

Dal Paleolitico al Genocidio Armeno

Ricerche su Caucaso e Asia Centrale

a cura di Aldo Ferrari, Erica Ianiro

The Colonial Photography of Central Asia (1865-1923)

Inessa Koutienikova

Abstract The article focuses on the photographic history of the Russian conquest in Islamic Turkestan (Turkestan Government-General) at the rise of international Orientalism. It is a rethinking of the cultural origins, history and significance of this major Islamic region under the Russian rule, and one of her greatest colonies at the time. Through photography it explores why and how the government of the Tsarist Russia led the heartland of Central Asia economically, scientifically, and artistically for six decades despite the relentless invasions, rebels, military campaigns and corruption. Placing the region within a world cultural framework at the rapid development of photography, this article hopes to provide a new understanding of the internal and external dynamics within Central Asia and shows how photography attempted repeatedly to revolutionize this civilization. Moreover, it raises questions about how photography escalated the development of cultural identity in Central Asia between 1860s and 1920s. Featuring the ethnographic and historical photography, some published for the first time, it provides an insight into the works of the late nineteenth-early twentieth century Russian artists next to their (often anonymous) Central Asian counterparts.

The exceptional position of Central Asia explains the scale of the Russian enterprise: few provinces at the outskirts of the Empire elicited more popular interest than Central Asia. This was the subject of a steady stream of articles, paintings, photographs and books. With its new wealth (cotton industry), by the turn of the twentieth century Turkestan attracted a surprising large number of skilled and armature photographers, willing to try their luck with this financially risky venture. Not only did they make pictures of people who came to their studios for likenesses, but also they took their cameras out of doors, into the streets, and to the countryside beyond. However, the commercial launch of photography in Central Asia didn't occur until the early 1890s when the Imperial Academy of Science in St. Petersburg¹ commissioned the first photographers into the area,

¹ This assessment is based on the archival documentations from the State Archive of the Russian Academy of Science (St. Petersburg chapter) about the first scientific expeditions to Central Asia under the academic supervision of Vasilii V. Bartold (1896-1930), Sergey F. Oldenburg (1863-1934), Nikolai I. Veselovsky (1848-1918), and Mikhail Ignatiev. Such documentations also illustrate an important social function of the first scientific photographs in

and even these had to be trained in situ since their direct tasks covered ethnographical and anthropological aspects.² Sadly, there is little archival documentation that could give us precise details about the circumstances of photographic training, production and publication.³ Everything suggests, however, that photography was by and large a sponsored venture, often by the Imperial commissions to the local governors that led to a separate photographic series.⁴ Others included private initiatives by the local Turkestan authorities and their office photographers with a purpose to familiarize the public about the new territories and populations. Six copies and highly portable manifestations of the *Turkestansky Al'bom* (Turkestan Album) emphasize the overall importance of Central Asia as a new colony to the Empire, whereby the photographic albums both delivered colonial knowledge to better envision and perceive the borderlands from afar, and also legitimated Russian administrative presence and development in the territory. Among many reasons to make Central Asia's architecture, traditions and daily routine a center of their photographic activities, the idea of exhibiting the new and ideal society under the Russian eye was their first priority. In its desire to encourage an urgent contemporary situation, the Russians simplified some of the complex political arguments and historical experiences.

This research on early photographs taken by Russians in Central Asia has two distinct approaches. The first emphasizes the documentary dimension of photography. Focusing on the contents of photographs taken in Central Asia, historians and art historians explore them as valuable documents about the Central Asian past under the Russians. The interest in photographs as historical documents has not been widely pursued in

late colonial Turkestan. The short reports of these expeditions were published by the Russian Imperial Academy of Science; see the RAN Archive, S.F. Oldenburg, *Russian Turkestan expedition 1909-10* with 53 tables, one plan and 73 drawings made on the basis of Samuil M. Dudin's photographs and the engineer D.A. Smirnov's plans, St. Petersburg, 1914.

The subject has been previously explored to some extent in the first exhibition devoted to the artistic practices in the colonies of the Russian Empire. Titled *Russia's Unknown Orient: 1850-1920*, it was held at the Groningen Museum in the Netherlands in 2010-2011, and curated by the author. For more information, see <http://www.groningermuseum.nl/en/exhibition/russias-unknown-orient>.

2 Prishchepova 2011; Dluzhnevskaya 2013. For most detailed historical information on the early photographic collections in Russia from Central Asia, see Dluzhnevskaya 2008. The IHMC (Institute of History of the Material Culture) also received a copy of the *Turkestansky Al'bom* as well as the vast collection of negatives of Aleksey Kun and N. Nekhoroshev. Dluzhnevskaya's dissertation is based on the observation of more than fifty photographic albums produced between 1880s and 1920s in Central Asia in the collection of IHMC, REM (Russian Ethnographic Museum) and the State Hermitage in St. Petersburg. Dluzhnevskaya 2010.

3 The most comprehensive publication that exists today was published in 2009 as a single book: *Russkaya Svetopis': Pervyj vek fotoiskusstva 1839-1914* (Barkhatova 2009).

4 St. Petersburg, The State Russian Archive of the Academy of Science.

the current Russian publications, but several museum-oriented studies have paid a tribute to specific photographic and ethnographical collections in Russia.⁵

The second approach explores how, through their choice of themes, Russian amateur photographers in Turkestan reinforced and perpetuated stereotypes of Central Asia and its inhabitants. The invention of Turkestan through imagery has been the departure point for several recent works on photography.⁶ The process of inventing and justifying the new looks of Central Asia through photographs and postcards also played an important role. The photographers entered Russian homes and became cherished items collectors. Predictably, the postcards disseminated stereotypical imagery and influenced the perceptions of the many people who purchased, received, and collected them.

My goal in examining the early colonial photography is thus twofold: on the one hand, to locate it within the developments of ethnographic history, and on the other, to understand photography as alternative within a field of reproductive options. Writing on the history of colonial albums of Central Asia, one is suddenly immersed in the study of the early history of photography of Russia, which itself has received very little attention but from a few scholars. Similarly, researching early albums, one is especially struck by the dearth of information in scholarship about albums as a legitimate text worth investigation: albums have practically received no attention in any discipline, including art history, until very recently. This initial discussion on the history of the *Turkestansky Al'bom* (Fig. 6), its manifestations and antecedents will, therefore, contribute significantly to the overall awareness and importance of such uniquely bound photographic collections not only about Central Asia, but also with respect to the Russian history of photography, encompassing an immense archive of colonial photography. The albums uniquely expose a spatial history of conquest and encounter, resulting in a construction of what Edward Said initially called the «geographical imagination», and merit a critical reviewing of historical content that has previously been used for illustrative purposes.

5 In this regard we should mention the initiative undertaken by the Rosfoto Museum Photography in 2011, which conducts annual conference and publishes the collective essays on known and less known photographic collections in various Russian museums. See for example *Sbornik Dokladov* 2012.

6 The Russian Ethnographic Museum initiated in the late 1990s a series on the ethnographic map of the Peoples of Russia as well as the State Hermitage and the National Public Library in St. Petersburg.

1 Von Kaufman's Album

The first Governor-General of Turkestan, Adjunct-General, Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufman (1818-1882) can be credited as the first government official to use photography to gather information about the territory he was fully in charge between 1867 until his death in Tashkent in 1882. The chronicle of the Turkestan Government-General⁷ is a work of military vision and grand design. Central Asian history is usually written from the Russian and European sources and oral testimonies collected from Central Asian people decades and even centuries after the events occurred. There, the Turkestan rulers and their *courtiers* don't speak for themselves, or interpret their own history, but let the readers share their views of themselves and their past. One of the strengths of von Kaufman is his interest in exploring ideas of continuity and change. He thought that the Russian colonial institution can serve as an enlightenment institution that should aim to change the way that people think about society, and examining the relationship between the past and the present, seems to be a part of his *Album*. At the same time he was highly aware of the political controversy. In conceiving the first colonial album von Kaufman and Aleksey Kun, the *Album's* principle organizer and the author of its very good introduction, seem to have set themselves two main goals: the first is to answer other colonial powers whose accounts of Russians in Central Asia stereotyped in the freedom-loving, servile, despotic nomads under the Russian expansionists; the second is to draw attention to the link between ancient Central Asia and modern Turkestan – in other words, to remind people that Central Asian Islamic theocracy is descended from a great pre-Islamic civilization.

It was in von Kaufman's best interest to be religiously tolerant: it would have been foolhardy to try to impose a single set of beliefs and practices on so huge a territory. There is still debate over what the Central Asian believed.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the portioning of Central Asia concluded a period in which Russians had rushed to secure large parts of the territory, believing there is no empire without a fight. They recognized its vast economic potential and wanted to safeguard and promote their interests. Once their boundary disputes were settled, systematic exploration, establishment of administrative systems, and increased economic exploitation could begin. The high economic, political and strategic stakes – such as freedom of trade along the Silk Road and the two major waterways, Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya, affected all of the major European and Asian powers in attendance.

7 The Western province of Turkestan was appropriated by the Russian Emperor Alexander II in 1867 and since 1886 was known as a Turkestan region with two adjusting territories: Semirechie and Syrdar'inskaya oblast' (Syr-Darya region) and their two respective capitals: Vernyi (today Almaty) and Tashkent.

The *Album* forested a hybrid art. The images were made for historical, educational and often for political reasons, and some for personal, perhaps as a consequence of finding themselves away from their homeland for the first time: none of the military servants were trained as photographer. The subjects are chiefly the Central Asians in their natural surrounding, but since not every photographer purpose was anthropological, their subjects usually never look relaxed in front of the camera. The portfolios include some atmospheric or, dismal looking landscapes, local populations occupied with a daily chorus of life, and the scenes featuring the Russian soldiers, the numerous open-air hospitals and military camps, fortresses and stations with an obligatory accuracy and ample evidence of the regular improvements (Figs. 1-2). The mood is quiet, even somber, and the evidence of the war sits lightly in the midst of an idyllic, isolated, exotic locale. Their subjects are not spied upon or exhibited as sensational and exotic. Their Turkestan is about the daily rhythm of *aul* (Fig. 3), in contrast to the images of other European colonial photographers in Northern Africa, Egypt, the Free Republic of Congo or India, who dwelled on the sensational and exotic sides of the natives.

Careful study of one of the most impressive parts, the ethnographic volume, opens the central question posed by the *Album*: who are these people? Beyond recognition of their origin, they are given very little authority. If *Turkestansky Al'bom* is what it seems - an extended project that required a substantial investment of time and energy by both photographer and sitters over a considerable period of time - then the photographer would almost surely have been either a translator, or one so closely tied to it as to be essentially one of the group.

Von Kaufman's *Album*, hindered by its tightly selected material, nevertheless conveys well the hybrid character of Central Asian art and history. One can imagine the awe that visitors to the Silk Road must have felt in approaching the royal complexes, and as one wanders through the architectural fragment on display in the archeological volume of the *Album*, the scale and splendor of the dynastical and family mausoleums and palaces can seem wanton and overwhelming. Amid these suggestions of opulence and imperial control, it is pleasing to look at a tiny and exquisite photographic detail of a young man with a bag at his belt, selling bread and tobacco, although we don't know anything about him, neither if he comes from the place he was photographed. The *Album* expertly illustrates the religious cross-fertilization of the Empire, the trading links between East and West, the tolerance for social and cultural difference, although we know that the khanates were unduly repressive. But the *Album* does not challenge the view.

This beautiful green velvet and golden-leather bound album was a gift to Tsar Alexander II initiated by von Kaufman the I - such was the title of the General he gave himself - «in light of satisfying the common interest



Figure 1. *Turkestansky Al'bom*, 1871-1872. Ural-Tiube and its street types. The Market Square. Albumen print. Commissioned by Konstantin von Kaufman, executed by Aleksei Kun. Photographic credit Nikolai Nekhoroshev. 1a. (Centre) The market Square; (Clockwise) 1b. The straw seller (*kakh-furush*); 1c. Bread's seller (*nan-furush*); 1d. Beggar (*giadaj*); 1e. Kitchenware's repaire (*kadakchi*)

and for the rapid familiarization of the reading public to our newly occupied land, by order of the compiled the photograph album to introduce the world of enterprising administrations to the region». ⁸ The long *edification* on the front page reads:

The main aim of these albums is to visually present:

- the past life of the region in preserved ancient monuments (archeological part);
- the contemporary life of the population - types, beliefs, rites, customs, dwellings, dress and views of more populated place (ethnographic part);
- the culture of the country in industrial and technical relations (industrial crafts and trades part);
- the advancement of the Russian into these new lands, grouped together as one, views of the places which are distinguishable because

⁸ *Turkestansky Al'bom*, the copy of the National Public Library of St. Petersburg's manuscript department. All six copies carried an introduction of Aleksey Kun and the explanatory note of von Kaufman, in which he listed the major reasons for this grand publication.



Figure 2. *Turkestansky Al'bom*, 1871-1872. Peddling (small trade). 2a. Butcher's shop (*dukani-kasab*); 2b. Selling fruits (*mive-firush*); 2c. Selling carrots and other veggies (*sabzi-firush*); 2d. Melon-and-watermelon's market (*bazari-kharbuze*)

of Russian arms, and portraits of individualists who were among the first to open routes to Central Asia (historical part).⁹

Thus, it is not only the work of unfamiliar quality and charm, but also an uneasy subject. The *Album* promised to be an unusual gift for several reasons. First, Aleksey Kun, whose organisation skills and scientific expertise appear in all six parts of the album, was a younger member and perhaps the last of a devoted group of adjuncts to the General-Governor von Kaufman. Secondly, most of the persons in the album are identified, more or less precisely, by name. Kun has also included difficult names of local regions, cities and monuments in relation to the Turkestan campaign, complicated names of the local games, traditions and rituals, and a vast number of the ethnographic types that can only be done with an assistant of an anthropologist or, a professional orientalist. It seemed reasonable

⁹ Aleksey Kun, forward to the *Turkestansky Al'bom*, from the copy of the Russian Public Library, Manuscript department.

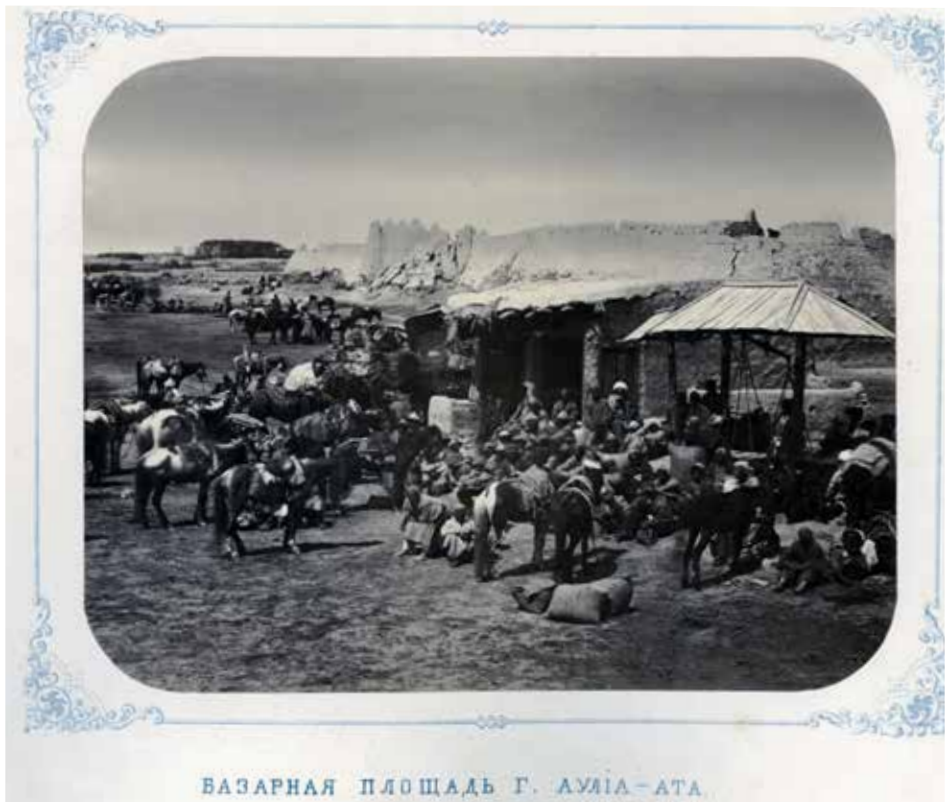


Figure 3. *Turkestansky Al'bom*, 1871-1872. The Market Square in Aulia-Ata

to hope that with these clues one might reconstitute on paper, the community of one hundred souls or more who sat for these early and energetic photographers. Third, the *Album's* putative date, 1872, places it at a moment when photography on paper was still a frilly uncommon activity, certainly in Central Asia. The ambition of von Kaufman's project, and the competence of its execution, strongly suggests an author who had made a serious effort to master the formidable technical demands of the craft, and who also gave no little thought to its pictorial possibilities. One would think that such a person – an amateur, surely, of the secure middle class, and one with available leisure – would have left a clear trail.

Finally, to further narrow the research problem, it seemed likely that the pictures were made in various parts of Zaravshan region and often in Samarkand, where Kun and later Nekhoroshev resided. Studying all six volumes of the *Album* in which a major geographic part of Eurasia has been reduced to a selection of photographic images, not only gives us a visual testimony of the first photographic translation of Central Asia's entity, but

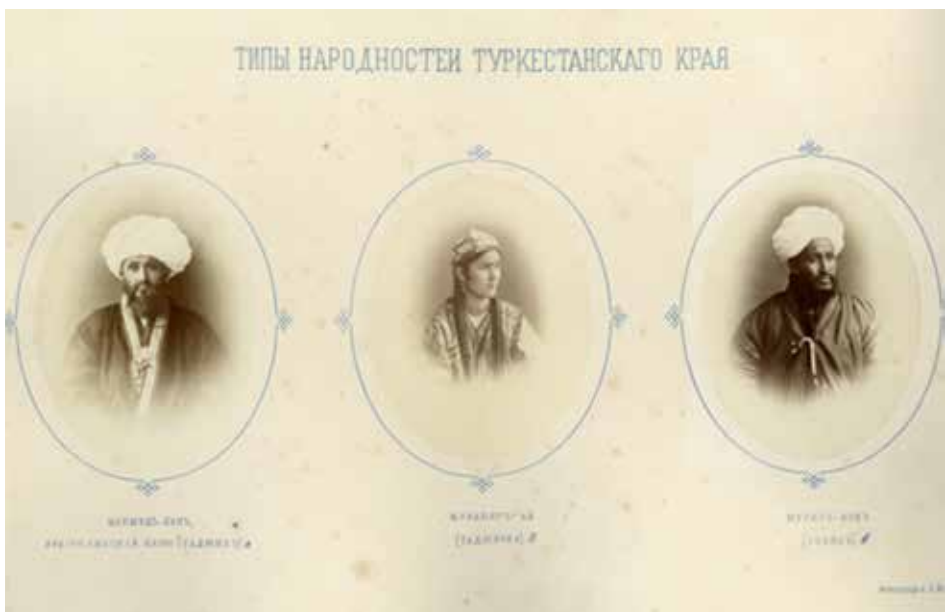


Figure 4. *Turkestansky Al'bom*, 1871-1872. Turkestan's region types. 4a. Makhmud-Khan Tadjik man; 4b. Mukhaber-Aj Tadjik woman; 4c. Murat-Bek Uzbek man



Figure 5. *Turkestansky Al'bom*, 1871-1872. Turkestan's region types. 5a. Mullah-Is khan Jewish man; 5b. Makhsat-Aj Gypsy woman; 5c. Abubekr Arab man



Figure 6. The Cover of the *Turkestan Album*, 1871-72. Principle organizer Aleksei Kun

also opens up a space in which the traces of a not-so-distant past remain visible. The photographic rendering relies partly on adapting previous ways of dismembering the original ‘collection’ of regions and partly on the invention of practical solutions to satisfy the ‘clientele’s’ visual requirements. The progressive renewal of this visual space, thanks to photography, is what accounts for the birth of Turkestan’s visual identity. Turkestan’s area has indeed been reduced, little by little, in the *Album*, until it consisted of just two regions: *Zaravshan* and *Syrdar’inskii krai* (the region around the Syr-Darya river) This early album demonstrates the starting point for this selective process. The photographers give us more than an insight into the process of assembling and reducing visual information, they provide us with examples of how we first recognize Turkestan in reality. They begin to map the visual identity that the region holds for us today.

When we see photographs taken by soldiers, officers, bystanders, and locals of Turkestan through the optic of the amateur, we understand that we are looking at visual documents that offer a possible range of discourses, from a potential variety of perspectives, that we are open to their possible adoption in processes of individual and, subsequently, historical witnessing. The attention given to these amateur pictures was similar to that paid to professional photographs in previous wars, but during the Turkestan campaign, despite the seldom news coverage and the lack of the professional reports, there seemed to be a lot of memorable semi-professional images. One factor was that Turkestan very quickly became a dangerous ‘working’ environment. The only secure option was for an expeditionary traveler, or artist to be ‘embedded’ with the Russian troops, which made independent working practices all but impossible. In addition, there were also problems of censorship. The media were tightly controlled, practically



Figure 7. Aleks. Serzhputovskiy. A Military Camp Hospital, c. 1880. Albumen print

in the Petersburg court, and few outlets existed for innovative photography. But there was also a prevailing sense that traditional photojournalism was inadequate and outdated in this first war of religions. The enthusiasm that welcomed its possibility, offered by developments in technology and changes in popular taste, was similar to the eagerness that greeted the invention of the camera in the nineteenth century, when commentators mused with some excitement on the prospects of how it might really look. It appeared that their desire was still unfulfilled.

Almost every political conflict has had its visual cliché. During 1860s the Turkestan campaign was largely represented by the paintings of the striped robs of narrow-eyed old aksakals, while in the early 1870s the young children, wide-eyed, colorfully dressed were the focus of an artist. When the Russians were fighting war on Islamic territory for the first time, the images of human scalps gathered into an open grave, the display of the decaying human bodies to the public, the routine preparations for the attacks became a subject of a powerful series painted by the Russian realist painter, Vasiliï Vereshchagin (1842-1904) (Fig. 15) during his three year services for the Governor-General von Kaufman. Because of his exceptional role (Turkestan governor's artist) and the superb photographic quality of his works, Vereshchagin was often accused of using secretly the



Figure 8. Samuil Dudin.
Two Dervishes, early 1880.
Albumen print

photographic techniques; the claim he vehemently denied. Framing these distressed people into an aesthetically pleasing, colorful composition was unheard of for Vereshchagin. The paintings of the mourning made the outside viewer aware of the possible impact of such a happening they might draw Western attention to the suffering of their community and help their cause in the war. However, as we see in the example of Vereshchagin's self-mounted Tashkent, London and Petersburg exhibitions (1869, 1873 and 1874), this potential can also be appropriated and pressed into the service of a history that is nowhere to be found in the images. We shall see this kind of appropriation again and again in Vereshchagin's work.

Like many early photographic portraits, most of the Turkestan pictures were made outdoor, dressed up sometimes with screens, rugs, and furniture to resemble an interior. It seems likely that the studio was on a shadowed side, since none of the pictures made in it shows direct sunlight. In this sense the Turkestan pictures are very much like the portraits that Vasilii Vereshchagin has made a few years earlier. As a painter, Vereshchagin was enamored of the strong realist effects most famously associated with Jean-Léon Gérôme (Fig. 12), and many of the most impressive descriptive historical paintings made by him are free from being blocked out with a strong, simple pattern of bright sunlight and deep shadow. The light in the *Turkestansky Al'bom* in comparison modulated and enveloped, insinuates itself into areas that Vereshchagin would have rendered as black. Vereshchagin's fondness for dramatic lighting is perhaps an anomaly in Russian realist art, which characteristically prefers in painting the same objective, watery light that most often falls on those northern lands. The southern sun made a profound effect on Vereshchagin, who genuinely incorporated its vital quality into his art.



Figure 9. Vasilii Vereshchagin. *A Kazakh Tartar*, 1868. Pencil on paper, 10.3 × 6.6 cm. The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Figure 10. Vasilii Vereshchagin. *An Armenian Priest*, 1868. Pencil on paper, 12.7 × 8.2 cm. The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Figure 11. Vasilii Vereshchagin. *Mulla Fazil from the city of Chinaz*. 21.1 × 12.8 cm. The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Some of his most extraordinary paintings from the Turkestan series were those made at the time of the defense of the Samarkand fortress (1868). These works are remarkable because of the technique he used to produce them: sketching and painting almost at the same time within a very short hours. Because of this urgency, together with beliefs regarding the potency of its civil (missionary) qualities, the Tsarist government was not keen on exploring Vereschagin's art seeing in it a weapon of domination. According to the Petersburg court, Vereshchagin's Turkestan works had the potential to sway the masses emotionally and thus open people's imagination to political persuasion. They were also afraid of another sides of the Turkestan campaign since some of Vereshchagin's works showed the enemy as a hero.

Vereshchagin's pictures can be described as a collective memory of the war made by a single person, and they are beautiful (*The Main Street in Samarkand from the City Citadel at Dawn*, Fig. 14), honest (*The Barbarians*), intimate (*Selling A Slave Boy*, Fig. 17), hilarious (*Two Mullahs On A Way To The Market*, Fig. 8), harrowing (*The War's Apotheosis*, Fig. 16). Their intention was to record what the artist had experienced to make it seem real to him as though making pictures had validated their experiences. Five years later this 'collective memory' extended to Aleksey Kun's photographs for the famous *Turkestansky Al'bom*. Kun's idea for the implementation of the photographic technology, employed by elite military officers, was intended for the successfully functioning model and the rapid and unfailing process of Russification of Central Asia, its status, culture and identity. The moral question behind the issues of 'Russification' and 'coexistence', which was spreading beyond the Russian Empire from North to South, was not taken into account.

The *Turkestansky Al'bom* is not simply compiled of photography, which totals about 1,200 images spread between 6 volumes, but also 21 watercolors, architectural plans, and three military-topographical maps. That presents a difficulty between calling it a 'reference' or 'a gift album',¹⁰ for *Turkestansky Al'bom* answers both claims: it identifies new visual entities and provides the historians with another types of information when its function and circulation become the main focus of study. In this context of choice of characters or their 'advertising' allows the viewer to look at Turkestan's people and their lives through the camera's lens. Kun's photographic team takes up the project of recording every exotic, un-Russian detail of daily life: the images reflect a documentary realism that contributes to the history narrated by the lists of names, figures, physical descriptions, times and places that were obsessively recorded under von

10 For further reading on the difference between the reference and the gift albums please see Bann 2011.



Figure 12. Jean-Léon Gérôme. *The Slave Market*, 1867. Oil on canvas. Sterling and Francine Clark Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts.

Kaufman's rule. This adherence of the photographer to the principles and modes of inventorial categorization speak to his compulsion to master and control what are effectively the solemn images of Central Asian life in the Russian Turkestan. Ultimately, Kun's team didn't see the Turkestan as a step toward Russia's 'purification' of its Asian subjects. Their photographs bear no trace of the biological or moral perversions that, according to the Russian government, justified the colonization process. The differences between *Album's* image of the local, and the image of the Russian officer are subtle. Von Kaufman saw the Russian Turkestan and its local people as central to the Russian Empire's progress toward victory through industrialization and (if slow) integration. They embrace the other, but efface the other's subjective desire, then place it in the service of an amateur photographer's own commitment to the greater project.

Aleksey Kun's system of classification of material is based on the classical division between the major academic and scientific disciplines from archeology to ethnography. The albumen prints are glued onto a thick cupboard, on which nothing more than a discreet mention of the negative number, the name of location, and a delicate golden frame is visible.



Figure 13. Vasilii Vereshchagin. *At the Fortress Wall: 'Let Them Enter'*, 1871. Oil on canvas, 95 × 160,5 cm. The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow



Figure 14. Vasilii Vereshchagin. *The Main Street in Samarkand from the City Citadel at dawn*. Oil on canvas, 28,7 × 40,8 cm. The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow



Figure 15. *Portrait of Vasilii Vereshchagin.*
Photographer unknown

Unfortunately it is so far impossible to date it with greater precision than within a few months (1871-1872). As a present to the Tsar, it is likely that the album entered the imperial collections very shortly after the photographs were made and possible that it was intended to thank him for approving the conquest.

As a professional scientist (orientalist and naturalist), Aleksey Kun assumed a large role in the *Album's* conceptualization, being surrounded by a military entourage of officers and colleagues who materially and intellectually shaped his project. We don't know much about Kun, his biography is yet to be written, and his life remains somewhat shadowy. He may have spent his youth in St. Petersburg before coming to Central Asia; we know about his friendship with several young painters there, but it is hard to decipher whether he was a *bon vivant* or an introverted person. Kun's range of friends and social standing rose considerably after he met General von Kaufmann. Aleksey Kun's introduction made an unusually brilliant and bold claim for the role of photography in reproducing ethnographic life of the new colonies. He stated that his photographic work made passages and scenes of people's life more engaging, understandable and transparent. By making more photographs than those required by the album, Kun was able to create a high level of contrast and composition. However, he made an even more interesting assertion about not trying to make the local people 'photogenic', by which I think



Figure 16. Vasilii Vereshchagin. *War's Apotheosis*, 1871. Oil on canvas, 127 × 197. The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Kun is referring to the way nineteenth century photographic materials misread colours.¹¹

A less known photographer, Mikhail K. Priorov helps to advance historical contextualization not simply about the *Turkestansky Al'bum* as a material object, but also that the *Album* had at least one antecedent. Designating an antecedent, he significantly underscores a deeper history of photographic practice for visual data collection in Central Asia, prior to Kaufman's commissions. Resurrecting this third photographer's album, *Out of Central Asia*, compiled of studio and field work spanning from 1866 to 1867 and which clearly pre-dates the *Turkestansky Al'bum*, he illuminates a growing imperial enterprise of visual discourse on Central Asian representation, circulating the Empire and inspiring future photography projects. A number of Priorov's photographs were immediately used for three-toned chromolithographs and gravures to illustrate the Russian orientalist writer Petr I. Pashino's (1838-1891) popular travel narrative, *Turkestanskii Krai v 1866 godu* (*Turkestan Region in 1866*), published in 1868 in St. Petersburg.

11 As Anthony Hamber (1996) has demonstrated, these problems were widely known. They were well rehearsed in 1853, at the very first meeting of the Photographic Society of London and were taken to consideration by the Russian branch.

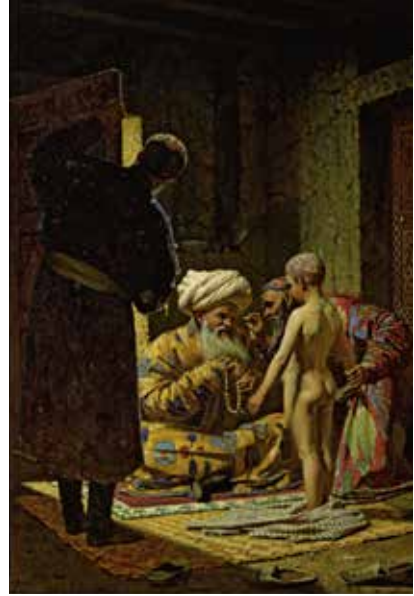


Figure 17. Vasilii Vereshchagin. *Selling a Slave-Boy*, 1872. Oil on canvas, 123 × 92.4 cm. The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

In the mid-nineteenth century, as there were no professional photographers, so there were no amateurs either. At a time when empires were expanding, colonial wars were being fought and adventures, travel and tourism were on the increase, the business of photographing war was primarily the domain of entrepreneurial travelers, wealthy ‘enthusiasts’ or military officers.

The attention given to these amateur soldiers pictures was similar to that paid to professional photographs in previous wars, but during the war in Turkestan, despite the news coverage, there seemed to be a lot of memorable professional images. One factor was that Turkestan very quickly became a dangerous working environment. The only secure option was for an expedient to be ‘embedded’ with the Russian troops, which made independent working practices all but impossible. There were also problems of censorship. The media were tightly controlled, practically in the Petersburg court, and few outlets existed for innovative photography. But there was also a prevailing sense that traditional photojournalism was inadequate and outdated in this first war of religions.

Almost every conflict has had its visual cliché. During 1860s the Turkestan campaign was largely represented by the striped robes of narrow-eyed old aksakals, while in the early 1870s the young children, wide-eyed colorfully dressed were the camera’s focus. When the Russians were fighting

wars in Islamic countries for the first time, the images of grief-stricken wailing Muslim men became a standard in the representation of the conflict. Framing these distressed people into an aesthetically pleasing, colorful composition was unheard of. The photographs of the mourning made the outside viewer aware of the possible impact of such a photograph they might draw Western attention to the suffering of the community and help their cause in the war.

What are their criteria for the *Album*? (Maas 1977). How precise does the information have to be? How positive is the delivery of the photographic documentation expected to be by the Russian Court? Should the photographers be critical, or neutral of their subjects and sitters? If the «accurate rendering» of emotions was a requisite for «moral beauty», the exact imitation of nature was for the *Album*'s photographers the *sine qua non* of the finest art whatever age. They hoped to produce an idealized naturalism. If Kun and Nekhoroshev stressed exactitude in rendering emotional expressions in art, in no way did or could they countenance the sacrifice of beauty. We might assume that they favored the Russian realists as Vereshchagin or Repin for their modern realism, a style of art that shows us nature with her imperfections and does not necessarily choose for beauty, elegance and extraordinary, but can also be ugly, vulgar and trivial. They were neither vulgar nor trivial – those were the conditions of the Tsarist Court. They were not artists, or artists of talent, they were executioners of the higher order and they did the best they could.

In my view, the maker of the Turkestan portraits has succeeded much better than how might reasonably be expected in translating at least some of the virtues of the Uzbek emerging portrait tradition into the intractable medium of photography. In the best pictures the composition is both stable and graceful, and the sitters are clearly drawn, well lighted, and seemingly alert, if not at ease. Those prints that seem unfaded, or only slightly faded, show us the sitters in a space that is coherent and persuasive, without unexplained holes or patches.

Who would eventually buy such pictures? The question of purchase was, perhaps, less important than the issue of fame. Most photographs were made on the high order, and the photographic albums about the newly conquered territories were the 'must' item in any self-respecting noble family in St. Petersburg. Russia's eminent nineteenth century art and music critic Vladimir V. Stasov personally supervised the reception of all the documentary photography about Russia and its new colonies into the single depository at the Russian Public Library in St. Petersburg, an institution he served until his last breath. Stasov's entire career paralleled his connections with discoveries for the 'benefit of the motherland', and developments within the new territories.

With a new generation of photographers after the intensive scientific research in the region, the natural beauty of Central Asia appears in the

works of the artist, ethnographer and photographer Samuil Martynovich Dudin (1863-1929),¹² supporting the emergence of specialist in the portrait and ethnographic photography (Fig. 7). He made many atmospheric landscapes and confronting, psychologically convincing gallery of ethnographic types during the expeditions to Central Asia and Kazakhstan: in 1900 on commission of the Russian Ethnographic Museum Dudin took part in the first systematic expeditions (1901, 1901 and 1902) to gather ethnographic material for the Museum collection. Dudin had a brief tour as artist to a scientific expedition in Caucasus in the 1890s, where for the first time he developed the principles of the ethnographic photo-session. He was later commissioned by the Academic and orientalist Sergey Fedorovich Ol'denburg to work again in Central Asia and brought to his depiction of the area a rather elegant quality. One of the principal claims of Dudin's ethnographic photography is that style is more than a set of aesthetic qualities: it is the mechanism of a particular vision of reality; thus the style of the early colonial Russian photography - its language, tone, composition, and above all its unique combination of archaic formality and straightforward simplicity, this distinctive style of the Dudin's *œuvre*, and later of Max Penson, Max Alpert, Alexander Khlebnikov, Arkadii Shaikhet, Georgii Zel'ma,¹³ resonates so deeply in Central Asian's most memorable images that have permeated Central Asian's sense of its moral and spiritual identity.

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge a great debt to my colleagues, past and present, at the National Public Library's manuscript department, the Russian Ethnographic Museum, the State Russian Art Academy, the photo collection of the Institute of the Material Culture, The Historic archive of the Russian Academy of Science, the State Hermitage's Orient Department and Library, the Russian Geographic Society, the *Kunstkamer* (Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography), all in St. Petersburg, and the archives of the State Historical Museum in Moscow.

12 Solovieva (2009) argues that Dudin, as the principal ethnographer in Central Asia, was responsible for the first photographic set offered to the ethnographic department of the Alexander III Museum (future Russian Museum in St. Petersburg).

13 For the sources on the Bolsheviks photography in the Soviet Uzbekistan and Central Asia, see Penson 2006.

Bibliography

- Abaza, Konstantin (2008). *Zavoevanie Turkestana*. Moscow: Kuchkovo Pole.
- Anon (2007). *Tcentral'naya Aziya: Traditsiya v Usloviyakh Peremen*, vol. 1. St. Petersburg: Nauka.
- Bakhtiya, Babadjanov (2010). *Kokand Khanate: Power, Politics, Religion*. Tōkyō; Tashkent: TIAS, pp. 569-590.
- Barkhatova, Elena V. (ed.) (2009). *Russkaya Svetopis': Pervyj vek fotoiskusstva 1839-1914* (Russian Pictorial Photography: The First Century of Photographic Art, 1839-1914). St. Petersburg: Alians; Liki Rossii.
- Barthes, Roland (1977a), «The Photographic Message». In: Heath, Stephen (ed. and trans.), *Image, Music, Text*. New York: Hill and Wang, pp. 14-31.
- Barthes, Roland (1977b), «The Rhetoric of the Image». In: Heath, Stephen (ed. and trans.), *Image, Music, Text*. New York: Hill and Wang, pp. 32-51.
- Batler, Judith (2009). *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* London: Verso.
- Baxandall, Michael (1985). *Patterns of Intention*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Benjamin, Walter (1972). «A Short History of Photography». *Screen*, 13 (1), pp. 5-26.
- Berger, John (1980). «Understanding a Photograph». In: Trachtenberg, Alan (ed.), *Classic Essays on Photography*. New Haven: Leete's Island Books.
- Bann, Stephen (ed.) (2011). *Art and the Early Photographic Album*. New Haven; London: National Gallery of Art Washington, DC; Yale University Press. *Studies in the History of Art*, 77.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1990). *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*. Trans. by Shaun Whiteside. Cambridge: Polity Press. Transl. of: *Un art moyen*, 1965.
- Crary, Jonathan (1992). *Techniques of the Observer*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Dikovitskaya, Margarita (2007). «Central Asia in Early Photographs: Russian Colonial Attitude and Visual Culture». In: Uyama Tomohiko (ed.), *Empire, Islam, and Politics in Central Eurasia*. Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaidō University, pp. 104-108.
- Dluzhnevskaya, Galina, V. (2008). *Istoriko-Arkheologicheskoe Nasledie Aziatskoi Rossii v fotodokumentakh vtoroj poloviny XIX-pervoi poloviny XX v. (po fondam nauchnogo arkhiva instituta istorii material'noj kul'tury Russijskoj Akademii Nauk)* (Historico-Arkheological Heritage of the Asiatic Russia in Photodocuments of the Second Half of the-Early 20th Century [According and from the Fonds of the Institute of History of the Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Science]) [dissertation]. St. Petersburg: author's referat.
- Dluzhnevskaya, Galina, V. (2010). *Musul'manskij Mir Rossijskoj Imperii, Al'bom* (Russian Empire's Muslim World). St. Petersburg: Liki Rossii.
- Dluzhnevskaya, Galina, V. (2013), *Fondy Fotoarkhiva Instituta Istorii Material'noj Kul'tury RAN* (Photographic Archives of the Institute of

- History of the Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Science). *Vostochnyj Arkhiv*, 2 (28).
- Forbes-Robertson, Diana; Robert, Capa (1941). *The Battle of Waterloo Road*. New York: Random House.
- Foster, Hal (2004) «An Archival Impulse». *October*, 110 (Fall), pp. 3-22.
- Gorshenina, Svetlana (2007). «The Major Project of the Russian Colonial Archives: Utopian Notion of the Turkestan's Totality of the Governor-General Konstantin von Kaufman» Крупнейшие проекты колониальных архивов России: утопичность тотальной Туркестаники генерал-губернатора Константина Петровича фон Кауфмана. *Ab Imperio*, 3, pp. 31-42.
- Grossman, Vasily; Beevor, Antony (2005). *A Writer at War: Vasily Grossman with the Red Army 1941-1945*. London: The Harvill Press.
- Hamber, Anthony (1996). *A Higher Branch of the Art: Photographing the Fine Arts in England 1839-1880*. London: Routledge.
- Maas, Ellen (1977). *Die goldenen Jahre der Fotoalben*. Köln: DuMont Buchverlag.
- Pashino Petr I (1838-1891) (1868). *Turkestanskii Krai v 1866 godu (Turkestan Region in 1866)*. St. Petersburg: s. n.
- Panofsky, Erwin (1955). «Iconography and Iconology». In: Panofsky, Erwin (ed.), *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History*. Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books Doubleday & Company Inc.
- Penson, Max (2006). *Soviet Uzbekistan 1920-1930*. Moscow: Multimedia Complex of Actual Arts.
- Prishchepova, Valeria (2007). *Central Asia in Photography of the Russian Explorers (According to the Materials from the Illustrated Collections of MAE, RAN, in Central Asia in Transition)*, vol. 1. Ed. by R. Rakhimov. St. Petersburg: Nauka, pp. 234-245.
- Prishchepova, Valeria (2011). *Illiustrativnye kollekcii po narodam Central-noj Azii vtoroj poloviny XIX-achala XX veka v sobraniyakh Kunstkamery (The Illustrated Collections over the People of Central Asia, Second Half 19th-Early 20th Century from the Kunstkamer)*. St. Petersburg: Nauka.
- Rakhimov, Rashid (1990) *'Male Homes' in the Traditional Tadjik Culture*. Leningrad: Nauka.
- Savine, Albert (1892). *On Progress in Art*. New York: American Art Galleries.
- Savine, Albert (1888). *Souvenirs: enfance, voyage: guerre*. S.l.: s.n.
- Sbornik Dokladov (2012). *Sbornik Dokladov Mezhdunarodnoj Konferencii «Fotografiya v Muzee» (Collection of selected articles, presented at the International Conference Photography in Museums)*. St. Petersburg: Rosfoto Gallery.
- Sebald, Winfried (2002). *The Emigrants*. Trans. by Michael Hulse. London: Vintage. Transl. of: *Ausgewanderten*. Köln: Eichborn Verlag, 1992.
- Snesarev, Gleb (1963). *Traditions in the Male Unions in the Latest Variant*

- of Central Asian Peoples, Field Research on the Basis of the Khorezem Expedition (1958-61)*, vol. 2. In: Tolstov, Sergej; Nerazik, Elena (eds.), *Monuments of the Middle Ages, Ethnographic Works*. Moscow: RAN, pp. 155-204.
- Solovieva, Karina (ed.) (2009). *Dudin, Samuil M.* St. Petersburg: Russian Ethnographic Museum.
- Sontag, Susan (1979). *On Photography*. London: Penguin Books.
- Stallabrass, Julian (2013). *Memory of Fire: Images of War and the War of Images*. Brighton: Photoworks.
- Struk, Janina (2011). *Private Pictures: Soldiers's Inside View of War*. London; New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Tucker, Anne; Michels, Will; Zelt, Natalie (2012). *War Photography. Images of Armed Conflict and Its Aftermath*. Houston: The Museum of Fine Arts; New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Vereshchagin, Vasilii (1894). *Na Voine v Azii I Evrope, Vospominaniya Khudozhnika V.V. Vereshchagina* (On the War in Asia and Europe, Artists' Memories). Moscow: Publishing House of I.N. Kushnerev & Co.
- Vereshchagin, Vasilii (1883). *Ocherki, nabroski, vospominaniya: s risunkami* (Essays, Sketches, Reminiscences: Pictures). St. Petersburg: Publishing House of the Railway Ministry (A. Benke).
- Zadykhina, Katya (1951). «Remnants of the Generation Classes among Central Asian Peoples». In: Tolstov, Sergej (ed.), *Clan Society: Ethnographic Material and Research*. Moscow: The Soviet Academy of Science, pp. 157-179.