street, Tiflis*. From the Album of the Caucasian Art Society (K.Kh.O.), by Dmitriy Nikitin, in leather jacket. 1874. Coll. 5343, REM

Caucasus didn't follow the same path as in Europe: the pictorial migrants didn't keep or took photographs for the personal memories in the private spaces of their homes, neither they did it as a souvenirs and a reminder of their past life. After Horschelt such things seemed more promising. The social aspects of his historical realistic painting were supported by the ethnographic and scientific knowledge that took over from the dry and soulless documentation. Caucasian War remains astonishingly vivid in the Russian memory precisely because of Horschelt's portfolio. Similar to *lubok* (a popular Russian woodprint), his ethnographic drawings served a propagandistic function in Russian national culture, and because of its functions, propaganda has always been connected to war. The focus on the production and reception of Caucasian national images allows to glimpse the ways in which publishers, artists, and consumers attempted to answer their own questions about Russian nationhood. The idea of *Russianness* for the Russian ethnographic photographers took roots in Horschelt's recording of the military campaign and the rural life in the Caucasus.

## 10 Early Albums: the Brothers Rudnev's Case

The study of the early Caucasian photographic album is legitimately seen as a branch of the history of Russian photography, although the study equally contributes in many different ways to the overall history of Russian and Caucasian art and their institutions. By the end of 1860s, photographers' growing expertise in reproductive techniques had begun to inspire such confidence those new entrepreneurial strategies for promoting the arts developed with an irreversible dependence on the capacities of the medium. An outstanding example of this development is the Rudnev Album (fig. 10), devoted to the Caucasian ethnographic types, it is a representation of human nature, and in accordance with this reading, the Album involves distinct visual innovations viewed by this magisterial photographic survey as an anticipation of the way in which photographic documentation continues today to provide markets of visual identity for complex results. With this certitude went an unflinching narrowness of focus. Those photographers who dug even deeper



Figure 9. Theodore Horscheld, *Military Life in the Caucasus, Vue de la tranchee*, 1859. Paper, watercolor. Coll. SHM

into the private world of the Caucasus were convinced that they had discovered the magnificent catalogue of one of the greatest nineteenth-century colonial campaigns. This considerable achievement ought not to be viewed in isolation.

A highly successful Rudnev's studio in St. Petersburg had later accepted a commission to reproduce the unique six-parts panorama of the Caucasian mountains. The brother Rudnev's photographic format was indeed characterised with this even number of powerful shots, which showed the harmonious spread of villages, including the Gunib village, the place of captivity of the Caucasian political and religious Muslim leader Imam Shamil in 1859. In this example, photography in the quite of the illustrated album is, in effect, positioning itself at the very epicentre of traditional European high art, with its unquestioned source in the masterpieces of the Italian *vedute* and its contemporary avatars in the thriving bourgeois culture of Russian traditionalism. The role of photography in redefining architectural artistic tradition by drawing upon the wider domain of visual culture is also under discussion here. It is fascinating to observe that, for the Rudnev brothers, the architecture of the Georgian places must still be conveyed through line drawings.

This kinship between the seriality of the album format and the multiple reproduction of photography has been previously thoroughly studied by Frederick Bohrer's contribution for the remarkable publication *Art and the Early Photographic Album*, edited by Stephen Bann amongst others in 2011. Bohrer describes this kinship as "the feature that underlies in broad terms the significant cultural effect of so many of the albums" (Bann 2011, 5).

## 11 Conclusions

To fully appreciate the scope and history of the Caucasian photography, we should first place it in the larger setting of the colonial and ethnographic photography. While the Caucasian photography as a whole seems to support prevailing attitudes of the Russian prowess and superiority, the majority of them are also open to multiple interpretations supportive of a variety of viewpoints. Soon enough, there was no single attitude towards the countryside, landscape, or ethnographic type; there was equally no single perspective, social, cultural, or artistic, in the Caucasian photographs. This growing multiplic-



Figure 10. The Rudnevs brother's Album, Aul (village) of Tlb, Ossetia. Early 1860s. REM, coll. 5339-8

ity have enhanced their commercial appeal as photographic art and placed them as souvenirs that echoed the range of political, cultural and historical events the Caucasus went through.

As Caucasus was slowly leaving the past behind and moving forward, some Russian photographers had learned to understand and document rapidly disappearing customs (fig. 11). Their images are now invaluable visual records of the Caucasus in the early twenty-first century. They show us how and at what speed social and cultural changes occurred, from the disappearance of women's covered face, to the emergence of modern crowds and changing cityscapes.

The early history of photography in the Caucasus becomes another mine of inquiry, its rise in the 1850-1870s attributed in part to the support of the Russian technical officers with a photographic virus, and above all to that of completely new artistic trade, not persecuted under the Russians. The two groups shared many of the same

aesthetic concept and commercial prophets. But hopes of a conciliatory and inclusive Caucasian photography faded in time, although this modest contribution to its history charitably underpays the divisive strains in the Koran, and only mildly alludes to the political catastrophes.

Whoever could control Caucasus would exercise enormous power, but so far no power achieved control there and the battle for influence took different direction since the day Russians connected themselves to the Caucasus.



Figure 11. Dmitri Ermakov's Carpet Mill, Tiflis, REM, coll. 214-54v

### Archives and Libraries

Bradford, UK. National Media Museum, Royal Photographic Society collection.  
 Horten, Norway. Norsk Museum for Fotografi, Preus Fotomuseum.  
 Köln, Photobibliothek der Kunst, and Museumsbibliothek der Stadt Köln.

### Bibliography

Anon. (1871). *Pravila fotograficheskogo otdela Obschestva rasprostraneniya technicheskikh znanii / Rules of Photographic Department of the Society for Advancing Technical Knowledge*. Moskva: Publishing House N.A. Kalashnikov.  
 Baldwin, Gordon (2004). *The Entire Mighty World: the Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852-1860*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Baldwin, Gordon (2013). *Architecture in Photographs*. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum.

Bann, Stephen (2011). *Art and Early Photographic Album*. Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art.

Barkhatova, Elena (2009). *Russkaya Svetopis', Pervyj Vek fotoiskusstva, 1839-1914 / The Russian Pictorial Photography, First Century of Photographic Art*. St Petersburg: Alians.

Benteli, Thomas Dworzak (2010). *Kavkaz, Kaukasus, Kaukasier*. New York; Paris: Magnum Photo.

Bertholet, Ferry; van der Aalsvoort, Lambert (2014). *Among the Celestials. China in Early Photographs*. Brussels: Mercatorfonds.

Boglachev, Sergej (2013). *Pervye Fotografy Kavkaza / Pioneers of the Caucasian Photographers*. Piatigorsk: Sneg Publishing House.

Deliss, Clementine; Mutumba, Yvette (eds.) (2014). *Foreign Exchange (or the stories you wouldn't tell a stranger)*. Diaphanes: Weltkulturen Museum.



- Dmitriev, A. (1858). *Fotografiya I fotograficheskaya khimiya / Photography and Photographic chemistry*. Moskva: I. Glazunov Publishing House.
- Judah, Tim (2012). "Armenia Survives!". *NYRB*, 10th of May, 47.
- Kerimov, Liatif; Stepanian, Nonna; Grigoliya, Tatiana; Tsitsishvili, David (1984). *Rugs and Carpets from the Caucasus, The Russian collections*. Leningrad: Aurora Publishing House.
- Lermontov, Mikhail Y. (s.d.). *Ein Held unserer Zeit / The Hero of our time*. s.l.: s.n.
- Migurskii, I.S. (ed.) (1859). *Prakticheskii Uchebnik dlia fotografii po noveishim ee usovershenstvovaniyam I primeneniyam / Practical Inventory of Photography According to Its Inventions and Innovations*. Odessa: Publishing house L. Nitsche.
- Mikdash-Shmailov, Liya (ed.) (2001-2002). *Mountain Jews, Customs and Daily Life in the Caucasus*. Jerusalem: The Israel Museum.
- Miller, Yuriy A. (s.d.). *Caucasian Arms from the State Hermitage Museum, The Art of Weaponry in Caucasus and Transcaucasia in the 18th and 19th centuries*. Devantier: Ole Skott.
- Norris, Stephen M. (2006). *A War of Images. Russian popular Prints, Wartime culture, and national Identity, 1812-1945*. DeKalb (IL): Northern Illinois University Press.
- Pardo, Alona; Restone, Elias (eds.) (2014). *Constructing Worlds: Photography and Architecture in the Modern Age = Exhibition Catalogue* (Barbican Art Gallery, London, 25 September-11 January). New York: Graham Foundation.
- Pushkin, Alexander S. (1937). *Sochineniya / Creative Writing*. s.l.: Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo Khudozhestvennaya Literatura.
- Raffaella, Maria; Ceccopieri, Fiory (a cura di) (1981). *Dal Caucaso al Himalaya, 1889-1909. Vittorio Sella, fotografo, alpinista, esploratore*. Milano: Touring Club Italiano.
- Sella, Angelica (ed.) (2014). *Vittorio Sella: Mountain Photographs 1879-1909*. Warnsveld Terra. URL <http://www.terralannoo.nl/sites/default/files/books/issuu/9789089896193.pdf>.
- Shapero, Bernard J. (s.d.). *Early Travel Photography, 1850-1950*. London: Rare Books.
- Skamoni, G.N. (1872). *Rukovodstvo k geliografii s prakticheskimi ukazaniyami otnositel'no graviroval'nogo iskusstva / Code of Rules to Heliography with Practical Advice About the Lithography and Etching*. Transl. from German by A. Ber. Edited by Langa, V. St Petersburg: Publishing house of Expedition for producing the government papers.
- Spencer, Stephanie (2011). *Francis Bedford Landscape Photography and Nineteenth-century British Culture. The Artist as Entrepreneur*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.
- Taylor, Roger; Branfoot, Crispin; Greenoug, Sarah; Daniel, Malcolm (2015). *Captain Linnaeus Tripe: Photographer of India and Burma, 1852-1860*. New York: Prestel Publishing.
- Tolstoy, Leo (1968). *Sobranie sochinenii / Collected Writings*, vol. 3, Moskva: izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvannaya literatura, 14.
- Wageman, Patty; Kouteinikova, Inessa (eds.) (2010). *Russia's Unknown Orient: Orientalist Paintings 1850-1920 = Exhibition Catalogue* (Groningen, 8 December 2010-8 May 2011). Groningen: Groningen Museum; Rotterdam: Nai publishers.
- Wue, Roberta; Waley-Cohen, Joanna (1997). *Picturing Hong Kong, Photography 1855-1910 = Exhibition Catalogue* (New York and the Hong Kong Arts Centre). Asia Society Galleries.

