



Camera Caucasica

Networks of Photographic
Practices in the
Transimperial Caucasus

Dominik Gutmeyr-Schnur



Imperial Encounters in Russian History

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Note on Translations and Transliterations

This book explores a region famed for its linguistic diversity, which comes with certain challenges when rendering non-Latin characters within an English text. For Russian, I use a simplified version of the Library of Congress system, that is, a version without ligatures, which extends also to names. Except for the tsarist rulers who are referred to as Tsar Nicholas or Tsar Alexander (rather than Tsar Nikolaï or Tsar Aleksandr), all names are transliterated directly from the Cyrillic spelling such as in Sergeï Levitskiï and Aleksandr Ul'skiï (rather than Sergey Levitsky and Alexander Ul'sky). It gets a little more complicated when it comes to transliterations from Georgian or (Eastern and Western) Armenian. Here, I follow a dual system of transliteration. The main text looks to connect to established anglophone renderings of names such as Aleksandre Roinashvili and Toros Toramanyan (rather than Alek'sandre Roinašvili and T'oros T'oramanyan) and expresses a difference in phonetics for Western Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire and Eastern Armenians living in the Russian Empire (Krikor for the former, Grigor for the latter) while references and quotations in these languages are rendered along the respective Library of Congress system, including all diacritics. The unfortunate result is that the bibliography in some rare cases reflects three different spellings of the same name, for instance with Ekvtime Takaishvili (transliterated from Russian), Ek'vt'ime T'aqaišvili (transliterated from Georgian), and Ekvtime Taqaishvili (anglophone spelling). Furthermore, the main text sees all Georgian names and terms with capital letters as they get fully integrated into the English orthography while references and quotations give expression to Georgian being a unicameral script. The logics behind the usage of place names is similar. Whenever a commonly used English toponym is available, I follow the standard English usage for particular place names such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Baku instead of Moskva, Sankt Peterburg, and Baki. In other cases, where it not as clear whether a certain toponym is actually established in the English language or is even politically charged, I use

a modern-day spelling rather than a reflection of nineteenth-century power relations with a preference of Tbilisi and Kyiv over Tiflis and Kiev. Again, the Library of Congress systems for Georgian and Armenian are simplified for the main text, omitting diacritics toward an anglophone spelling as in Chakvi rather than Č'ak'vi. Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

Introduction

In 1843, a civil servant by the name of Sergeĭ L. Levitskiĭ joined the German chemist Carl Julius Fritzsche, an associate of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, on an expedition to investigate mineral springs in the Russian Empire's southern borderlands. As many of the expedition members did not speak Russian, Levitskiĭ was asked to contribute his German and French skills by translating and recording heated debates. Levitskiĭ was, however, also a passionate amateur of photography in these early days. Grabbing his camera and twenty-five dozen galvanized silvered plates, he was ready to photograph the Caucasus vistas around Piatigorsk and Kislovodsk, including views of the summits of Beshtau and Mashuk. When asked for assistance by Fritzsche, who had brought his own daguerreotype apparatus, they could rely on the help of three soldiers who were commanded to protect and assist the team, translating them into carrying heavy photo equipment and contributing with other considerable, yet unspecified services in the process.¹ Thereby, Levitskiĭ, Fritzsche, and their unknown helpers were the first to produce photographs of the region, contributing to the first prominent series of Russian landscape photography.

An artistic understanding of photographic history would be based on the aesthetic quality of an early masterpiece by an individual genius who recognised the directorial potential of rugged peaks in the imperial borderlands—and with it, his mastery of the new art of photography. However, Levitskiĭ's mountain vistas would not have come into being nor would they have sparked a lot of interest if it weren't for a complex network of political, cultural, and economic relations. If Aleksandr Pushkin had not “discovered the Caucasus” in a sense that he had “securely fixed the territory on the readership's cultural horizon in 1822”² with his narrative poem *The Captive of the Caucasus* (*Kavkazskii plennik*),

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- 1 Sergeĭ L. Levitskiĭ, “Iz vremen dagerotipii (1841–1850),” *Fotograficheskii ezhegodnik P.M. Dement'eva* 1 (1892): 178–180; Sergeĭ L. Levitskiĭ, “Kak ia sdelalsia fotografom,” *Fotograf-Liubitel'* 7, no. 6 (1896): 209–210.
 - 2 Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire. Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5. Layton's work is representative of the strong contribution of literary scholars to the exploration of Russian discourses about the Caucasus. See, among the many, also Katya Hokanson, *Writing at Russia's Border* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); and Harsha Ram, *The Imperial Sublime. A Russian Poetics of Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003).

a poem by which “Russian society made the acquaintance of the Caucasus for the first time,” developing an image of the Caucasus as “a cherished country not only of an unbridled, free will but also of inexhaustible poetry, a country of vibrant life and bold dreams,”³ Levitskii’s photographs would not have directly landed on this rich cultural capital. If it weren’t for the active exchange between Russian and Western European pioneers, Levitskii would not have combined one of Russian daguerreotypist Aleksei F. Grekov’s cameras with a combined glass lens made by Charles Chevalier. This was an available option, which eventually allowed Chevalier to exhibit images of Russian landscapes at industrial expositions in France. If the Russian government had not been interested in underscoring the potential of the southern borderlands it was about to conquer, it would not have assigned a photographer to investigate mineral springs.

If the poetic conceptualization of the Caucasus as a “new Parnassus,” international technological innovation, imperialist expansionism, and governmental support for topographic documentation in combination with an understanding of photography as a craft rather than an art had not intertwined, Levitskii would not have released the shutter vis-à-vis the mountain range, the images would not have been widely acclaimed and circulated, nor would anyone have considered the region “a cradle of Russian photography.”⁴ The history of the first Caucasus daguerreotypes is representative for photography in relation to manifold processes of circulation and reciprocal negotiation within an intercultural contact zone. *Camera Caucasicca* therefore rejects nationalized histories of photography and focuses on the transimperial entanglements of photographic practices in the nineteenth-century Caucasus as a case study of global networks of knowledge production and circulation.

At the heart of this study is the investigation of the relationship between an accelerating global entanglement in times of a “revolution of communications and traffic”⁵ and the development of local and regional visual cultures, building on the potential of the new medium of photography to induce a “visual revolution.”⁶ It explores how the use of photography contributed to the representation of

3 “[...] tol’ko v poëme Pushkina v pervyĭ raz russkoe obshchestvo poznakomilos’ s Kavkazom, davno uzhe znakomym Rossii po oruzhiiu. [...] S tekh por, s legkoĭ ruki Pushkina, Kavkaz sdelalsia dlia russkikh zavetnoiu stranoiu ne tol’ko shirokoĭ, razdol’noĭ voli, no i neischerpaemoĭ poëzii, stranoiu kipucheĭ zhizni i smelykh mechtanii!” Vissarion G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*. Vol. 7, *Stat’i i retsenzii 1843. Stat’i o Pushkine 1843–1846* (Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1955), 372–373.

4 Karina Solovyova and Inessa Kouteinikova, “A different Caucasus. Early Triumphs of Photography in the Caucasus,” *Venezia Arti* 25 (2016): 135.

5 Johannes Paulmann, *Globale Vorherrschaft und Fortschrittsglaube. Europa 1850–1914* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2019), 378–395.

6 Karl Kaser, *Andere Blicke. Religion und visuelle Kulturen auf dem Balkan und im Nahen Osten* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2013), 131–170.

spatial visions in the transimperial Caucasus region and how the academic use of the camera helped structure knowledge of the region, which networks provided the conceptual and practical basis for the production, circulation and reception of these images, and which vernacular traditions shaped the development of local photography. Underpinned by these questions, this book investigates photographic practices in the Caucasus throughout the long nineteenth century—from scientific experiments with light-sensitive chemicals and the origins of the medium photography through the end of World War I, as well as the region's position during the end of the “age of empires.” From its very first days, photography became a tool in the service of the empire, which co-constructed and asserted imperial rule over the borderlands, while also serving as a medium for imagining alternative visions of a region at the intersection of three major nineteenth-century empires: Qajar Iran and the Russian and Ottoman empires.

Firstly, Russia's imperialist expansion toward the Caucasus coincided with the introduction and development of photography, which allowed St. Petersburg to provide the empire's population, as well as the outer world, with visually enhanced and purportedly neutral images of its colonial endeavors in the southern borderlands. Against the backdrop of a “new imperial history” of the Russian Empire⁷ and of the photographic archive as “a form of collective colonial memory,”⁸ this book problematizes in which ways the Caucasus as well as the role of the Russian Empire in the region were represented in different ways by using photography. I am, however, interested in the role of photography not only in creating but also in subverting homogenizing perceptions and images. In what has become a productive field of study, the Caucasus bears a special place within Russia's cultural memory. It is however not only key to a Russian imperialist-orientalist network but also a platform of and subject to alternative spatial visions. I argue that different, albeit interrelated, networks of political, cultural, aesthetic, social, discursive, and economic relations between all actors involved resulted in several understandings of the region. The context of photograph production and consumption defined images of “Self” and “Other” that were visually created, changed, or enhanced. Identities were shaped, challenged, and re-imagined while colonial attitudes accompanied imperial interests and conquest, thereby constituting processes that reciprocally affected photographic

7 Ilya Gerasimov et al., “New Imperial History and the Challenges of Empire,” in *Empire Speaks Out. Languages of Rationalization and Self-Description in the Russian Empire*, ed. Ilya Gerasimov, Jan Kusber, and Alexander Semyonov (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 3–32.

8 James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire. Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion, 1997), 12.

practices. Therefore, *Camera Caucasica* explores the part the photographic image has played in shaping and influencing visions of the Caucasus in imperial times.

Secondly, this book investigates the intrinsic relationship between scientific networks and photography's alleged indexical objectivity. Against the backdrop of increasingly institutionalized knowledge production in and on the region, I argue that photography played a particularly important role in creating and structuring knowledge about the imperial borderlands. According to Roland Barthes's idea that every photograph is a "certificate of presence,"⁹ not only must the photographed object be present, but also the photographer, whose works support claims of authority and authenticity. By investigating scientific networks in the emerging disciplines of ethnography, anthropology, and archaeology, this book discusses photographic practices within nineteenth-century academia. Questioning the idea that every photograph in imperial borderlands is a representation of power and authority while being particularly interested in the development of photographic local practices, it furthermore explores blurry visions of the "Self" and the "Other" within these networks.

Thirdly, by understanding photography within a web of relationships, the book turns away from an analysis of individual images but asks for contextualizing mechanisms that brought the photographer and the camera to a particular place and time when these images were taken. It argues that the produced photographs are not merely reflections of ideas and inspirations by individual actors but the results of interconnected modes of representation within a complex zone of transimperial communication and circulation, driven by sociopolitical and cultural factors of influence. A narrow emphasis on one photographer, driven by an art historical understanding of the photographer as an artist, or the neglect of clusters and edges across imperial borders, would not adequately address the implicit dynamics and diversity of actors constituting the networks behind photography in and of the wider Caucasus area. *Camera Caucasica* thereby builds on an extended understanding of agency, which encompasses nonhuman agency and demonstrates how the technological development of photography transformed the photograph into a social product informed by a circulation of knowledge within networks of power and commerce.

Finally, the narrative that photography originated in Western Europe and was disseminated to other parts of the world has often obscured our understanding of photography as an instantaneous global phenomenon in terms of local traditions and adaptations. The presentation of the daguerreotype (1839), the

9 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 87.

public introduction of the calotype (1841), and the invention of the collodion wet plate process (1851) are unquestionable milestones in the history of photography and just like the US-American invention of the first roll film camera in 1888, they laid the foundation for spreading Euro-Atlantic norms of depiction around the world. Understanding nineteenth-century photography exclusively as a diffusion of European practices, however, does not do justice to the history of photography as a history of contact and exchange. The oversight of local specificities has been addressed in various (post-)colonial settings¹⁰ but remains understudied for the Russian Empire and the bordering areas in the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Iran. A key element in the study of local visual traditions is the analysis of religiously based pictorial traditions and the subsequent acceptance or skepticism of a technology that allows for mechanically reproducible, secular images. For the Caucasus region, a theoretical debate was yet to begin on the local particularities of visual cultures based on the pictorial traditions of Islam; the (Christian) Armenian networks, which transmitted photographic knowledge and pioneered the new technology across imperial boundaries from and into neighboring Ottoman and Qajar empires; and the increasing influx of Western European travelers with increasingly lighter and smaller cameras able to capture everyday life scenes of a skeptical (Muslim) population. Thus, this book explores vernacular traditions and regionally entangled photographic practices, particularly in the context of pictorial traditions associated with different religious beliefs, within and across the borders of the three empires in question.

Based on these questions, this book builds on three-level theoretical guidelines that range from the deconstruction of a unilateral gaze toward the Caucasus, an engagement with photography and Orientalism, and an entangled history of the wider region, thereby advancing three main arguments.

Camerae illuminaturae

As implied in the title, I am indebted to the theoretical considerations presented in Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*, Christopher Pinney's *Camera Indica*, and Ali Behdad's *Camera Orientalis*. They lead me to the argument that

10 Ali Behdad, *Camera Orientalis. Reflections on Photography of the Middle East* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica. The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (London: Reaktion, 1997); Markus Ritter and Staci G. Scheiwiller, eds., *The Indigenous Lens? Early Photography in the Near and Middle East* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2018); Stephen Sheehi, *The Arab Imago. A Social History of Portrait Photography, 1860–1910* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

nineteenth-century photography in the Caucasus did not result from a “unilateral visual regime,”¹¹ produced and enforced by Western Europeans (and Russians) traveling to the region, but was the result of cultural contact. The ambition to deconstruct an understanding of a unidirectional gaze while acknowledging lopsided relations of cultural hegemony and the inequality in access to (visual) representation is shared in my attempt to map photographic practices in the Caucasus across national and imperial boundaries.

I build on Barthes’s considerations with my introductory gesture of locating photography within the “vast disorder of objects” and by asking why a particular object or moment is chosen and photographed rather than another.¹² I consider Barthes’s attention to the choice of the object or moment in the photograph as a solid basis to explain a de-individualized *punctum* through a sociocultural reading of photography which Barthes himself suggests, arguing that it was impossible “to posit a rule of connection between the *studium* and the *punctum*” for “it is a matter of a co-presence.”¹³ A *studium* of networks of photographic practices investigates the broader appeal—the societal *punctum* beyond the individual *spectator*—that photographs were able to develop, such as, for instance Levitskiĭ’s Caucasus vistas in the 1840s. It is, then, less a single image whose appeal should be overemphasized or attributed extraordinary importance, but the patterns of representation that potentially “prick” a multitude of viewers in a similar way.

Pinney¹⁴ looks “to extend Barthes’s concerns into an ethnographic realm, where what matters is not the personal and private readings of the analyst but photography’s impact on the everyday life of a society.” Taking the example of photography in British India, his *Camera Indica* contributed to the study of wider cultural and social practices as photography’s foundation, and meant a much-needed shift in photography studies away from “the insular security of the Euro-American cultural region” that had grounded the vast majority of work on photography by the late 1990s when Pinney’s book was published. Referring to John Tagg’s work on social practice rather than intrinsic semiotic property, placing photography “within the truth,” he demonstrates how power relations were increasingly invested in early photography. Pinney furthermore elaborates on how photography contributed to a form of knowledge transfer through which “India was filtered into Western consciousness.” It remains to be seen how the Caucasus’s adjacent imperial powerhouses invested in photography and what

11 Behdad, *Camera Orientalis*, 7.

12 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 6.

13 *Ibid.*, 42.

14 Pinney, *Camera Indica*, 8.

influence it took on the development of ethnographic conceptualizations in and of the region. Pinney also examines local practices of photography, describing them as “a creative space in which new aspirant identities and personae can be conjured.” However, he concludes that Indian photographers were also participating in the project of ethnological surveillance, for which he suggests refraining from any attempt to categorize either practitioners or images as “Indian” or “Western,” but instead examining the differences between official and personal photography resulting from power and knowledge around the camera.¹⁵

Against the backdrop of early photography in the Middle East (“the Orient”), Ali Behdad “attends to the dialectical relationship in a photograph between the indexical and the historical, on the one hand, and the iconic and latent, on the other.”¹⁶ Rejecting Barthes’s privileging of the *punctum* over the *studium*, he stresses the historical contingency of a photograph and photographic practices while underscoring the performative nature of photographic representation. I follow Behdad’s¹⁷ problematizing of considering non-Western indigenous traditions of photography as utterly distinct from or as oppositional, in terms of a “transcultural resistance,” to the influx of traveling traditions coming from imperial centers. He furthermore discards approaches that reduce the analysis of photography to either aesthetic and formal concerns or to an ideological, orientalist-colonialist, critique.

Reconsidering (Russian) Orientalism

In her analysis of photography of the Middle East, Michelle L. Woodward argues that “it has become almost a cliché to describe many of these images as ‘Orientalist,’” while the photographic visual conventions of representations of the regions had not been “monolithic or hegemonic” but rather “reflect[ed] a complex range of perspectives” beyond imperial power.¹⁸ On a similar note, and despite the uneven distribution of cultural hegemony in the Russian Empire and its borderlands, the spatial visions and images as reflections of a “Russian Orientalism” were never uncontested, which manifested in photography. The photographs must be understood as products of contact and communication

15 Ibid., 85, 95–96.

16 Behdad, *Camera Orientalis*, 12.

17 Ibid., 6–15.

18 Michelle L. Woodward, “Between Orientalist Clichés and Images of Modernization. Photographic Practice in the Late Ottoman Era,” *History of Photography* 27, no. 4 (2003): 363.

within the networks that enabled their existence. This book does not affirm the dichotomy of a constructing actor and a constructed object, but instead underscores the amalgamation processes in photographic practices within a transimperial setting. It suggests looking at agent- and network-centered approaches that emphasize exchange and circulation rather than cultural domination and transfer. Early photography was also fueled by the logic of a market that craved exoticizing representations, which contributed to the production of auto-exoticizing photographs, often making them an economic necessity for professional photographers. The chapters of this book are therefore not separated along an imperialist-vernacular division but look to map different actors within these networks in a collective discussion.

The lopsided beginnings of photography caused relatively more “Westerners” to engage with photography in what supported “the imperialism of the imagination.”¹⁹ Consequently, “Western” photography contributed to constructing specific images of certain regions such as the “Orient” and the “Balkans.” The theses of early (post-)colonial theory were, however, almost exclusively built on written sources, but increasingly, visual sources were considered central to an understanding of the paradigm of “Self” and “Other.” Art historians have reconsidered the history of photography in the Near and Middle East or North Africa,²⁰ while Todorova’s seminal *Imagining the Balkans* (1997) has inspired scholars to investigate the visual construction of Southeastern Europe.²¹

The beginnings of deconstructivist criticism regarding the nature of a “Russian Orientalism” were also strongly text-based.²² Building on Edward Said’s blind spot toward Russia’s colonialism, Nathaniel Knight, Adeeb Khalid, and Maria

- 19 Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania. The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).
- 20 Malek Alloula, *Le Harem Colonial: Images d'un sous-érotisme* (Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 1981); Behdad, *Camera Orientalis*; Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan, eds., *Photography's Orientalism. New Essays on Colonial Representation* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2013); Ken Jacobson, *Odaliques & Arabesques: Orientalist Photography 1839–1925* (London: Quaritch, 2007); John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism. History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Nissan N. Perez, *Focus East. Early Photography in the Near East (1839–1885)* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1988); Sheehi, *The Arab Imago*; Mary B. Vogl, *Picturing the Maghreb. Literature, Photography, (Re)presentation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).
- 21 See Martina Baleva, *Bulgarien im Bild. Die Erfindung von Nationen auf dem Balkan in der Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2012); Kaser, *Andere Blicke*; Tanja Zimmermann, *Der Balkan zwischen Ost und West. Mediale Bilder und kulturpolitische Prägungen* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2014).
- 22 Cf. for instance the contributions in Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzarini, eds., *Russia's Orient. Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700–1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

Todorova in 2000 started a discussion on a Russian tradition of “Orientalism”—a discussion on which several studies built in the past couple of decades.²³ Central to this debate are the networks that provide the background of power and rule to create, structure, and utilize knowledge, as well as who they serve to assert authority. As mentioned above, the networks of power and representation in the southern borderlands have inspired many scholars to analyze the rich Caucasus genre in Russian literature history—a theme so dominant in the scholarly examination of Russia’s role in and relation with the region, so that fairly little insight into the nature of orientalist networks has come from the analysis of the Russian Empire’s southern borderlands so far.²⁴ The visual turn has eventually enriched the discourse of “Russian Orientalism,” predominantly against the backdrop of Central Asian rather than Caucasus studies. *Camera Caucasica* builds on this scholarly desideratum, which is discussed in more detail below, and investigates different spatial visions of the Caucasus and their visual representations.

Entangling the Transimperial Caucasus

Eurocentric perspectives have shaped the study of imperial history, for which comparatively few studies have, for instance, addressed entangled Russo-Iranian, Russo-Ottoman, and Russo-Sino histories.²⁵ The Caucasus has, however, always been attributed the metaphor of “crossroads” which indicates an amalgamation of cultural, social, and political influences. Contested mostly for its strategic importance, three imperial powerhouses at a certain time exerted rule over parts of the Caucasus in the long nineteenth century and shaped what Jürgen Osterhammel calls a “space of interaction” (*Interaktionsräume*).²⁶ To understand the Caucasus as a “space of interaction” within a comparative imperial

23 Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, and Alexander Martin, eds., *Orientalism and Empire in Russia* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2006); Dominik Gutmeyr, *Borderlands Orientalism or How the Savage Lost his Nobility. The Russian Perception of the Caucasus between 1817 and 1878* (Vienna: LIT, 2017); David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

24 Vera Tolz, *Russia’s Own Orient. The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

25 Martin Aust, “Russland und die Sowjetunion in der Globalgeschichte,” in *Globalisierung imperial und sozialistisch. Russland und die Sowjetunion in der Globalgeschichte 1851–1991*, ed. Martin Aust (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2013), 36–37.

26 Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2010), 154–168

and global history²⁷ enables us to emphasize the ongoing contact between different civilizations and to analyze resulting hybrid formations within these spheres. My hypothesis posits that all regional actors involved in photographic practices were, on different transimperial levels, closely interacting with each other in what I understand as an “entangled history”²⁸ of the nineteenth-century Caucasus. Hence, I look for transcultural interactions and for developments of global dimension and reactions to them on a local level.

I consider the concept of the research program “Transottomanica”(de) convincing, for it does not look to define a new region but seeks to focus on a trans- or intercultural space of interaction centered on actors and deliberately blurred edges.²⁹ This emphasizes culture as a process of exchange, negotiation, and adoption, which most importantly extends beyond a particular territorially defined area. Furthermore, the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire, and Qajar Iran were multiethnic and multireligious states,³⁰ which is particularly applicable to the space where these three empires bordered each other. Ideas and practices circulated not only beyond the borders of the nineteenth-century empires but also beyond the borders of ethnic or religious communities. The study of transcontinental entanglements between the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman empires thereby offers a guiding framework suitable also for this case study for it correlates to my endeavor to explore transcultural photographic practices of a Caucasus including its manifold ties not only to the adjacent empires but also to the Near East, Western Europe, and other entangled spatial frameworks.

- 27 Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference. The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History. Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Benedikt Stuchtey, “Zeitgeschichte und vergleichende Imperien-geschichte. Voraussetzungen und Wendepunkte in ihrer Beziehung,” *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 65, no. 3 (2017): 301–337.
- 28 Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung. Der Ansatz der Histoire croisée und die Herausforderung des Transnationalen,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28, no. 4 (2002): 607–636.
- 29 Stephan Conermann, Albrecht Fuess and Stefan Rohdewald, “Einführung: Transosmanische Mobilitätsdynamiken. Mobilität als Linse für Akteure, Wissen und Objekte,” in *Transottomanica—Osteuropäisch-osmanisch-persische Mobilitätsdynamiken. Perspektiven und Forschungsstand*, ed. Stefan Rohdewald, Stephan Conermann, and Albrecht Fuess (Göttingen: V&R, 2019), 54–55.
- 30 Andreas Helmedach et al., eds., *Das osmanische Europa. Methoden und Perspektiven der Frühneuzeitforschung zu Südosteuropa* (Leipzig: Eudora, 2014); Andreas Kappeler, *Russland als Vielvölkerreich. Entstehung—Geschichte—Zerfall* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1992); Rudi Mathee, “Was Safavid Iran an Empire?,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53, no. 1–2 (2010): 233–265.

Transcultural interaction takes place on several levels. Jerry H. Bentley suggests investigating three dimensions: Long-distance trade, campaigns of imperial expansion, and mass migrations.³¹ These require consideration also in the present study, and I would like to add a fourth, namely the exchange and the institutionalization of knowledge: Firstly, commercial networks facilitated a large-scale exchange of photographs and visual representations. Pictorial visiting cards (*cartes de visite*) flourished already in the 1860s and laid the foundation for photographs as collector's items.³² The circulation of images accelerated with the introduction of picture postcards by the end of the nineteenth century.³³ Analyzing Russian postcards, Alison Rowley has described it as a "Europe-wide, if not global, phenomenon,"³⁴ while Mustafa Özen writes of Ottoman postcard production being "dominated by European production companies and European-oriented Ottoman entrepreneurs."³⁵ Desire for orientalist representations furthermore contributed to an increasing number of Caucasus photographs requested, produced, and sent/sold to Western Europe.³⁶ Secondly, imperial expansion is not exclusively about the imposition of foreign rule, but also resulted in the spread of cultural traditions. Visual cultures were transported, negotiated, and resulted in amalgamations of photographic practices. Karl Kaser³⁷ has argued for "Eurasia Minor"³⁸ that photography constituted a visual revolution to the extent that it, as an elite avant-garde project, connected a traditional, religiously refined visual practice to a continuously developing visual practice of Western modernity. Thirdly, migration and mobility facilitated the circulation of knowledge as

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- 31 Jerry H. Bentley, "Cross-Cultural Interaction and Periodization in World History," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 3 (1996): 752.
- 32 Elizabeth Anne McCauley, *A. A. E. Disdéri and the Carte de Visite Portrait Photograph* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985); Robin Wichard and Carol Wichard, *Victorian Cartes-de-Visite* (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications, 1999).
- 33 Eric J. Evans and Jeffrey Richards, *A Social History of Britain in Postcards 1870–1930* (London: Longman, 1980).
- 34 Alison Rowley, *Open Letters. Russian Popular Culture and the Picture Postcard, 1880–1922* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 15–16.
- 35 Mustafa Özen, "Visual Representation and Propaganda: Early Films and Postcards in the Ottoman Empire, 1895–1914," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 6, no. 2 (2008): 146.
- 36 Matthias Gründig, *Der Schah in der Schachtel. Soziale Bildpraktiken im Zeitalter der Carte de visite* (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2016).
- 37 Kaser, *Andere Blicke*, 131–170.
- 38 Karl Kaser, *The Balkans and the Near East. Introduction to a Shared History* (Vienna: LIT, 2011).

“transcultural entanglements”³⁹ and as patterns of interaction that extend beyond individual experience and into a broader social context. A study on the role of migration in the development of transimperial networks of photographic practices in the Caucasus, however, remains an unaddressed field of research. Fourthly, academic knowledge was increasingly institutionalized throughout the nineteenth century which led to its professionalization and systematization.⁴⁰ By the end of the century, photography began to supplant other processes of reproduction and emerged as an increasingly vital mode of academic data capture and transmission.⁴¹

These considerations are juxtaposed by the re-nationalization of science in the Caucasus post-1991, when locally rooted scholars sought to rewrite a national history rather than exploring transimperial networks across the borders (re-) drawn at the end of the twentieth century. These networks not only but also concerned the respective imperial interests in the Caucasus and were firmly based on a diplomatic history of well-established relations between the courts in St. Petersburg, Tehran, and Istanbul.⁴² Scholars of photographic history often follow this pattern with publications and exhibitions framing imperial photography as an integral part of national history rather than as part of transimperial practices of knowledge production and circulation—an approach that *Camera Caucasia* does not share.

39 Michael Borgolte, “Migrationen als transkulturelle Verflechtungen im mittelalterlichen Europa. Ein neuer Pflug für alte Forschungsfelder,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 289, no. 2 (2009): 261–285.

40 Dominik Gutmeyr and Karl Kaser, *Europe and the Black Sea Region. A History of Early Knowledge Exchange* (Zurich: LIT, 2018); Iakovos Michailidis and Giorgos Antoniou, *Institution Building and Research under Foreign Domination. Europe and the Black Sea Region (early 19th–early 20th Centuries)* (Thessaloniki: Epikentro 2019); Biljana Ristovska-Josifovska, *Migration, Knowledge Exchange and Academic Cultures in Europe and the Black Sea Region until World War I* (Skopje: Institute of National History, 2021).

41 Christopher Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology* (London: Reaktion, 2011), 21; Wendy M.K. Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed. Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 142.

42 See, for instance, Moritz Deutschmann, “‘All Rulers are Brothers’: Russian Relations with the Iranian Monarchy in the Nineteenth Century,” *Iranian Studies* 46, no. 3 (2013): 383–413; Suraiya Faruqi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004); Nana Kharebava and Christoph U. Werner, “Persisch-Russische Verzahnungen,” in *Transottomanica—Osteuropäisch-osmanisch-persische Mobilitätsdynamiken. Perspektiven und Forschungsstand*, ed. Stefan Rohdewald, Stephan Conermann, and Albrecht Fuess (Göttingen: V&R, 2019), 231–244; Victor Taki, *Tsar and Sultan. Russian Encounters with the Ottoman Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016); Denis V. Volkov, *Russia’s Turn to Persia: Orientalism in Diplomacy and Intelligence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Point of Departure

The 1990s saw the declaration of the “iconic”⁴³ or “pictorial turn”⁴⁴ by which visual materials were increasingly adopted in the humanities outside the disciplinary framework of art history. The acceptance and acknowledgement of images as sources has been discussed within history as an academic discipline⁴⁵ and has led to the establishment of an interdisciplinary field of inquiry in visual (culture) studies,⁴⁶ whereas discussions on photography have not only examined photography as an imperial⁴⁷ but also as a specifically modern medium.⁴⁸ The integral debate about images as historical sources has thereby addressed questions of evidence and objectivity,⁴⁹ agency,⁵⁰ representation,⁵¹ and materiality.⁵²

These developments of the 1990s and 2000s eventually led to an increasing number of publications devoted to the study of the history of photography in the Russian Empire, but not a debate on the theoretical and methodological

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- 43 Gottfried Boehm, “Die Bilderfrage,” in *Was ist ein Bild?*, ed. Gottfried Boehm (Munich: Fink, 1994), 325–343; Gottfried Boehm, “Die Wiederkehr der Bilder,” in *Was ist ein Bild?*, ed. Gottfried Boehm (Munich: Fink, 1994), 11–38.
- 44 W.J. Thomas Mitchell, *Picture Theory. Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1995).
- 45 For an overview, see Jens Jäger, *Fotografie und Geschichte* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus Verlag, 2009).
- 46 See, for instance, Margaret Dikovitskaya, *Visual Culture. The Study of the Visual after the Cultural Turn* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005); James Elkins, *Visual Studies. A Skeptical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2003); Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999).
- 47 Ryan, *Picturing Empire*.
- 48 Scott McQuire, *Visions of Modernity. Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of the Camera* (London: SAGE, 1998); Peter D. Osborne, *Travelling Light. Photography, Travel and Visual Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Bernd Stiegler, *Philologie des Auges. Die photographische Entdeckung der Welt im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2001); *ibid.*, *Montagen des Realen. Photographie als Reflexionsmedium und Kulturtechnik* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2009).
- 49 Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone, 2007).
- 50 Horst Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts. Frankfurter Adorno-Vorlesungen 2007*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2013).
- 51 Elizabeth Edwards, “Shifting Representation. The Making of the Ethnographic in Nineteenth Century Photography,” in *Bilder des Fremden. Mediale Inszenierungen von Alterität im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer et al. (Berlin: LIT, 2007), 41–62.
- 52 Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, eds., *Photographs Objects Histories. On the Materiality of Images* (London: Routledge, 2004).

specifics.⁵³ The publication of edited volumes⁵⁴ and conference proceedings⁵⁵ extended the research on Russian imperial history to the use of visual sources by analyzing the contexts of production, dissemination, and reception of photographs, rather than merely using them to illustrate a book. An excellent overview of “Russian photography”⁵⁶ and biographical reference works⁵⁷ were published, journals dedicated special issues to the study of the empire’s visual history,⁵⁸ monographs indicate the relevance of the visual turn for a variety of disciplines from anthropology⁵⁹ to literary studies,⁶⁰ while visual materials constitute important sources for studies on “Russia’s ride to modernity.”⁶¹

In what is still a young field of interest, several elements remain widely understudied. For instance, the history of photographic unions, the development of amateur photography, and the influence of religious traditions on the development of photographic practices in the region, among others, all merit further examination. The visual representation of Russia’s “Orient” has been investigated unequally in terms of its territorial manifestation.⁶² Central Asia has received the most scholarly attention so far, which is probably a reflection of

- 53 Andreas Renner, “Der *Visual Turn* und die Geschichte der Fotografie im Zarenreich und in der Sowjetunion,” *Jahrbücher für die Geschichte Osteuropas* 62, no. 3 (2014): 404–408.
- 54 Valerie A. Kivelson and Joan Neuberger, eds., *Picturing Russia. Explorations in Visual Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).
- 55 Igor’ V. Narskii, ed., *Oche-vidnaia istoriia. Problemy vizual’noi istorii Rossii XX stoletia* (Cheliabinsk: Kamennyi poias, 2008).
- 56 Elena V. Barkhatova, *Russkaia svetopis’. Pervyi vek fotoiskusstva 1839–1914* (St. Petersburg: Al’ians and Liki Rossii, 2009).
- 57 Anatolii P. Popov, *Rossiiskie fotografy (1839–1930). Slovar’-spravochnik* (Kolomna: Muzei Organicheskoi Kultury, 2013).
- 58 Isabelle de Kegel and Andreas Renner, eds., “Fotografie in Russland und der Sowjetunion,” *Fotogeschichte* 136 (2015); Ekaterina Emeliantseva, ed., “Religion and Photography. The Sacred before the Camera,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 57, no. 2 (2009); Klaus Gestwa and Katharina Kucher, eds., “Visuelle Geschichte Russlands im 19. Jahrhundert,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 60, no. 4 (2012).
- 59 Elena Vishlenkova, “Strategies of the Visual Construction of Russianness and Non-Russianness, 1800–1830,” in *Defining Self. Essays on Emergent Identities in Russia. Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Michael Branch (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2009), 173–192.
- 60 Stephen Hutchings, *Russian Literary Culture in the Camera Age. The Word as Image* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004); Katherine M. H. Reischl, *Photographic Literacy. Cameras in the Hands of Russian Authors* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).
- 61 Frithjof Benjamin Schenk, *Russlands Fahrt in die Moderne. Mobilität und sozialer Raum im Eisenbahnzeitalter* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2014); *ibid.*, “Russlands Aufbruch in die Moderne? Konzeptionelle Überlegungen zur Beschreibung historischen Wandels im Zarenreich im 19. Jahrhundert,” in *Ränder der Moderne: Neue Perspektiven auf die Europäische Geschichte (1800–1930)*, ed. Martin Lengwiler and Christof Dejung (Cologne: Böhlau, 2016), 183–203.
- 62 Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism*.

the Russian state's adoption of photography as an instrument for military purposes in the 1860s to 1880s, as well as the prominent development of photographic projects such as the *Turkestan Album*.⁶³ For the Caucasus, it remains primarily a scholarly desideratum. Little has been written about the development of photographic practices in the empire's southern borderlands and even less about the networks of power and rule informing them.⁶⁴ *Camera Caucasic* is therefore concerned with the role of photography in this area. Unfortunately, research on the history of photography in the Russian Empire is less concerned with photographic practices outside the centers of power and rule and mainly confined to the borders drawn or about to be redrawn. Recent publications on transimperial networks have explored connections between revolution(arie)s⁶⁵ and merchants,⁶⁶ contributing to a vision of the Caucasus beyond conventional

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- 63 Margaret Dikovitskaya, "Central Asia in Early Photographs: Russian Colonial Attitudes and Visual Culture," *Slavic Eurasian Studies* 14 (2007): 99–133; Kate Fitz-Gibbon, "Emirate and Empire: Photography in Central Asia 1858–1917," SSRN (September 29, 2009), <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1480082>; Jennifer Mary Keating, "Space, Image and Display in Russian Central Asia, 1881–1914" (PhD diss., University College London, 2016); Inessa Koutienikova, "The Colonial Photography of Central Asia (1865–1923)," *Eurasistica* 2 (2015): 85–108; Inessa Kouteinikova, "Tashkent in St. Petersburg. The Constructed Image of Central Asia in Russia's Nineteenth-Century Ethnographic Exhibitions," in *À l'orientale: Collecting, Displaying and Appropriating Islamic Art and Architecture in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries*, ed. Francine Giese, Mercedes Volait, and Ariane Varela Braga (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 151–162; Brenda Parker, "Turkestanskii Al'bom": Portrait of a Faraway Place and Another Time," *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 40, no. 4 (1983): 284–341; Heather S. Sonntag, "Genesis of the Turkestan Album 1871–1872. The Role of Russian Military Photography, Mapping, Albums & Exhibitions on Central Asia" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2011); Patty Wageman and Inessa Kouteinikova, eds., *Russia's Unknown Orient. Orientalist Painting 1850–1920* (Groningen: Groninger Museum and NAI Publishers, 2010).
- 64 Alina Akoeff, *Fotografy i fotograficheskie atel'e Vladikavkaza*, vol. 1, 1860–1940 (Vladikavkaz: Kharizma, 2014); Sergei V. Boglachëv, *Pervye fotografy Kavkaza* (Pjatigorsk: Sneg, 2013); Svetlana Gorshenina and Heather S. Sonntag, "Early Photography as Cultural Transfer in Imperial Russia: Visual Technology, Mobility and Modernity in the Caucasus and Central Asia," *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* (2018): 322–344; Vahan K'och'ar, *Hay lusankarich'ner* (Yerevan: Heghinakayin hratarakut'yun, 2007); Solovyova and Kouteinikova, "A different Caucasus;" Nino Žanzava, *tp'ilisis moqvarul p'otograp't'a sazogado-eva (1893–1906)* (Tbilisi: sak'art'velos erovnuli ark'ivi, 2019).
- 65 Houri Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries. Armenians and the Connected Revolutions in the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman Worlds* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019); Moritz Deutschmann, "Cultures of Statehood, Cultures of Revolution: Caucasian Revolutionaries in the Iranian Constitutional Movement, 1906–1911," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2013): 165–190.
- 66 Sebouh David Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean. The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Sussan Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah. New Elites of Safavid Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 49–79; Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *The Shah's Silk for Europe's Silver. The Eurasian Trade of the Julfa Armenians in Safavid Iran and India (1530–1750)* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press: 1999).

borders. However, the exchange of knowledge informing photographic practices has yet to be addressed.

In what has overall become a productive field of research,⁶⁷ the history of photography in the Ottoman Empire—as Edhem Eldem⁶⁸ puts it—lacks variety and scope as most studies focus on Istanbul and neglect vernacular photographic traditions. Hence, scholarly knowledge of photography in the eastern Ottoman provinces and in Qajar Iran’s northern provinces are similarly absent from the literature, despite Ottoman and Qajar photography both being productive fields of research overall.⁶⁹ A commonality for the state of the art in the photographic history of all three empires is therefore a dominance of studies on imperial self-representation, especially in respect to the shared photo- and albumania of the tsars, sultans, and shahs.⁷⁰ However, the representation of the

- 67 Among the many, see Zeynep Çelik and Edhem Eldem, eds., *Camera Ottomana. Photography and Modernity in the Ottoman Empire 1840–1914* (Istanbul: Koç University Publications, 2015); Engin Çizgen, *Photography in the Ottoman Empire, 1839–1919* (Istanbul: Haşet Kitabevi, 1987); Engin Özendes, *Photography in the Ottoman Empire 1839–1923* (Istanbul: YEM Yay, 2013); Bahattin Öztuncay, *The Photographers of Constantinople: Pioneers, Studios and Artists from 19th Century Istanbul* (Istanbul: Aygaz, 2003); Mary Roberts, *Istanbul Exchanges. Ottomans, Orientalists, and Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015); Wendy M. K. Shaw, “Ottoman Photography of the Late Nineteenth Century: An ‘Innocent’ Modernism?,” *History of Photography* 33, no. 1 (2009): 80–93.
- 68 Edhem Eldem, “The Search for an Ottoman Vernacular Photography,” in *The Indigenous Lens? Early Photography in the Near and Middle East*, ed. Markus Ritter and Staci G. Scheiwiller (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 29.
- 69 Among the many, see Iraj Afshar, “Some Remarks on the Early History of Photography in Iran,” in *Qajar Iran: Political, Social, and Cultural Change, 1800–1925*, ed. Edmund Bosworth and Carole Hillenbrand (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), 261–290; Ali Behdad, “Royal Portrait Photography in Iran: Constructions of Masculinity, Representations of Power,” *Ars Orientalis* 43 (2013): 32–45; Elahe Helbig, “From Narrating History to Constructing Memory: The Role of Photography in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution,” in *Iran’s Constitutional Revolution of 1906. Narratives of the Enlightenment*, ed. Ali M. Ansari (London: Gingko, 2016), 48–75; Donna Stein, “Three Photographic Traditions in Nineteenth-Century Iran,” *Muqarnas* 6 (1989): 112–130; all contributions in Reza Sheikh and Carmen Pérez González, “The First Hundred Years of Iranian Photography,” *History of Photography* 37, no. 1 (2013), and, in combination with an insight into Ottoman photography, the seminal Ritter and Scheiwiller, *The Indigenous Lens?*
- 70 Among the many, see William Allen, “The Abdul Hamid II Collection,” *History of Photography* 8, no. 2 (1984): 119–145; William Craft Brumfield, *Journeys through the Russian Empire. The Photographic Legacy of Sergey Prokudin-Gorsky* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020); Erin Hyde Nolan, “Ottomans Abroad: The Circulation and Translation of Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Portrait Photographs” (PhD diss., Boston University, 2017); Mira Xenia Schwerda, “Iranian Photography. From the Court, to the Studio, to the Street,” in *Technologies of the Image. Art in 19th-Century Iran*, ed. David J. Roxburgh and Mary McWilliams (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 81–105; Shaw, “Ottoman Photography of the Late Nineteenth Century;” Mohammad Reza Tahmasbpour, *Nasir al-Din Shah Akas: Piramoon-e*

Caucasus in these albums has hardly been addressed and, for instance, has led to the curious omission of Sergeï Prokudin-Gorskiï's "Views in the Caucasus and Black Sea area."⁷¹

This is even more the case for a study looking to connect photographic practices across these three empires—a void *Camera Caucasica* aims to address. Beyond such an exchange, the degree to which early photography in the wider Caucasus region has been studied intensely varies. While the individual work and life of a photographer rooted across imperial boundaries has been addressed in the case of Antoin Sevruguin (c. 1851–1933),⁷² others such as Dmitriï Ermakov (1845–1916), whose work has been prominently exhibited in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Tbilisi, and Rotterdam, are yet to be included in the focus of historical research. Furthermore, Armenians' roles in the development of photography have been researched fairly well within the context of the Ottoman Empire, albeit with the addressed "Istanbul bias," but less for the Armenian provinces of the Russian Empire.⁷³ The circumstances of the introduction and the development of photography on the territory of today's Republic of Azerbaijan await

Tarikh-e Akasi Iran / Nâser-od-din: The Photographer King (Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran, 2002); Muhammad Isa Waley, "Images of the Ottoman Empire: The Photograph Albums Presented by Abdülhamid II," *British Library Journal* 17, no. 2 (1991): 111–127; see above for the Turkestan album.

- 71 Dominik Gutmeyr-Schnur, "Visually Integrating the Other Within: Imperial Photography and the Image of the Caucasus (1864–1915)," in *Images of Otherness in Russia, 1547–1917*, ed. Kati Parppe and Bulat Rakhimzianov (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2023), 238–245.
- 72 Behdad, *Camera Orientalis*, 73–99; Aphrodite Navab, *De-Orientalizing Iran: The Art of Sevruguin, Neshat, Navab and Ghazel* (Saarbrücken: LAP Lambert, 2011), 70–103; Staci G. Scheiwiller, *Liminalities of Gender and Sexuality in Nineteenth Century Iranian Photography. Desirous Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 2017); *ibid.*, "Relocating Sevruguin: Contextualizing the Political Climate of the Iranian Photographer Antoin Sevruguin (c. 1851–1933)," in *The Indigenous Lens? Early Photography in the Near and Middle East*, ed. Markus Ritter and Staci G. Scheiwiller (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 145–169; Tasha Vorderstrasse, ed., *Antoin Sevruguin: Past and Present* (Chicago, IL: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2020).
- 73 Badr El-Hage, *L'Orient des Photographes Arméniens* (Paris: Cercle d'Art, 2007); Vigen Galstyan, "Translating Ruins: Photography of Cultural Heritage and the Project of Armenian Cultural Modernity, 1860–1904" (PhD diss., University of Sydney, 2018); Elke Hartmann, "Family Portraits: Visual Sources for a Social History of the Late Ottoman Empire," in *Ways of Knowing Muslim Cultures and Societies. Studies in Honour of Gudrun Krämer*, ed. Bettina Gräf et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 111–131; David Low, "Photography and the Empty Landscape: Excavating the Ottoman Armenian Image World," *Études Arméniennes Contemporaines*, no. 6 (2015): 31–69; *ibid.*, *Picturing the Ottoman Armenian World. Photography in Erzurum, Harput, Van and Beyond* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2022).

further examination.⁷⁴ Thereby, the potentially rich oeuvre and significant contribution of imperial Baku's Armenian photographers remains difficult to access and makes their study a delicate undertaking. Research on the history of photography in the territory of the third state in today's South Caucasus, the Republic of Georgia, is similarly underrepresented.⁷⁵ Additionally, a re-nationalized post-Soviet academia has led to several contributions with a focus on photography within an ethnic-national framework, neglecting exchange mechanisms across both imperial and today's borders.

Ultimately, my point of departure is underscored by my background and training as a historian of Eastern Europe and the subsequent dominance of scholarship on imperial Russian history which, to a certain extent, correlates with the Russian Empire's political dominance over large swaths of the region under scrutiny throughout the nineteenth century and which may or may not inevitably translate into a particular bias toward a "Russian Caucasus." To underscore the inclusion of the Caucasus into the logics of global cultural exchange constituting the basis of the introduction and development of photography, I have, however, also relied on an array of scholarship, discourses, and sources from outside the immediate field and region, and not only when the extensive photographic networks reach into faraway Indonesia or California. This approach might estrange the one or other reader but it is this global negotiation of knowledge that has informed photography in the Caucasus as much as elsewhere that I'm ultimately interested in; like Alison Rowley, who has argued in her study on another visual medium, the picture postcard, that "cultural trends do not respect international borders" and that "the Russian Empire was deeply embedded in the attitudes and crazes of the fin-de-siècle era."⁷⁶

From Broken Edges to Image Types

To discover answers to the present study's research questions, I draw on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Systematic historical research

74 Dominik Gutmeyr, "The Oil Boom and the Beginnings of Photography in Imperial Baku. Co-Constructing Knowledge in an Industrialising City," in *Migration, Knowledge Exchange and Academic Cultures in Europe and the Black Sea Region until World War I*, ed. Biljana Ristovska-Josifovska (Skopje: Institute of National History, 2021), 271–296.

75 Lika Mamatsashvili, "Early Photography in Georgia," in *Masters of 19th Century Photography. Dimitri Ermakov. Photographer and Collector* (Plovdiv and Tbilisi: Janet-45 and Georgian National Museum, 2014), 15–41.

76 Rowley, *Open Letters*, 9.

in archives and libraries in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Piatigorsk, Stavropol', Vladikavkaz, Baku, Yerevan, Tbilisi, Stockholm, Los Angeles, Biella, and Vienna allowed me to establish a database with over seven hundred photographers constituting central nodes in the networks under investigation.⁷⁷ This archival trail has been complemented by digitized online collections with, for instance, the Library of Congress,⁷⁸ the New York Public Library,⁷⁹ and several institutions in France⁸⁰ but also with private initiatives such as Lusadaran(.org), ProjectSave (.org), and Houshamadyan(.org). For this aim, I followed a minimal definition of a "Caucasus photographer" based on whether I was able to find an image or a written description of a photograph/er who respectively which was either based in, traveling to or taken in an area that roughly corresponds to the Russian Empire's "Caucasus Viceroyalty," Northern Iran ("Iranian Azerbaijan"), and the vilayets between Trabzon and Van.

This database, however, also highlights the study's biggest methodological problem: a fragmented and dispersed archive. The fragmented nature of the archive eventually also influences cases where an in-depth analysis of their integration into transimperial networks is actually feasible, as in the case of most of these photographers little more than their names, the cities where they were living and working, and maybe their studios' names and address are researchable.

77 Materials have been collected in the following archives and libraries: Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka (overall, and especially in the otdel izoizdaniï); Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei; Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv kinofotodokumentov (Krasnogorsk); Central State Archive of Kino/Photo/Phono/Documents, SPb; Rossiiskaia natsional'aia biblioteka biblioteka (overall, and especially in the otdel izoizdaniï); Piatigorskii kraevedcheskii muzei (photo collections); Stavropol'skii kraevoi muzei izobrazitel'nykh iskusstv; Stavropol'skaia nauchnaia biblioteka imeni M. Iu. Lermontova (Otdel redkoï knigi); Natsional'naia nauchnaia biblioteka Respubliki Severnaia Osetiia-Alaniia (Otdel redkikh knig); National Archives of Azerbaijan; National Museum of History of Azerbaijan (Fund of documentary sources, SMF); Matenadaran Yerevan; National Archives of Armenia (Archive of films, photographs and sound-recording documents); National Library of Armenia (otdel izoizdaniï); National Archives of Georgia (Central Archive of Audio-Visual Documents); National Parliamentary Library of Georgia (Rare collections; periodicals hall; audio-visual collections; digital library "Iveriel"); Riksarkivet Stockholm; Fondazione Sella, Biella (Vittorio Sella); Archiv des Instituts für Kunstgeschichte, Universität Wien (Nachlass Josef Strzygowski); UCLA Library Special Collections; Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

78 Especially the Prokudin-Gorskii Collection including the album "Views in the Caucasus and Black Sea area" and the Abdul Hamid II Collection.

79 The photography collection of the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Arts, Prints and Photographs, incl. photographs and albums by George Kennan, Denis Rudnev, Ilia Abuladze, and others.

80 See the rich collections of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the Ministère de la culture, and the Musée du quai Branly on travelling photographers such as Joseph de Baye, Hugues Krafft, Paul Nadar, and Paul Lancrenon.

These limitations, including the inability to collect more extensive biographical data and a corpus of at least thirty images taken by the same person, have resulted in a somewhat self-selecting group of twenty-five photographers, who form the core of my qualitative analysis. The incompleteness of many archival traces and subsequent broken edges prevent an analysis of potentially productive clusters, requiring constant attention. This ultimately results not only in insightful answers but also raises questions for future studies to address and complement.

The book draws on a wide range of printed and archival sources to collect, whenever possible, some basic data about these photographers and their studios, equipment, employees, and clients in order to get an idea of the networks constituting the basis of photographic practices. The historical research on these “Caucasus photographers” thereby builds on a systematic scanning for information through a variety of printed sources which promise preoccupation with the region per se and coverage of certain historical events of global relevance, including (1) newspapers and magazines in different languages,⁸¹ (2) nineteenth-century scientific, artistic, and sports journals,⁸² (3) published protocols of exhibitions and photographic societies,⁸³ (4) catalogues,⁸⁴ (5) travelogues,⁸⁵ (6) correspondence and diaries,⁸⁶ (7) *cartes de visite* and illustrated postcards,⁸⁷

- 81 *Die Debatte und Wiener Lloyd; Droeba; Illustrierte Zeitung; Iveria; Kaspiï; Kavkaz; Kavkaz i Sredniaia Aziia v fotografiakh; Le Monde illustré; L'illustration; Molla Nasreddin; Moskovskie vedomosti; Niva; Novoe vremia; Sanktpeterburgskie vedomosti; Severnaia pchela; The Illustrated London News; Vsemirnaia illustratsiia.*
- 82 *Alpine Journal; Bollettino del Club Alpino Italiano; Bulletin du Photo-Club de Paris; Ètnograficheskoe obozrenie; Fotograf-Liubitel'; Fotograficheskiï vestnik; Izvestiia IOLEAË; Oesterr. Alpen-Zeitung; Petermanns Mitteilungen; Russkii antropologicheskii zhurnal.*
- 83 See, for instance, *Catalogue de la x-ième exposition de la Société Française de Photographie; Catalogue de la section russe à l'Exposition universelle de Paris 1878; Protokoly zasedaniï raspriaditel'nago komiteta po ustroistvu Russkoï ètnograficheskoi vystavki; Ukazatel' Russkoï ètnograficheskoi vystavki.*
- 84 For instance, the *Catalogues de la Société Française de Photographie*; or Dmitriï I. Ermakov's *Katalog fotograficheskikh vidov i tipov Kavkaza, Persii, Evropeïskoi i Aziiatskoï Turtsii* (1896).
- 85 To name only a few of the many: A. P. Andreev, “Na razvalinakh Armianskoï Pal'miry. (Iz putevykh vpechatlenii),” *Istoricheskii vestnik* 71 (1898): 225–264; Moriz von Déchy, *Kaukasus. Reisen und Forschungen im kaukasischen Hochgebirge*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1905–1907); Douglas W. Freshfield, *The Exploration of the Caucasus*, 2 vols. (London: Edward Arnold, 1896); Agnes Herbert, *Casuals in the Caucasus. The Diary of a Sporting Holiday* (London: John Lane, 1912).
- 86 See, for instance, Carl Peter Mazér's unpublished Russian diary (Rikarsarkivet Stockholm), Nino Jorjadze's unpublished diary (National Archives of Georgia); Vittorio Sella's “Note di viaggio al Caucaso” (1889) and “Diario viaggio Caucaso” (1890) (Fondazione Sella); as well as the correspondence of Douglas W. Freshfield, Vittorio Sella, Josef Strzygowski, Toros Toromanian, and others.
- 87 See, for instance, the postcard series “Kavkaz—Caucase” (Scherer, Nabholz & Co.), “Severnyi Kavkaz—Caucase du Nord” (Scherer, Nabholz & Co.), “Tipy Kavkaza—Types de/du Caucase” (various publishers), “Vidy Kavkaza” (Granbergs Brefkort).

(8) handbooks and instruction manuals,⁸⁸ and (9) volumes of photographs.⁸⁹ The studied archival sources are not only located in many different archives but also include a variety of documents, such as notebooks, diaries, protocols, reports, accounts, decrees, correspondences, and photographs in various forms and collections.

These sources attest to an archive that is at the same time overwhelmingly wide and rich, but also frustratingly thin and fragmentary. The latter becomes particularly evident when examining how women's agency contributed to the development of the men-dominated field of nineteenth-century photography. This is not to say that women were not part of photographic practices in the Caucasus at that time—far from it—but rather that their roles and contributions were often behind the scenes and rarely documented for posterity. Unlike the men behind the cameras, who would use their names on shop fronts, advertisements, and the reverse of the photographs themselves, as well as write handbooks and travel abroad to exhibit their products, women were often concerned with developing, sorting, and selling the images. They were also called upon to photograph women whenever the father or husband would forbid a male photographer to direct his gaze and camera onto the sitter. This rule did not apply to images taken by the highest authorities, as in the case of early portrait photographs of Iranian women taken by Nasr-ed-Din Shah himself.⁹⁰

Either way, these accomplishments are hardly ever reflected in the otherwise rich archive and complicate any ambition to expose gender stereotypes in various aspects of photographic practices when it comes to the omission, marginalization, and exclusive inclusion of women, that is, their inclusion as “the Other,”⁹¹ or to follow Abigail Solomon-Godeau's proposition that the “diminished presence of feminist analyses, whether oriented to gender or to sexual difference (they are not the same), therefore functions in photographic discourse

88 E.g. Al'bert È. Felish, *Bromo-serebrianyiĭ zhelatinnyiĭ sposob, ego znachenie i primeneniie k fotografii* (St. Petersburg: A. S. Suvorin, 1881); A. Ianysh, *Fotografiia na steklĕ s kollodionom, al'biuminom, sukhim kollodionom, stereoskop, stereoskopicheskiia izobrazheniia na bumagĕ i steklĕ i fotograficheskiĭ protsess na bumagĕ* (St. Petersburg: Èduard Prats, 1858); Carl Peter Mazér, *Handledning i fotografi eller konsten att på egen hand lära sig att aftaga bilder på glas och papper, samt att förfärdiga stereoskopbilder och visitkortporträtter; efter nyaste och enklaste metoder* (Stockholm: Sigfrid Flodins, 1864); Sergei M. Prokudin-Gorskii, *O fotografirovanii momentalnymi ruchnymi kamerami (Ukazaniia dlia liubitelei)* (St. Petersburg: E. Evdokimov, 1897).

89 The analyzed albums result from the research laid out in footnotes 77–80 and build the foundations of Chapters 4–7 in this book.

90 See Afshar, “Some Remarks,” 265.

91 See Kerstin Brandes, “Die Gans lebt . . . Studien Visueller Kultur und feministische Fotografieforschung,” *Fotogeschichte* 40, no. 155 (2020): 10.

as a structuring absence, evident, to take one example, in the presumption of a universal male photographer and a universal male spectator.”⁹² Such analyses remain a scholarly necessity for the Caucasus⁹³ as they extend beyond the exploration of circulated photographic representations of femininities, or the albeit important search for the “few forgotten women photographers” (such as Baku-, Vladikavkaz-, and Tbilisi-based Ashkhen Aristakova,⁹⁴ Ekaterina N. Sokolova,⁹⁵ and Nino Jorjadze),⁹⁶ who most frequently were a deceased photographer’s spouse, sister, or daughter, which allowed them to take over the business.⁹⁷ Furthermore, gendered narratives and metaphors in the history of photographic development (see Levitskiĭ as the “patriarch of photography”)⁹⁸ and both linguistic and visual parameters within nineteenth-century writing on and representation of (Caucasus) photography have reinforced this marginalization of women’s agency.

The historical research has been enhanced by the establishment of a database of images, which includes 5,200 mechanically (re-)produced images (i.e. photographs per se and various printing techniques from a positive/negative), about 70 percent of which can be assigned to the abovementioned group of twenty-five. Using methods of visual content analysis,⁹⁹ I have grouped the collected

- 92 Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Photography after Photography. Gender, Genre, History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 7.
- 93 General histories of photography in the Russian history share this invisibility of women in photographic practices while otherwise meritorious works such as Naomi Rosenblum’s *A History of Women Photographers*, 3rd ed. (New York: Abbeville Press, 2010) focus on pioneering female photographers from Western Europe and North America with a blind spot for practitioners beyond that—an issue that Luce Lebart and Marie Robert’s *A World History of Women Photographers* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2022) addresses and for instance includes a page on the Georgian photographer Nino Jorjadze (written by Nestan Nijardze, p. 122).
- 94 Vigen Galstyan, “Ashkhen Ivani Aristakova (Aristakesyan),” *Lusarvest—Database of Armenian Photo-Media Practitioners*, 2016, <http://www.lusarvest.org/practitioners/aristakova-ashkhen-ivani>.
- 95 Akoeff, *Fotografy i fotograficheskie atel'e Vladikavkaza*, 156.
- 96 Tamar Lordkipanidze, *nino jorjaže. k'art'veli k'alis t'valit' danaxuli pirveli msop'lio omi [Nino Jorjadze. World War I through the Eyes of a Georgian Woman]* (Tbilisi: Cezanne, 2015).
- 97 Carmen Pérez González, *Local Portraiture. Through the Lens of the 19th-Century Iranian Photographers* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012), 175–177; Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers*, 42.
- 98 Natal'ia Iu. Avetian, *Atel'e "Svetopis' Levitskogo." Ranniaia russkaia fotografia v sobranii Gosudarstvennogo Ėrmitazha* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Gosudarstvennogo Ėrmitazha, 2015), 7.
- 99 Philip Bell, “Content Analysis of Visual Images,” in *Handbook of Visual Analysis*, ed. Theo van Leeuwen and Carey Jewitt (London: SAGE, 2001), 10–34; Stephanie Geise and Patrick Rössler, “Visuelle Inhaltsanalyse. Ein Vorschlag zur theoretischen Dimensionierung der Erfassung von Bildinhalten,” *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft* 60, no. 3 (2012):

images into recurring motifs and then systematically grouped them types—a type being different from a motif in its degree of abstraction, effectively reducing the denotation of individual motifs to their pictorial statement. The recognition of patterns is methodologically vital within the wide quantitative and qualitative array of nineteenth-century photography.¹⁰⁰ The corresponding image type analysis has allowed me to come to conclusions both about visual pattern and strategies and about the images' significance and symbolism through a semiotic-iconographic analysis of selected frames within the identified types.

This methodological design, developed by communication scholars Elke Grittmann and Ilona Ammann, bridges the quantitative content analysis of the social sciences with the qualitative iconographic-iconological approach of art history.¹⁰¹ The development of image types requires in-depth knowledge of visual content and builds on the works of Erwin Panofsky, allowing for an analysis of the social and cultural meanings of photographs and an interpretation of their intrinsic values, with the advantage of avoiding overstating the importance of single images. The discussion of visual agency is partly—whenever the sources have allowed it—informed by Bredekamp's definition of “image acts” and their schematic, substitutive, and intrinsic dimensions, in agreement with his acknowledgements of the concept's closeness to that of the “effect of images” and the difficulty of resolving the question of the autonomous activity of images.¹⁰² The results of this analysis directly translate to the structure of this book, particularly chapters four through seven which address the transimperial viscourses¹⁰³ of the region's industrialization and further understanding of its transition into malleable provinces, modes of imperial self-representation, inclusive imageries of multiethnic empires, and the exclusive imaginations of ethnic-national homelands, co-constructed iconographies of the sublime, and obsession with antiquity and ruins as metaphors of social and spatial transformation.

341–361; Elke Grittmann, “Methoden der Medienbildforschung in der Visuellen Kommunikationsforschung,” in *Handbuch Visuelle Kommunikationsforschung*, ed. Katharina Lobinger (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2019), 527–546; Elke Grittmann and Ilona Ammann, “Quantitative Bildtypenanalyse,” in *Die Entschlüsselung der Bilder*, ed. Thomas Petersen and Clemens Schwender (Cologne: Halem 2011), 163–178; Katharina Lobinger, *Visuelle Kommunikationsforschung. Medienbilder als Herausforderung für die Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaft* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2012), 227–243.

100 See also Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 28.

101 Grittmann and Ammann, “Quantitative Bildtypenanalyse,” 165–169.

102 Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts*, 49–56.

103 The neologism *viscourse* (or *Viskurs* in German), a compound word from *visual* and *discourse*, has been proposed by the Austrian sociologist Karin Knorr-Cetina (1999, 2001) a quarter century ago to explore the visual dimension of communication and has since been established in media and visual studies.

Aside from the qualitative aspect of the semiotic-iconographic analysis of the identified types, the quantified motifs, which include a quantification of the images' composition and the types formation, add to the quantification of the use of camera models and props, as well as exposure and printing techniques. This part constitutes the precondition for a systematic comparison of the collected data. The established database includes the images per se and their captions and, whenever possible, related information on the hardware and materials involved, providing the basis for the images' contribution to the determination of clusters, brokers, and edges in the networks under scrutiny with the ambition to map patterns of sociability in photographic practices.

Actors and Networks

For the significance and symbolism of the images and the question of entangled photographic practices in the region, I connect the image type analysis to the idea of actor-network theory (ANT), which posits that everything in the social world is part of constantly shifting networks with ever-changing connections between the actors involved. Despite the misleading "theory" in its name, ANT is a descriptive rather than foundational approach in explanatory terms and "describes the enactment of materially and discursively heterogeneous relations that produce and reshuffle all kinds of actors including objects, subjects, human beings, machines, animals, "nature," ideas, organizations, inequalities, scale and sizes, and geographical arrangements."¹⁰⁴ Through ANT, I describe the global connectedness of local practices, and, while it has hardly been applied to photographic history,¹⁰⁵ it has proven to be a productive method across several disciplines such as science and technology studies (with ANT proponents Bruno Latour and Michel Callon), geography,¹⁰⁶ pedagogy,¹⁰⁷ and anthropology.¹⁰⁸

Camera Caucasica maps patterns of transimperial entanglement between local and global agency in early photography. Historians of early photography have

104 John Law, "Actor Network Theory and Material Semiotics," in *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (Chichester: Blackwell, 2009), 141–158.

105 Ali Behdad, "Mediated Visions: Early Photography of the Middle East and Orientalist Network," *History of Photography* 41, no. 4 (2017): 362–375.

106 Ignacio Farias and Thomas Bender, eds., *Urban Assemblages. How Actor-Network Theory Changes Urban Studies* (London: Routledge, 2010).

107 Tara Fenwick and Richard Edwards, eds., *Actor-Network Theory in Education* (London: Routledge, 2010).

108 Robert Oppenheim, "Actor-Network Theory and Anthropology after Science, Technology, and Society," *Anthropological Theory* 7, no. 4 (2007): 471–493.

primarily relied on categories and methodologies borrowed from art history, considering (single) images for their aesthetic qualities as resulting from a photographer's mastery of the art. Ali Behdad¹⁰⁹ has challenged "the notion of the individual photographer as the sole creator of his or her work" by underscoring the importance of numerous actors, such as dragomen or porters, and entities, such as governmental agencies or cultural and academic institutions, in the production of photographs. Abigail Solomon-Godeau¹¹⁰ has pointed out that, in the case of 1850s Jerusalem photography, the photographic work of physiologists and physicians, entrepreneurs and artists, archaeological documentarians, and the makers of tourist views has all been subsumed under the "unifying rubric of art," which eventually led to the neglect, if not obfuscation, of questions related to intent, context, and production. Scholars moving beyond these traditional art historical approaches to photography have contributed a better understanding of the relationship between local agency and global processes for various parts of the world; however, not yet for the Caucasus.

I suggest understanding the *Camera Caucasia* as an actor inscribed within networks of actors embedded in social, cultural, economic, and political relations of global dimension in a part of the world to whose historical complexity and dynamics only few regions can stand up. Thinking of photography less as a history of images of particular striking importance, but through these networks, eventually enables us to approach an evaluation of photography's role within the connections and relationships of various actors involved.¹¹¹ The agency of the photographic apparatus has been magnificently discussed by Elizabeth Edwards in *The Camera as Historian*. According to her, it is an integral part of "a mesh of connections between human photographers and nonhuman 'objects': objects that ranged from the interactions of photographers and the materiality of the camera itself to landscapes and ancient churches."¹¹²

The notions of nonhuman agency, networks, and connections relate to the work of Bruno Latour¹¹³ who looked "to redefine the notion of social by going back to its original meaning and making it able to trace connections again." In *Reassembling the Social*, the French sociologist elaborated on ANT and

109 Behdad, "Mediated Visions," 375.

110 Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "A Photographer in Jerusalem, 1855: Auguste Salzmann and His Times," *MIT Press* 18 (1981): 92.

111 Owen Clayton and Jim Cheshire, "Editorial," *History of Photography* 41, no. 4 (2017): 327.

112 Elizabeth Edwards, *The Camera as Historian. Amateur Photography and Historical Imagination, 1885–1918* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 31.

113 Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1

summarized the argument of his book by challenging the use of the adjective “social” to designate a stabilized state of affairs ready to be mobilized to account for some other phenomenon. Latour suggests understanding “social” as “a trail of *associations* between heterogeneous elements,” designating “a *type of connection* between things that are not themselves social,”¹¹⁴ while any social link has “to be traced *by the circulation* of different vehicles which cannot be substituted by one another.”¹¹⁵

What I look to borrow from ANT is the idea that the networks constituting the basis for the production and circulation of photographs are constantly shifting, while the connections between actors involved are ever-changing. It stresses the idea that “all those heterogeneous elements *might be* assembled anew in some given state of affairs”¹¹⁶ which correlates with the lack of identity in photography.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, it underscores the autonomy of the photographic object per se, which receives its content through its narrative framing or, as Latour puts it, “although art is largely ‘autonomous,’ it is also ‘influenced’ by social and political ‘considerations’ which could account for some aspects of its most famous masterpieces.”¹¹⁸ The constant formation of groups is driven by an endless number of “mediators” that “transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry” and stand in contrast to “intermediaries” that “transport meaning or force without transformation.”¹¹⁹ A focus on the power of mediators and the extension of agency to nonhuman entities to help trace social connections intermittently¹²⁰ should help us better understand mechanisms of production, distribution, and circulation of early photography and, in this case, the global entanglement of photographic practices.

Behdad relates the dynamics of ANT to a static notion of Orientalism as both a discursive and visual practice in order to overcome an understanding of early photography of the Middle East “based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction” between West and East, between Occident and Orient.¹²¹ By understanding Orientalism as a reflection of interacting mediators, based on concrete practices and connections, he offers a study of early photography as

114 Ibid., 5.

115 Ibid., 36.

116 Ibid., 5.

117 John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation. Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), 63.

118 Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 3.

119 Ibid., 39–40.

120 Ibid., 63–78.

121 Behdad, “Mediated Visions,” 364–365.

neither suitable to reproduce a binary visual structure between an Occident as an active agent and an Orient as a passive object nor as a reading of indigenous photography as auto-exoticization or resistant iconography but rather as a description of different nodes within the very same network. The study of early photography in the Caucasus equally requires an awareness of the dynamic polyvalences that inform the images in question; in their production, dissemination, and circulation. Hence, this book examines early Caucasus photographs not as products of individual photographers informed by Orientalist power relations, but as products of discursive patterns, including contact and circulation, as well as co-optation and co-construction.

In his take on networks in *The Transformation of the World*, Osterhammel warns social scientists to overlook or underestimate hierarchies and asymmetries in the field of network analysis, which, as a precondition, attributes the same value to all nodes.¹²² The multiplication and acceleration of the connections building these networks is one of the main features of the long nineteenth century, thereby constituting the basis of what can be described as “globalization.” Against the backdrop of criticizing the latter term for its implicit teleology, global history and ANT converge in their ambition to understand the connections between the local and the global in a sense of asymmetric synchronicity of processes across borders and boundaries.¹²³ Understanding globalization as a “localizing process”¹²⁴ corresponds to Latour’s first move to render associations traceable again: “Localizing the Global.”¹²⁵ Considering the global just like the social not as a given “force” behind any activity linked to it but rather as the result of connections between human and nonhuman entities while understanding that any interaction takes place locally for which “we have to lay continuous connections leading from one local interaction to the other places, times, and agencies through which a local site is *made to do something*” is relevant for studying networks of photographic practice.¹²⁶ For every discussed case of

122 Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*, 1010–1011.

123 Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016); Frederick Cooper, “What Is the Concept of Globalization Good For? An African Historian’s Perspective,” *African Affairs* 100, no. 399 (2001): 189–213; Debora Gerstenberger and Joël Glasman, “Globalgeschichte mit Maß. Was Globalhistoriker von der Akteur-Netzwerk-Theorie lernen können,” in *Techniken der Globalisierung. Globalgeschichte meets Akteur-Netzwerk-Theorie*, ed. Debora Gerstenberger and Joël Glasman (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2016), 13–19.

124 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

125 Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 173–190.

126 *Ibid.*, 4–8, 173.

“Caucasus photography,” this book looks at an apparently local site and its links and non-links to other apparently local sites via a chain of mediators. It explores the reciprocal relevance of these sites for one another and eventually delocalizes the implications of these connections to other entities and discourses within a flat, descriptive landscape that does not precondition distinct degrees of relevance. *Camera Caucásica* argues that the “redistributed local”¹²⁷ reveals a global dimension of Caucasus photography—global not as an overarching force but as the result of all actions involved—remaining attentive to its limits and open to blurry edges.

The opening chapter traces the introduction of photography to the wider Caucasus region, discusses processes of knowledge production within this framework, and suggests considering innovation from a global perspective of circulation rather than of diffusion. It explores the technological development of photography and shows how chemicals and hardware made the photograph a social product informed through a circulation of knowledge within networks of power and commerce across geopolitical boundaries. The chapter consequently explores the effects of globally introduced technological advancements (from collodion wet plates and artificial lighting to roll film cameras) on locally rooted visual practices in the region and vice versa, showing how photography became explicable in local theory and practice upon its introduction.

The second chapter examines the intrinsic relationship between photography and the emerging academic fields of ethnography/anthropology, set against the backdrop of the Caucasus region. It touches on international academic discourses on race and ethnographic “typicality,” and connects the nineteenth century’s global popularity of exhibitions to the imperial states’ ambition to survey and collect the ethnography of their provinces, as the respective authorities were eager to exhibit the empire both to a domestic and a global audience. The chapter investigates the representation of the Caucasus and the role of photography at Moscow’s 1867 All-Russian Ethnographic Exhibition and 1879 Anthropological Exhibition before ultimately addressing the polymedial circulation and popularization of photographic “types” via academic discourses and *cartes de visite*.

Building on the previous section and the discussed popularity of exhibitions throughout the nineteenth century, the third chapter addresses the multiplicity and developments of representations of the Caucasus on a global stage. While literature is abundant on world’s fairs per se, little literature is yet particularly

127 Ibid., 191–218.

engaged with the role of photography for the preparation, organization, and also realization of these global exhibitions, especially when it comes to the displays of the Russian, Ottoman, and Qajar Iranian empires and their respective representation of the Caucasus region (or parts of it). This chapter examines the networks of production behind these images, analyzing representations of agriculture and infrastructure, as well as progress and leisure, and investigates the agency of both the state and private actors, as well as the role of photography in diplomatic exchange and in performing imperial identities.

The fourth chapter explores the entanglement of industrialization and photographic practices, inquiring how visions of modernity built on or broke with traditional images of the Caucasus region. It discusses a *vision ferroviaire*, or “railroad vision,” for the transimperial Caucasus by exploring the prominent visualization of railway projects at the intersection of three empires between the 1870s and World War I. It demonstrates how photography and the railway functioned as powerful agents of spatialization, exerting a decisive influence on contemporary perceptions of landscape, urban space, and imperial cohesion. It furthermore shows against the backdrop of the dynamic industrialization of Baku how a connection to the late nineteenth-century oil boom in the region symbolized both political and social change while its ambition to connect formerly peripheral and newly conquered provinces to the empire’s main lines of communication and trade was accompanied by an understanding of photography producing neutral documentation which provided both the state and private actors the ideal form of representing their respective claims to modernity.

Camera Caucasica’s fifth chapter expands the global era of albumania of the 1850s–1880s into the early twentieth century, discussing the album as a poly-medial object of imperial self-representation and cultural power. It examines the implications of the visual representation of a region by analyzing the place of the wider Caucasus in state-sponsored projects across the long nineteenth century, and asks about the integration and omissions of (parts of) the region into the broader picture of imperial imaginations of space and place. It touches upon questions of Russian Orientalism, Ottoman depictions of Armenian heritage in eastern Anatolia, and the representation of the multiethnic northwest of Qajar Iran. This chapter additionally discusses the networks of court photographers against the backdrop of a discussion of religious dogmata and photography.

The sixth chapter writes a cultural history of mountain photography by contextualizing the symbolic capital of peaks such as Ararat, El’brus, and Kazbegi. Still, it also explores the agency of Caucasus photography beyond the visual representations of the region’s mountains per se. It follows Armenian photographer Ohannes Kurkdjian to Java and his images of Gunung Bromo and analyzes

the networks that stand behind the work of Italian photographer Vittorio Sella in the Caucasus and the circulation of his works to the United States against the backdrop of an exhibition by the Appalachian Mountain Club in Boston 1893, and the later reception of Sella's work by leading American photographers such as Ansel Adams. The chapter thereby asks for the relationship between mountaineers/photographers and colonial discourses on landscapes, exploring how the latter are visually reimagined and how an iconography of the sublime Caucasus came into being.

The seventh and final chapter explores the use of photography at archaeological sites in the Caucasus. It addresses the intertwinement of archaeology, nationalism, and photography and asks how it informed the production and circulation of images of historical artefacts and ruins. This chapter builds on the well-studied history of archaeological photography in the "Orient" and connects nineteenth-century discourses on a "sacred antiquity" with the international rediscovery of Ani, the photographic work of Mateos Papazyants on Armenia's "national antiquities," and the role of Aleksandre Roinashvili's photographs in the "Travelling Caucasus Museum." It shows how images of ruins function as metaphors of social and spatial transformations and how they contributed to manifold visions of imagined histories of the Caucasus.

CHAPTER 1

A Global Invention and Circulating Knowledge. The Technological Aspect of Photographic Practices

In May 1840, Aleksei F. Grekov (1800–1855), one of the first professional photographers in the Russian Empire, used the platform of the country’s largest newspaper by circulation, *Moskovskiiia vedomosti* (Moscow news), to inform readers interested in obtaining a “cheap” daguerreotype portrait that he was offering his services for a price of twenty-five to seventy-five rubles, depending on the image’s size.¹ Put in perspective, the supplement to the *Sanktpeterburgskiiia vedomosti* (St. Petersburg news) on the same day included advertisements for razors imported from Switzerland for three rubles and a barrel of rye for forty rubles, while the owner of a three-year-old horse, fit for harness and riding, asked for one-hundred rubles for his animal since he was moving away from the bay.² Despite the global echo to new technology and widespread enthusiasm for the first produced images, photography remained a luxury good, reserved for an exclusive circle of society’s wealthiest individuals who could afford to buy an image or have their own portrait taken. The technologically challenging procedure of making an image required the daguerreotypist to apply iodine fumes to a polished silver-plated copper sheet to make it light sensitive, expose it in a camera for as long as the lighting conditions required it, develop the image under mercury vapor, fix it with a salt or sodium thiosulfate bath, possibly tone it with a gold chloride solution, and finally seal it behind glass. The need for a

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- 1 Aleksei F. Grekov, “O prodazhē deshevykh dagerrotipov,” *Moskovskiiia vedomosti* 42 (May 25, 1840), 333–334.
 - 2 *Pribavlenie k Sanktpeterburgskim vedomostiam* 115 (May 25, 1840), 1221–1222.

variety of expensive materials, in addition to the required knowledge and skill, directly influenced photography's role as a social practice insofar as it limited its scope of dissemination everywhere. Furthermore, the initially narrow range of technically possible images and technological limitations, such as long exposure times, left an imprint on the produced images, as sitters around the globe had to be arranged in a similar light setting and static position. Owen Clayton and Jim Cheshire have, in that respect, rightfully stated that “[w]ithin photographic studies, image-centered approaches have tended to overlook the market-driven technological changes that underpinned the finished picture.”³

The history of photographic practices is, therefore, in good part a history of developing technology where vernacular pictorial traditions increasingly collided with the logics of a global exchange of visibility. This idea has much in common with Bruno Latour's imperative that “we have to lay continuous connections leading from one local interaction to the other places, times, and agencies through which a local site is *made to do* something,”⁴ for in the case of early photography in Peru⁵ as much as in India,⁶ innovation in the field of photographic technology throughout the nineteenth century often (but not exclusively) emanated from the metropolises of Western Europe and was then negotiated in local contexts and translated into photographic practices. This chapter thus also aims to address examples of reciprocity in the exchange of knowledge that informs the progress of early photography, beyond an often-claimed binary conception of a progressive, diffusing “West” and a receiving, backward “non-West.” The social practice of photography oscillated between being informed by the globalized circulation of knowledge and local particularities. It is what Stephen Sheehi, beyond vernacular forms of photography, refers to as “the global story of photography, where formalistic patterns and social practices repeat themselves and even accompany the camera as part of the

3 Owen Clayton and Jim Cheshire, “Editorial,” *History of Photography* 41, no. 4 (2017): 326.

4 Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 173.

5 For discussions of photography expanding both quantity and accessibility of Andean images as well as the commodification of photographic images through the technological field of the *carte de visite*, see Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity. A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 10–11, 107–141.

6 In *Camera Indica*, Christopher Pinney explores how photographic technologies transformed local visual cultures in India through active engagements with both Indian and Western European pictorial traditions where approaches that considered photography as “a sign of Western technological prowess and a symptom of a modernity that they opposed” and “an élite that mimicked key colonial aesthetic forms” all contributed to a complex zone of representation beyond a binarity of colonizing and colonized.

apparatus itself, but that formalism and those technical and social practices act within or toward their own ideological ends.”⁷

Against the backdrop of photography’s technological development, this chapter explores how chemicals and hardware transformed the photograph into a social product informed by the circulation of knowledge within networks of power and commerce that spanned geopolitical boundaries. It seeks connections and parallels in photographic practices between the three empires that culturally pervaded the Caucasus region, thereby following the logics of technological innovation throughout the long nineteenth century, rather than merely understanding the introduction of photography as the diffusion of knowledge from Western Europe. It re-traces the first steps of the camera into the Caucasus and investigates early photography in the region as a transnational sphere of circulation which—despite different pictorial traditions among local communities and those coming from the Russian, Ottoman, Persian, and Western European empires—was inevitably subjected to a globalized market of technological development and exchange. While it is true that “the taking of the picture is still a choice involving aesthetic and ethical values,”⁸ it was also salts, chemicals, and metal or glass plates that shaped the range of “photographable” motifs—a dimension of materiality of photography adding to Elizabeth Edwards’s and Janice Hart’s rationale that “photographs exist materially in the world” and are as such “both images *and* physical objects.”⁹ The chapter thus argues that while the introduction of photography had different starting points and amalgamation processes with local pictorial traditions in the intercultural contact zone of the Caucasus region, photography’s globalized technological development also shaped a shared visual discourse and converging photographic practices. The purported mediators thus played an active role in altering photographic practices to a similar extent throughout the history of their technological development in culturally diverse spaces.

Light, Salt, and Silver. The “Invention” of Photography

The visual production of knowledge received a new but not necessarily revolutionary outlet in the nineteenth century with the introduction of photography.

7 Sheehi, *The Arab Imago*, xxi–xxii.

8 Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography. A Middle-Brow Art* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 6.

9 Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, “Introduction. Photographs as Objects,” in *Photographs Objects Histories. On the Materiality of Images*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (London: Routledge, 2004), 1.

The English art historian John Tagg has argued that this “so-called medium of photography has no meaning outside its historical specifications” and went on to point out:

Photography as such [h]as no identity. Its status as a technology varies with the power relations which invest it. Its nature as a practice depends on the institutions and agents which define it and set it to work. Its function as a mode of cultural production is tied to definite conditions of existence, and its products are meaningful and legible only within the particular currencies they have.¹⁰

The complex intertwining of power relations and agency is widely acknowledged across various disciplines engaging with visuality today, which has led to a shared understanding that visual images are central nodes in the creation of knowledge, rather than mere illustrations. In the early 1990s, anthropologists in particular¹¹ explored the use of photography in creating knowledge, which led to a deeper comprehension of how visuality, and especially photography, contributed to the production and circulation of knowledge.

Before photography added impetus to these processes of creating and circulating ethnographic or other kinds of knowledge, its introduction constituted a process of knowledge production and circulation on its own. The “invention” of photography, however, did not occur in an epistemic void, but instead resulted from negotiations within an intercultural zone also shaped by a variety of already-existing visual cultural traditions, which significantly affected how this new visual outlet was first perceived and later adopted and further developed throughout the following decades. As one of the theoretical front-runners in debates on the relationship between photography and anthropology, Christopher Pinney has written on nineteenth-century India and its “early enthusiasm for photography’s *cure* of existing representational problems” that “appeared to supersede and resolve the deficiencies of earlier systems” and was “seen as a solution to the weaknesses and corruptions of earlier practices of representation.”¹²

10 Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 63.

11 Elizabeth Edwards, ed., *Anthropology and Photography, 1860–1920* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

12 Christopher Pinney, *The Coming of Photography in India* (London: The British Library, 2008), 16–17.

In the nineteenth century, pictorial traditions were furthermore strongly influenced by religious dogmata.¹³ As the Caucasus region was home to practitioners of different Christian denominations, Judaism, and Islam (Sunni as well as Shia), it serves as a microcosm of the globally diverging reception of photography ranging between enthusiastic acceptance and categorical rejection.¹⁴ The introduction of photography to the Ottoman Empire created a genuinely new visual experience among viewers and practitioners after it had arrived as an exclusively imported technology without links to established pictorial traditions.¹⁵ Arriving as part of the empire's modernizing reforms in the late 1830s, photography was closely tied to Western painting on canvas and lithography, and therefore lacked the same history of representational practices from which it had developed. It shared this radical break with pictorial traditions within photography in the Persian Empire. Layla S. Diba has pointed out that photography's introduction and rapid adoption were built upon a combination of court patronage and religious acceptance, since, unlike sculpture or painting, it "was not considered an act of creation by the *ulamā* (religious authorities)."¹⁶ Several scholars have convincingly argued that photography was particularly well-received among Qajar artists because it seemed to meet the desire to discover shortcuts to portraying realism in painting.¹⁷ In the Russian Empire, on the other hand, photography was met with enthusiasm and high expectations, as pre-revolutionary photographers created a sphere of continuous exchange with actors abroad and remained informed about the latest developments in the field. Photography thus linked established visual cultures rooted in Orthodox pictorial traditions to the developing visual cultures of Western modernity.¹⁸

The camera's journey from Paris and London to the Caucasus first went through St. Petersburg. The "invention" of photography is mostly symbolically

13 See Karl Kaser's discussion in *Andere Blicke*, 63–170.

14 While initially it was predominantly Christians and especially Armenians who coined the first phase of photography also in the Muslim empires, the—albeit rather exceptional for the nineteenth century—example of Mendel Diness, an Odessa-born Jew who had settled in Jerusalem in 1846 and became the first local photographer of the city (see Behdad, "Early Photography of the Middle East, 372), or Carmen Pérez's González's rich history of local photographers in Qajar Iran (*Local Portraiture*), as well as as Iraj Afshar's "Some Remarks" (67–272) summary of the country's "famous photographers" show that photography was eventually practiced across confessional boundaries.

15 Shaw, "Ottoman Photography of the Late Nineteenth Century," 80–81.

16 Layla S. Diba, "Qajar Photography and Its Relationship to Iranian Art: A Reassessment," *History of Photography* 37, no. 2 (2013): 91.

17 *Ibid.*, 93.

18 Kaser, *Andere Blicke*, 170; Robin Lenman, "Russia," in *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, ed. Robin Lenman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 553.

dated with the presentation of Louis Daguerre at the Parisian Academy of Sciences in January 1839, when a broader public initially heard of the new technology. Daguerre's presentation of the "daguerreotype," however, built upon several decades of experimental research that included milestones such as his fellow Frenchman Joseph Nicéphore Niépce's "heliography" and the "photogenic drawing" developed by their English colleague William Henry Fox Talbot, which produced negative images. These early days of photographic development were curiously monitored by correspondents and researchers in the Russian Empire who confronted photography with a mixture of euphoria and skepticism in contemporary debates on photography's value that were strikingly similar to the history of Western Europe's reception of photography as something between fabricated artifact and natural product.¹⁹ The newspaper *Severnaia Pchela* (Northern Bee) was the first to report on the camera as the latest innovation presented in Paris and came to a conclusion, which retrospectively seen was far removed from realities to come, in arguing that there was no particular reason to discuss this discovery's potential future influence since it would constitute an invention of solely practical character.²⁰ Readers of Russia's oldest newspaper, *Sanktpeterburgskiiia vedomosti* (St. Petersburg's news), on the other hand, read a two-part essay by the French critic Jules Janin on the daguerreotype²¹ and news about "Mr. Daguerre's wonderful discovery," which highly praised the invention: "Neither any object, nor any type of nature, nor the tiniest thing can hide from this method of tracing objects: the morning is depicted with all its freshness; and also clearly represented are the bright shine of the day, the gloomy shades of the evening or the melancholic spectacle of rainy weather."²²

Scholars at the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, such as the naturalists Karl von Baer (1792–1876) and Fëdor (Johann Friedrich) von Brandt (1802–1879), also heard the news from Paris and were eager to integrate photography into their research. Academy correspondent Joseph Hamel (Iosif Gamel', 1788–1861) was selected to travel to London and Paris, where he became acquainted

19 Bernd Stiegler, *Theoriegeschichte der Photographie* (Munich: Fink, 2006), 18–32.

20 Cited in Jelena Barchatowa, "Die ersten Photographien in Rußland," in *Russische Photographie 1840–1940. Katalog zur Wanderausstellung Hundert Jahre Photographie in Rußland 1840–1940*, ed. David Elliott (Berlin: Ars Nicolai, 1993), 24.

21 Iul' Zhanen [Jules Janin], "Dagerotip," *Sanktpeterburgskiiia vedomosti* 26–27, February 1–2, 1839, 115–116, 119–120.

22 "Ni kakoï predmet, ni kakoï vid prirody, ni maleïshaia veshchitsa ne ukryvaiutsia ot ètogo sposoba srisovnyvat' predmety: utro izobrazhaetsia so vseiu svoeï svezhestiï; i takzhe iasno predstavliaiutsia iarkii blesk dnia, mrachnye ottenki vechera ili melankholicheskoe zrelishe dozhdlivoï pogody." N., "Novago roda zhivopis'," *Sanktpeterburgskiiia vedomosti* 20, January 25, 1839, 87.

with the works of Talbot and Niépce.²³ Hamel collected descriptions of their methods, examples of their work, materials required for the production process, and a camera (which was not yet available on the market), and sent this compendium back to the Russian capital, where a committee convened to discuss the mail from Paris. He summed up his findings in the academy's proceedings the following year and argued against naming the new technology after Daguerre instead of its true founder, Niépce, but asserted that the latter's heliography had a bright future if perfected.²⁴

At this point, the Academy's leading physicists and chemists decided to extend their research into the emerging field of photographic technology. The German chemist Carl Julius Fritzsche (1808–1871), who had moved to Russia in 1834, was one of the earliest scholars in the Russian Empire who aimed to improve the methods that Hamel had described. Fritzsche's report for the Academy not only constituted the first scientific investigation of photography within Russia but also the first paper on Talbot's method, which was then discussed back in Paris.²⁵ Another contribution to the emerging field was made by the Russo-German physicist Moritz von Jacobi (Boris S. Iakobi, 1801–1874), whose "Galvanoplastik" became part of the process of fixating an image on daguerreotype plates and was widely discussed in newspapers and popular journals abroad.²⁶

23 Barchatowa, "Die ersten Photographien in Rußland," 26–27.

24 "Ich kann mich nicht entschliessen, Daguerre's Methode (und seinen Apparat), wie er es will: Daguerréotype zu nennen. Dieser, in mehr als einer Hinsicht anstössige, Name hat eine Tendenz, das Verdienst Niépce's—des eigentlichen Begründers der neuen graphischen Kunst—vergessen zu machen. [. . .] Die Heliographie auf Papier, wenn sie vervollkommenet werden kann, verspricht grossen Nutzen und eine ausgedehnte Anwendung." Joseph Hamel, "Ueber Daguerre's Heliographie und Abdrücke von seinen heliographirten Platten. Aus einem Schreiben des Herrn Akademikers HAMEL an den beständigen Secretär (lu le 10 janvier 1840)," *Bulletin Scientifique publie par L'Académie Impériale des Sciences des Saint-Petersbourg* 6, no. 20–21 (1840): 319, 336.

25 Barchatowa, "Die ersten Photographien in Rußland," 26–27.

26 Moritz Hermann Jakobi, *Die Galvanoplastik oder das Verfahren cohärentes Kupfer in Platten oder nach sonst gegebenen Formen, unmittelbar aus Kupferauflösungen, auf galvanischem Wege zu produciren* (St. Petersburg: Eggers, 1840), iii; N. N., "Das Neueste aus der Natur- und Gewerbswissenschaft," *Das Pfennig-Magazin der Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung gemeinnütziger Kenntnisse* 8, no. 360, February 22, 1840: 58–60; N. N., "Vermischte Nachrichten," *Wiener Zeitung* 275, November 30, 1838: 1655. On "the daguerreotype and electricity as the key driving forces in the early histories of photography and photomechanical reproduction," i.e. on the history of electrotypes and galvanically etched daguerreotypes, see Petra Trnkova, "Electrifying Daguerreotypes: On Correlations between Electricity and Photography around 1840," *History of Photography* 45, no. 2 (2021): 111–127.

However, it was not only academics who joined the international quest for improving photography. The first professional practitioner, Grekov, opened a commercial studio in 1840, where he produced and sold self-constructed daguerreotype apparatuses which reduced the daguerreotype's exposure times to approximately two minutes. It also allowed for cheaper image production as his camera was based on cheaper photographic plates than cameras produced in England and France.²⁷ The substantial international echo of Grekov's work constituted one more step on the long path toward the commercialization of a complex product that remained an expensive occupation for many decades to come.

The international circulation of information and the reciprocity of contacts between Paris and London, on the one hand, and St. Petersburg, on the other, facilitated the introduction of photography in the Russian Empire, where it, as an expensive elite project, gradually became a prominent medium in knowledge production throughout the 1840s. Since Ottoman and Persian scientists were not involved in the development of the first photographic technologies, it took a little longer for them to be noticed and applied in their respective home empires. An issue of the newspaper *Takvim-i Vekayi* (Calendar of Facts) from late October 1839 was the first to report on its invention to the Ottoman public, while the first known photograph was taken ten days later, on November 7, 1839, showing Alexandria's Ra's at-Tin Palace.²⁸ The following decade was then dominated by photographers flocking from Western Europe to the Ottoman Empire, especially to the Middle East, to use the camera "as a tool of Orientalist fascination and touristic voyeurism"²⁹ before local Greek, Armenian, and other European communities picked up the new technology and established their own photographic studios in Istanbul, Jerusalem, and other centers of international interest and exchange.³⁰

The introduction of photography to the Persian Empire followed a similar pattern. The first equipment arrived at the court in Tehran from London and St. Petersburg at the Iranian government's official request. Nikolai Pavlov, a young

27 Barchatowa, "Die ersten Photographien in Rußland," 29; Lenman, "Russia," 553.

28 Engin Çizgen, *Photography in the Ottoman Empire, 1839–1919* (Istanbul: Haşet Kitabevi, 1987), 20–21; Jacob M. Landau, *Exploring Ottoman and Turkish History* (London: Hurst, 2004), 100–101.

29 Wendy M. K. Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed. Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 139.

30 For some of the names of these early practitioners, see *ibid.*, 140–141; Bahattin Öztuncay, "The Origins and Development of Photography in Istanbul," in *Camera Ottomana. Photography and Modernity in the Ottoman Empire 1840–1914*, ed. Zeynep Çelik and Edhem Eldem (Istanbul: Koç University Publications, 2015), 66–105; Sheehi, *The Arab Imago*, 97–98, 108–109.

diplomat in Russian service, took the first daguerreotypes to Iran in winter 1842 under the supervision of Muhammad Shah Qajar, amidst curious bystanders on the palace grounds.³¹ Although the first translation of a treatise on daguerreotype photography—both author and translator remain unknown—was made in 1842,³² Western European photographers such as the French Jules Richard and the Italians Luigi Pesce, Antonio Giannuzzi, and Luigi Montabone³³ then pioneered photography in the first decades after its introduction to the Persian Empire. Thus, they imported visual traditions from their home countries upon invitation, as there was a lack of knowledge about the diplomatic gifts from Queen Victoria and Tsar Nikolai I. A diary entry by Richard from December 5, 1844 suggests that he was ignorant of Pavlov's demonstration daguerreotypes and that nobody had used the camera in the previous couple of years:

I had an audience with the Crown Prince [i.e. at Tabriz] in order to take his picture on silver plate. Two sets of equipment using metal plates have been brought for the Shah. One is a gift from the Queen of England and the other from the Emperor of Russia. Although the operating instructions have been sent in accompanying leaflets, up to now no single European or Persian has been able to operate them and take pictures. When they realised that this task was within my scope, they approached me and first summoned me to take pictures of the Crown Prince and his sister.³⁴

It was, however, less about the visual traditions emanating from Western Europe towards the wider Caucasus, and more about the early photography's technical limitations that defined the first motifs. The architecture in the Ottoman-ruled Middle East had already accompanied the very first steps of photography in public when François Arago presented Daguerre's efforts to the French Chamber of Deputies:

31 Reza Sheikh and Carmen Pérez González, "Editorial," *History of Photography* 37, no. 1 (2013): 1; Mohammadreza Tahmasbpour, "Photography during the Qajar Era, 1842–1925," in *The Indigenous Lens? Early Photography in the Near and Middle East*, ed. Markus Ritter and Staci G. Scheiwiller (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 57–58.

32 Mohammad Reza Tahmasbpour, "Photography in Iran: A Chronology," *History of Photography* 37, no. 1 (2013): 7.

33 Maria Francesca Bonetti and Alberto Prandi, "Italian Photographers in Iran 1848–64," *History of Photography* 37, no. 1 (2013): 14–31.

34 Cited in Afshar, "Some Remarks," 262.

While these pictures are exhibited to you, everyone will imagine the extraordinary advantages which could have been derived from so exact and rapid a means of reproduction during the expedition to Egypt; everybody will realize that had we had photography in 1798 we would possess today faithful pictorial records of that which the learned world is forever deprived of by the greed of the Arabs and the vandalism of certain travelers.

To copy the millions of hieroglyphics which cover even the exterior of the great monuments of Thebes, Memphis, Karnak, and others would require decades of time and legions of draughtsmen. By daguerreotype one person would suffice to accomplish this immense work successfully.³⁵

Given Western Europe's widespread orientalist fascination, multiple people brought the camera to Egypt and Palestine in the early 1840s. Published aquatints based on the first daguerreotypes show how Noël Marie Paymal Lerebours forged the conceptual bridge from Moscow's Kremlin to Beirut for his two-volume 1840/42 *Excursions daguerriennes*. Hector Horeau credits Pierre-Gustave Joly de Lotbinière in his 1841 *Panorama d'Égypte et de Nubie* for one of the first vignettes with a view of Cairo, and Girault de Prangey made numerous daguerreotypes of monuments and landscapes that constituted the basis of his 1846 *Monuments Arabes d'Égypte, de Syrie et d'Asie Mineure*. The strong showing of architectural photographs from the Middle East in the corpus of early daguerreotypy is the result of technical limitations, with Arago presenting an ideal exposure time of two to three minutes in the southern climate's summer sunlight (in contrast to ten to twelve minutes exposure in [European] winter)³⁶ and orientalist networks within the context of early photography's production and dissemination.

The lack of a comparable Western European orientalist fever—sparked at the latest by Napoleon's expedition to Egypt—toward the historical sites in the Persian Empire did not imply that the development of early photography did not go down similar paths there. Driven by the ruling dynasty's enthusiasm for the new technology, the court commissioned Jules Richard in 1849 to photograph

35 François Arago (1839): "Report [on the Daguerreotype, presented to the French Chamber of Deputies]." Translation from the French (4th ed., 1935) cited in Josef Maria Eder, *History of Photography* (New York: Dover, 1978), 232–245, 234.

36 Arago, "Report," 236.

the archaeological site of Persepolis.³⁷ While the mission was eventually aborted, its motivation to visually preserve the ancient capital's crumbling site connected the photographic projects in the Middle East, which sought motifs of high cultural and symbolic capital.

The combination of long exposure favoring the realization of static motifs in combination with Russian photographers' involvement in the development of technological innovation gave them a head-start in establishing an indigenous photography scene over its southern political adversaries. This, on the one hand, led to the camera arriving in the Caucasus region from the north, and, on the other, inspired a focus on mountains scenery rather than the topical "Circassian beauty" meant to satisfy the Russian audience longing for visual enforcement of their armchair travels with Pushkin, Bestuzhev-Marlinskiĭ, and Lermontov. The very first photographs taken in the North Caucasus combined all these elements when Sergeĭ L. Levitskiĭ (1819–1898) and Fritzsche brought Grekov cameras³⁸ to the south and fixated landscape vistas around Kislovodsk and Piatigorsk on silvered plates. The material dimension, however, influenced what motifs ended up on those first glass plates from the Caucasus and contributed to their archival longevity. The fragile physical condition of daguerreotypes and the historical turmoil that engulfed the region throughout the long nineteenth century led to the loss and considerable damage of many valuable items that are known today only through written descriptions or catalogue entries. The collections of the State Historical Museum in Moscow, for instance, include only 16 original architectural or landscape daguerreotypes, while the majority of the images that have survived—that is, 294 of 315 daguerreotypes—are portraits, which testifies to the latter genre's role in early photography's commercial basis.³⁹

Collodion and Artificial Lighting. The Reign of the Portrait

The first photographic technology favored static subjects in bright sunlight. However, the potential to produce true-to-life images of living men and women aroused the most interest among photographers and the public, contributing to

37 Tahmasbpour, "Photography in Iran," 7.

38 The cameras were actually sold by a certain Mr. Vokerg as Grekov called himself to attract more buyers with a foreign-sounding name. See Levitskiĭ, "Iz vremen dagerotipii," 177–178.

39 Tat'iana G. Saburova, *Dagerotip v Rossii. Sobranie istoricheskogo muzeia* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyiĭ istoricheskiiĭ muzeĭ, 2014), 19, 439.

photography's rapid popularization. The first experiments with portrait photography were made in 1839, but the success of portrait photography is also a story of changing technology. While long exposure times were no problem and therefore remained standard in landscape photography, their reduction to a few seconds was key for the eventual success of portrait photography by the late 1840s. In its very early stages, the complicated and lengthy procedure where the sitter had to remain motionless for several minutes and try keeping a pleasant expression while facing the sun hardly led to satisfying results.

Additionally, the exorbitant price for daguerreotype portrait production limited the number of potential buyers and sitters. It required an enormous amount of (social) capital to gain access to the sphere of early photography—notable examples from the 1840s include former American president John Quincy Adams (taken by Philip Haas in 1843), British Queen Victoria (taken by Henry Collen in 1844), Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV (taken by Hermann Biow in 1847) and Mohammad Shah Qajar (taken by Jules Richard in 1844). The bulky and fragile daguerreotype silver on copper behind glass plates was thereby favored for prominent representations as it provided a much higher resolution than Fox Talbot's paper-based calotypes. However, there is a lack of evidence about the photograph's social dissemination and daguerreotypes were also limited in their material ability to travel. The longer the daguerreotype remained a common photographic practice in a certain region, the more socially permeable it became. In the United States of America, where it remained popular throughout the 1850s, a comparably high number of its workers are known to have spent their wages on daguerreotype portraits of themselves.⁴⁰

As Stephen Sheehi puts it, the “portrait was a social product, created by an array of scientific knowledge and accessible chemicals and photographic hardware, imbibed with a social currency through exchange and circulation within new networks of sociability, commerce, and power.”⁴¹ The history of the photographic portrait can be told along the history of scientific-technological knowledge, the history of chemicals used, and the history of photographic hardware. These are histories of very local findings that influenced the global development of portrait photography. The development of portrait lenses by the Austro-Hungarian mathematician Joseph Petzval in 1841 was one of the main steps in

40 See, for instance, the “occupational portrait of three railroad workers standing on crank handcar” from the 1850s for which the workers are thought to have spent nearly one day's wage. Library of Congress, LC-USZC4-3944, accessed May 31, 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004664276/>.

41 Sheehi, *The Arab Imago*, 55.

photographic hardware's evolution, as their faster exposure and higher resolution in the image's center with blurry edges influenced photographic practices, since the choice of equipment now had a direct influence on the choice of the subject. The arrival of the Petzval lens in the bags of the Viennese portrait painter and daguerreotypist Joseph Weninger to St. Petersburg, along with much-needed plates fumed with bromine chloride and therefore a higher sensitivity, paved the way for portrait photography within the Russian Empire.⁴²

The results of the chemical experiments by a British sculptor who was unsatisfied with "the imperfections in paper photography arising from the uneven texture of the material" contributed to the global acceleration of photographic circulation. In 1851, Frederick Scott Archer discovered "from numerous trials that *Collodion*, when well prepared, is admirably adapted for photographic purposes as a substitute for paper," for it "presents a perfectly transparent and even surface when poured on glass."⁴³ What would become known as the wet collodion process combined the clearer image of the daguerreotype with the calotype's ability to print multiple paper copies. It also reduced exposure times from minutes to seconds, but remained an effortful procedure as photographers had to bring their darkrooms with them to expose and develop the light-sensitive layer while it was still wet. The spread of chemical knowledge about collodion use in photography, combined with access to collodion and iodides of silver and potassium (among other elements), and a global hardware market transformed the sociability of photography by tightening the networks of photographic exchange and circulation, as the collodion process replaced the daguerreotype as the dominant commercial process on the global stage. The discovery that collodion could be used for clearer images, in combination with the albumen print, formed the technological basis for photography's shift from artistic uniqueness to the medium of mass communication it would eventually become. Cost was also a factor, as the production of a wet collodion-processed image was less expensive than that of daguerreotypes, as was its by-product, the ambrotype—a collodion positive.

Photo albums became popular diplomatic gifts and increasingly included portraits, for which photographers had earlier preferred daguerreotypes for its clearer image and more precise rendering of the sitter's details, despite the

42 Josef Maria Eder, *Geschichte der Photographie*, vol. 2 (Halle (Saale): Wilhelm Knapp, 1932), 1022; Hans Frank, *Vom Zauber alter Licht-Bilder. Frühe Photographie in Österreich 1840–1860* (Wien: Fritz Molden, 1981), 109.

43 Frederick Scott Archer, "On the use of collodion in photography," *Chemist*, n.s., 2, no. 19 (1851): 257–258.

disadvantage of it remaining a unique specimen. The Golestan Palace Library, for instance, houses more than thirty-five albums sent by European rulers to the shah—an exchange that extended to courts around the globe and introduced images into circulation.⁴⁴ However, not only were the images widely circulated by the 1850s, but the exchange of photographic practices led to amalgamation processes of pictorial traditions. The productivity of Italian photographers in Qajar Iran highlights photography's potential to foster a formal exchange between different figurative traditions, specifically the amalgamation of Western and Persian dynastic portraiture.⁴⁵ A salted paper print from glass negative of Nasr-ed-Din Shah's portrait, which might have been taken by Luigi Pesce, was included in an album sent to the Prussian King Wilhelm I, which was ultimately gifted to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1977. This portrait exemplifies the combination of elements of representation in portrait photography, as the young shah is seen wearing a suit resembling a European military uniform beneath "a traditional termeh coat (native weaving from Kerman), lined with Russian fur" while "hold[ing] a curved Iranian sword, and wears an astrakhan hat typical of the early Qajar dynasty, decorated with the jagheh, a paisley-shaped insignia associated with the shah."⁴⁶ This example is thereby no exception, and this exchange was not limited to the sitter's costume, since portraits built on local traditions of dynastic and aristocratic representation increasingly interacted with other conventions in pose, gaze, costume, and prop of the subject, as analyses of early Qajar portraits have shown.⁴⁷

During a time of reforms throughout the Caucasus region—between the Ottoman Empire's *Tanzimât*, prime minister Mirza Taghi Khan's (Amir Kabir) reform years, and later also the Russian Empire's "Great Reforms"—processes of modernization were mostly equated with so-called "Europeanization." Since photography was widely perceived as a Western invention, the exchange of early local photographic practices was strongly oriented toward Western Europe. The career of the Russian Empire's most renowned photographer represents the steady exchange between "East" and "West" and speaks to the technologically enabled transition from landscape to portrait photography as the dominant genre. Levitskii's occupation with photography did not end in the early 1840s

44 Diba, "Qajar Photography," 87.

45 Bonetti and Prandi, "Italian Photographers," 26.

46 Donna Stein, "Three Photographic Traditions," 113–116. "Naser al-Din Shah." Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977.683.22, accessed May 31, 2021, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/285455>.

47 Diba, "Qajar Photography," 89. For a detailed discussion of (hybrid) poses in early Iranian studio photography, see Pérez González, *Local Portraiture*, 105–130.

when he was responsible for producing the first Caucasus landscape vistas—far from it. A son of a wealthy family, his career path soon took him from studying law in Moscow and his post as a civil servant toward a life as a professional photographer.⁴⁸ He used one of Grekov's cameras with a Chevalier lens of the type sold as "photographe à verres combines" (combined glass), promising lower exposure and improved transmission, which led to his elevated status in the earliest years of photographic exchange. During this time, he sent examples of his work in the Russian Empire to Charles Chevalier (1804–1859) in Paris, who used them in exhibitions in France, where they were highly acclaimed.⁴⁹

Levitskiĭ then quit his job with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and travelled to Austria, France, and Italy, where he became acquainted with the latest innovations in photographic technology and Western Europe's leading daguerreotypists, and studied chemistry at the Sorbonne.⁵⁰ In Rome, he took the portrait of a group that included Nikolai V. Gogol' (1809–1852), which is believed to be the only existing portrait of the famous writer. Levitskiĭ took another image of Gogol' after he had fallen asleep after breakfast, which made the writer furious and demanded the immediate destruction of the daguerreotype, which was already in the possession of the hosting countess (Chernyshova-Kruglikova). Levitskiĭ's description of this situation was focused on the technical details, since he depended on daylight for exposing his plate for three minutes while

48 For a biography of Levitskiĭ, see Avetian, *Atel'e "Svetopis' Levitskogo,"* 8–37; Alexei Loginov, "Sergey Lvovich Levitsky," in *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, vol. 2, ed. John Hannavy (New York: Routledge, 2008), 853–855; and his obituary, N. N., "Sergei Lvovich Levitskiĭ," *Fotograf-Liubitel'* 9, no. 9 (1898): 330–331.

49 Vladimir Levashev, *Lektsii po istorii fotografii* (Moscow: Trimedia, 2014), 28; Levitskiĭ, "Iz vremen dagerotipii," 177–189; Loginov, "Sergey Lvovich Levitsky," 853; Milan Zahorcak, "Evolution of the Photographic Lens in the 19th Century," in *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, 4th ed., ed. Michael R. Peres (Burlington: Focal Press, 2007), 158–159.

50 The development of photographic technology also led to educational mobility insofar as students and teachers alike travelled long distances to learn and teach the latest innovations in the field. With St. Petersburg being a popular destination for the Qajar elite in the 1840s and 1850s, many Iranians who would later start taking photographs themselves had spent time in the Russian capital where they've become familiar with photo studios (see Schwerda, "Iranian Photography," 83). Not only did early practitioners travel abroad to learn photography, the Russian, Ottoman, and Iranian states were actively involved in including photography into curricula at institutes of higher and/or military education such as the Russian Technical Society, the Imperial School of Military Engineering in Istanbul, and the Dār al-Fonun in Tehran. For this aim, experts from abroad were often brought in which ultimately led to an amalgamation of knowledge and visual practices through educational mobility. See Nancy Micklewright, "Late Ottoman Photography: Family, Home, and New Identities," in *Transitions in Domestic Consumption and Family Life in the Modern Middle East: Houses in Motion*, ed. Relli Shechter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 77; Pérez González, *Local Portraiture*, 27–30; Sonntag, "The Genesis of the Turkestan Album," 35–38.

the writer slept in a chair approximately three meters away from the window.⁵¹ Levitskiĭ returned to St. Petersburg in 1850 with contacts, skill, and reputation, which helped him open a studio on Nevskii Prospekt. Levitskiĭ's newly acquired emphasis on portrait photography turned out to be lucrative and constituted the perfect motivation to keep improving photographic technology throughout the 1850s, for instance, by experimenting with the use of wet collodion and artificial lighting before Gaspard-Félix Tournachon—better known under his pseudonym “Nadar” (1820–1910)—introduced it to the world of studio portraiture. By 1881, Levitskiĭ had installed an arc light that allowed him to take portraits on wet collodion within four seconds.⁵²

In his continuous quest to embrace the latest innovations, Levitskiĭ's works are considered milestones in the development of nineteenth-century Russian portrait photography. After Gogol', he photographed his cousin Aleksandr I. Herzen, Mikhail A. Bakunin, Ivan S. Turgenev, and, later in life, also Lev N. Tolstoĭ; works that remain common illustrations in texts on any of these important figures. He also furthered photography as a practice of imperial representation and high diplomacy. Levitskiĭ took portrait photographs of Emperor Nikolai I (1796–1855), which was likely the first ever portrait of a Russian emperor (1853),⁵³ as well as the Persian Nasr-ed-Din Shah,⁵⁴ or Napoleon III and his family, which won him the honorary title “the Emperor's photographer.” While Levitskiĭ's portraits lack expansive backgrounds and accessories, they experimented with the model's pose and overcame generic conventions of studio portraiture, progressing photo technology that determined the framework of what was feasible.⁵⁵

He remained a central figure in portrait photography until his death in St. Petersburg in 1898 and, having already been called the “father of Russian photography” by his contemporaries,⁵⁶ received an obituary in the journal

51 Levitskiĭ, “Iz vremeni dagerotipii,” 184.

52 Eder, *Geschichte der Photographie*, 1023; Heinz K. Henisch and Bridget A. Henisch, *The Photographic Experience 1839–1914. Images and Attitudes* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 215. Kate Flint's “attempt at writing the cultural history of the overlooked [flash gun]” addresses the role of technology's materiality in the production of images against the backdrop of artificial lighting. See Kate Flint, “The Cultural History of the Flash Gun,” *History of Photography* 41, no. 4 (2017): 395–411.

53 Barkhatova, *Russkaia svetopis'*, 49.

54 Redhouse, *The Diary*, 63.

55 Loginov, “Sergey Lvovich Levitsky,” 853–854.

56 Elena V. Barkhatova, “Pervaia natsional'naia fotokollektsiia (Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka),” in *Sbornik докладов mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii “Fotografiia v muzee,” 21–23 Maia 2013 g.*, ed. E. A. Vasil'eva (St. Petersburg: Rosfoto, 2013), 5.

Fotograf-liubitel' (Amateur photographer) that stated that “Russian photography has lost its oldest teacher.”⁵⁷ While Levitskii’s portraits gained cultural capital through the fame of his sitters, they also represented common discourse and reciprocal exchange between Western European practitioners and Russia’s photographic scene—a sphere of communication that gradually extended from St. Petersburg and Moscow to the cities in the imperial provinces. This sphere included an artistic articulation alongside an art historical shaped meaning of portraiture and also negotiated globally circulating technological developments that eventually helped shape visual discourses on portraiture that led to converging photographic practices.

Portraits were, however, not only staged due to technical prerequisites, where long exposures and artificial lighting required photographers to instruct their sitters on exactly where and how to pose and behave. They were also staged along pictorial traditions that had developed over the centuries in the pre-photographic age, or as Peter Burke put it, “the selection of subjects and even the poses of early photographs often followed that of paintings, woodcuts and engravings.”⁵⁸ Many early photographers came from a classical arts background and allowed “some of these conventions survive and . . . democratize in the age of the photographic studio portrait, from the mid nineteenth century onwards.”⁵⁹ The Georgian photographer Aleksandre Roinashvili⁶⁰ made ample use of his training as a painter in the composition of his portraits, as seen in his photo of his countryman and writer Aleksandre Qazbegi.⁶¹ The image depicts the sitter as a representative of the Georgian nation not only through selected props such as the worn *chokha* (woolen coat) and a pen but the composition of the photograph also

57 N. N., “Sergei L’vovich Levitskii,” 330.

58 Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing. The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion, 2001), 22.

59 *Ibid.*, 28. On “the ready adoption of photographic portraiture by the Ottomans, since photography could be understood in the context of their own traditions of painted portraiture, long explored through the medium of miniature painting and displayed in albums,” see Micklewright, “Late Ottoman Photography,” 71. Against the backdrop of portrait photography in Iran during the 1860s–1880s, Mohammadreza Tahmasbpour (“Photography during the Qajar Era, 1842–1925,” 62–63) raises the question whether the contemporary, local phase of “more experimental and original” photography would have sustained for a longer period if it weren’t for the influx of European visual material and a related exposure to realist forms of image-making and European conventions of perspective.

60 The life and work of Roinashvili, occasionally dubbed “the first Georgian photographer,” at the intersection of photography, cultural heritage, and a Georgian national movement is addressed in the seventh chapter of this book.

61 Besarion Tabiže, *alek’sandre roinašvili* (Tbilisi: sakartvelos teatraluri saz.-bis stamba, 1962), 21–22.

alluded to a then-widely circulating photo reproduction that Roinashvili had made of the medieval Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli, which was again based on a miniature by the Russian painter, military man, and administrator in the Caucasus, Grigoriĭ G. Gagarin. In his portrait of Qazbegi, the photographer followed the established pattern of representation and wove symbolic meaning into the sitter's posture and the props used.

Portraits were therefore social performance platforms for ruling elites who embraced the genre as a status symbol in its earliest days, and as social permeability increased due to gradually sinking costs, it allowed increasing numbers of social classes to partake in the approach to use photography as a medium to communicate modes of self-representation to the outside world. Nancy Micklewright has argued that photographs were “inextricably bound up with the discourses surrounding modernity” where “[t]he possession and display of photographs and photograph albums was a means of signaling the desire to be modern”⁶² and how “the Ottoman engagement with photography (which for most Ottoman consumers equaled portraiture) was an important means for exploring new self-images and new identities, especially for women”⁶³ in the late Ottoman context. Adding to this observation in the context of Armenian family portraits in the Ottoman Empire, Elke Hartmann⁶⁴ has explored how aspects of social, cultural, and political placement found expression through habitus and pose, clothing, and accessories. She has demonstrated the relevance of detailed knowledge on fabrics, distribution, and production techniques on portrait analysis as carefully arranged stagings of intended self-representation in the image, for instance, in the case of the *fedayi* (Armenian revolutionary militia) in the late imperial years.⁶⁵ This required knowledge of the clothing depicted in portraits corresponds to the necessary familiarity with then-contemporary photographic technology and its influence on how photographic portraits were produced. How much the latter was still dependent on technical aspects in the early twentieth century can be seen at hand of Sergeĭ M. Prokudin-Gorskii's⁶⁶ description of his famous picture of Lev N. Tolstoi. Already in 1908, pioneering color

62 Micklewright, “Late Ottoman Photography,” 67.

63 Ibid., 76.

64 Hartmann, “Family Portraits,” 120–125.

65 Elke Hartmann, “Shaping the Armenian Warrior: Clothing and Photographic Self-Portraits of Armenian *fedayis* in the late 19th and early 20th Century,” in *Fashioning the Self in Transcultural Settings: The Uses and Significance of Dress in Self-Narratives*, ed. Claudia Ulbrich and Richard Wittmann (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2015), 117–148.

66 The life and work of Sergeĭ M. Prokudin-Gorskii, one of the most prominent figures in the photographic scene of imperial Russia, and especially his ambition to systematically document the empire in color photographs, is discussed in the fifth chapter of this book.

photography, Prokudin-Gorskii describes how a cyclone affected his shooting, causing a significant increase in exposure time, and how the extreme sensitivity of his plates still allowed him to proceed as intended and preserve the full authenticity of the portrait despite the unfavorable natural lighting conditions.⁶⁷

From Photographic Van to Roll Film. The Mobility of Early Photography

Prokudin-Gorskii's portrayal of Tolstoi shows the writer sitting outside in a chair in his garden at his estate in Iasnaia Poliana, which explains the photographer's struggle with the weather conditions that usually did not bother portrait photographers too much as they pursued their trade in the safe haven of their studios. Long exposure times dictated static frames, while the fragility of the materials, as well as the need to immediately develop the exposed plates, minimized the mobility of photography in its early days. A broad variety of actors, however, was interested in pushing technological progress toward greater practicality in the use of cameras in the field. The Crimean War (1853–1856) had a particularly significant effect on the increasing mobility of photography since several states sought to exploit the propagandistic effect of war photography for the first time. The British were the frontrunners in the hunt for such images, evident in the works of Roger Fenton and his assistant Marcus Sparling who traveled the world during times of war, and whose works were exhibited in London and in the Paris World's Fair in 1855. These works likely inspired the Russian military to install their own photographic division.⁶⁸ The Englishmen dealt with the storage of their bulky and fragile equipment but also with the necessity of

67 "Nesmotria na nekotoryia neblagopriiatnyiia usloviia fotografirovaniia, vsledstvie prokhodivshago v Maë mēsiatsē tsiklona, kotoryi prinuzhdal v znachitel'noi mēre uvelichivat' vremia èkspozitsii, s'emka prodolzhalas' vsego shest' sekund, vkluchaia siuda i vremia, potrebnoe dlia peredvizheniia ochen' bol'shoi kassety. [...] Èta kraïne trudnaia rabota mogla byt' vypolnena s takoi korotkoï èkspozitsieï iskluchitel'no blagodar'ia chrezvychainoi chuvstvitel'nosti plastin k spektral'nyim lucham i pravil'noi peredachē poslednykh, chto poimet kazhdyi, znakomyi s tekhnikoï tsvētnykh vosproizvedeniï. V pečati portret vosproizveden bez vsiakikh popravok i prikras, chtoby sokhranit' vsiu tsēnnost' podlinnosti vosproizvedeniia." Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii, "Portret L. N. Tolstogo," *Fotograf-Liubitel'* 19, no. 9 (1908): 296.

68 On Fenton's images from the Crimean War, see Sarah Greenough, "A New Starting Point": Roger Fenton's Life," in *All the Mighty World. The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852–1860*, ed. Gordon Baldwin, Malcolm Daniel, and Sarah Greenough (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 18–24; Klaus Kreimeier, "Kriegsfotografie," in *Krieg und Gedächtnis. Ein Ausnahmezustand im Spannungsfeld kultureller Sinnkonstruktionen*, ed. Waltraud "Wara" Wende (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), 286–289.

having a perfectly darkened room by relying on a horse-drawn photographic van (fig. 1.1). They built their mobile equipment room and studio—otherwise hardly available on the Crimean battlefields—inside a carriage from a wine merchant in Canterbury, which they had converted into a sleeping area complete with kitchen and dark room. It boasted panes of yellow glass with shutters fixed at the sides, dedicated sections for fixing baths, and carried their extensive gear: utensils, seven hundred glass plates of three different sizes, five cameras, and several cases of chemicals, as well as also logistic supplies like several boxes of preserved meats, wine, biscuits, and harness for three horses.⁶⁹

The choice of subjects was still limited by the prevalent long exposure times, lack of access across the enemy lines, and the likely nature of a propagandistic mission that aimed to counter negative reports from the frontlines. While Fenton and Sparling were not the only ones to travel with a camera to the Black Sea frontlines,⁷⁰ the 350 negatives that they brought back to England are still considered to be the first photographic documentation of war and constituted an important step in the development of photographic mobility in the era of wet collodion photography years before the introduction of the gelatin silver process and dry plates which made the immediate exposure and development after coating superfluous.⁷¹

69 Hirst Milhollen, “Roger Fenton, Photographer of the Crimean War,” *Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions* 3, no. 4 (1946): 10.

70 Best known are the images by their fellow British photographer James Robertson and his colleague, the Italian Felice Beato, while the works of another Brit, Richard Nicklin, were lost when he and his assistants vanished with their photographs in a hurricane near Sevastopol'. The Hungarian-Romanian Carol Szathmári took photos of Russian and Ottoman troops in the Wallachia region during the years of war, while a number of amateurs, often part of the military stationed on Crimea, also aimed at recording the war and included the first Russian attempts to make the most of wet collodion plates for (necessarily static) war scenes. Generally, very few of these photographs are known to have survived but reports about them give testament to photography becoming part of modern warfare and the development of visual propaganda. See Jelena Barchatowa, “Realismus und Dokumentation: Photographie als Fakt,” in *Russische Photographie 1840–1940. Katalog zur Wanderausstellung Hundert Jahre Photographie in Rußland 1840–1940*, ed. David Elliott (Berlin: Ars Nicolai, 1993), 48; Yakup Bektas, “The Crimean War as a Technological Enterprise,” *Notes and Records* 71, no. 3 (2017): 233–262; Luke Gartlan, “James Robertson and Felice Beato in the Crimea: Recent Findings,” *History of Photography* 29, no. 1 (2005): 72–80; Julie Lawson, “Dr John Kirk and Dr William Robertson: Photographers in the Crimea,” *History of Photography* 12, no. 3 (1988): 227–241.

71 Richard Leach Maddox, “An Experiment with Gelatino-Bromide,” *British Journal of Photography* 18, no. 592 (September 8, 1871): 422. The first dry plates came to St. Petersburg via England and the networking activities of the Polish engineer and inventor Władysław Małachowski (better-known under his pseudonym Leon Warneke) while the first Russian dry plates factory was established by the German Albert Felisch in 1881 (see Eder, *Geschichte der Photographie*, 1023).



Figure 1.1. Roger Fenton. “The Artist’s Van.” Library of Congress.

Wars were, however, not the only reason for official and private actors to keep working on lower exposure times, more practicable equipment, and better lighting conditions with the ambition to extend photographers’ radius of activity beyond the confines of their studios. The contested market of early photography attracted Western and Northern European photographers such as the Frenchman Alfred Davignon and the Swede Carl Peter Mazér, who were looking for motifs outside St. Petersburg and Moscow, who brought equipment from abroad into circulation, and thereby became central figures in the photographic exploration of the empire and whose endeavors occasionally collided with local authorities showing little interest in the motivation of foreigners portraying exiled Decembrists in Siberia.⁷²

The rulers and administrators of the Russian state also hoped to explore the imperial provinces and systematize its knowledge, which supported James R. Ryan’s overall observation that “the history of interaction between photography

72 Mazér, *Handledning i fotografi*; Saburova, *Dagerotip v Rossii*, 14, 19, 438.

and exploration is in part a story of changing technology.⁷³ The years between 1850 and 1915, therefore, bookended a period of rapid technological development—which began with glass plates that constantly cracked on the road and developing procedures during which liquids would freeze and hang in icicles around the edge of the treated negative due to winter winds from Mongolia⁷⁴ and ended with the invention of roll film and aerial cameras, allowing for photography to become a part of educating and popularizing aviation.⁷⁵ Excursions such as the ones undertaken by Nikolai M. Przheval'skiĭ (Przewalski) into Central Asia proved catalysts for innovations like waterproof cameras, which Viacheslav I. Sreznevskii, the founder of the Russian Technical Society's (Russkoe tekhnicheskoe obshchestvo) photography section, had tailored for the explorer's needs in 1882.⁷⁶

In the Caucasus, the first Russian actors to compile a more comprehensive photographic survey of the region often came from within the ranks of the military, such as Count Ivan G. Nostitz (Nostits, 1824–1905) who had taken part in the Caucasus War and the subjugation campaign against Sheikh Shamil'. He not only took images of the romanticized landscapes but also photographed the local population during the era of wet collodion.⁷⁷ Photography soon became an integral part of the Russian ambition to amass a growing body of knowledge about the imperial peripheries which led to visual ethnographic collections and an exploration of social questions. Nostitz was only one of many Russian military personnel who were instructed to document native lives and customs. However, we know only of a few names today since, on the one hand, the respective photographer's name was often not attributed to images produced within the context of military exploration and, on the other hand, almost no photographs from the first decade of photography in the Caucasus are known to have

73 James R. Ryan, *Photography and Exploration* (London: Reaktion, 2013), 14.

74 John Thomson, *The Straits of Malacca, Indo-China and China or Ten Years' Travels, Adventures and Residence Abroad* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, & Searle, 1875), 474–475.

75 Pëtr D. Duz', *Istoriia vozdukhoplavaniia i aviatsii v Rossii (period do 1914 g.)*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Mashinostroenie, 1981), 81–82.

76 Nina V. Kolgushkina, "Lichnost' Viacheslava Izmailovicha Sreznevskogo i ego vklad v nauku, obrazovanie i fizicheskuiu kul'turu Rossii," *Vestnik RGU imeni S.A. Esenina* 43, no. 2 (2014): 54.

77 Eder, *Geschichte der Photographie*, 1022–1023; Tat'iana N. Shipova, *Moskovskie fotografy 1839–1930. Istoriia moskovskoi fotografii* (Moscow: Planeta, 2012), 258–269. A wider European audience got to know Nostitz and his passion for photography through the travelogue of the French writer Alexandre Dumas who met the Russian count and was presented with albums with photographs taken by his host. See Alexandre Dumas, *Le Caucase* (Brussels: Jules Hetzel, 1859), 221–222.

survived.⁷⁸ The transfer of photo-technological knowledge to the Caucasus thereby predominantly remained in the hands of the Russian state and was less a commercial sector before the mid-1860s, when the first permanent photography studios were opened in the regional capital of Tbilisi. At roughly the same time, travelers from abroad such as the British Edward Westley, who opened his studio “Caucasus Photography” in 1863 and established himself as the personal photographer of the Viceroy of Georgia, and local artists such as the Armenian Grigor Ter-Ghevondyants, whose studio (1864) produced an extensive array of portraits of the regional Armenian intelligentsia and contributed to a collective iconography for Armenians, heralded the age of commercial studio photography in the Caucasus.⁷⁹

The increasing number of travelers arriving in the Caucasus from abroad was facilitated by Russia’s tightening grip on the region by the 1850s and the ensuing initiative to modernize transport infrastructures, which sped up the influx of visual products and conventions. What had primarily meant a series of Russian expeditions with naturalists seeking to produce a comprehensive study of the empire’s natural resources and local population over the previous decades, now also attracted more conventional travelers from abroad reporting a wide range of subjects, ranging from political stances⁸⁰ to potential hiking adventures in high altitudes.⁸¹ The clunky (sub-)titles of these reports testified to travels in the Caucasus often being parts of transimperial exploration that allowed the authors mentally weave together the bordering Russian, Persian, and Ottoman provinces into one comprehensive realm for their readers to discover.⁸²

Tourists had always been interested in returning with visual souvenirs, which, before owning their own cameras, made them enter local photo studios and shops along their routes to buy select images catered to customer expectations and curiosity.⁸³ With the increasing practicability and easier

78 Kouteinikova and Solovyova, “A different Caucasus,” 136.

79 Mamatsashvili, “Early Photography in Georgia,” 21–22; Vigen Galstyan, “Grigor Isahaki Ter-Ghevondyants,” *Lusarvest—Database of Armenian Photo-Media Practitioners*, 2016, <http://www.lusarvest.org/practitioners/ter-ghevondyants-grigor/>.

80 James Stanislaus Bell, *Journal of a Residence in Circassia during the Years 1837, 1838 and 1839* (London: Edward Moxon, 1840); Friedrich Bodenstedt, *Die Völker des Kaukasus und ihre Freiheitskämpfe gegen die Russen* (Frankfurt/Main: Hermann Johann Keßler, 1848).

81 On the rise of Caucasus alpinism and its relationship to photography, see Chapter 6.

82 Among the many, see Augustus H. Mounsey, *A Journey through the Caucasus and the Interior of Persia* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1872); or Max von Thielmann, *Streifzüge im Kaukasus, in Persien und in der Asiatischen Türkei* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1875).

83 A lot has been written about the Orientalist themes that dominated commercial photography in a souvenir industry that targeted a Western European audience looking for visual confirmation of stereotypes about the “Orient.” On the “Orientalist photograph” and its market,

operability of photographic apparatuses, travelers later brought their own cameras to enhance their written observations by showing photographs taken along the route that ultimately contributed to the reimagining of mental maps of the Caucasus⁸⁴ or simply attest to their own mental maps if the photographs in question were personal records rather than destined to go into a commercial distribution.⁸⁵

By the end of the nineteenth century, photography's increasing ability to capture movement allowed it to permeate various recreational and leisure practices tied to new ways of traveling. Within the established tradition of "hunting with the camera"⁸⁶—a nineteenth-century development where explorers used photography to document their hunting achievements and which helped establish the trope of the colonial hunter as "one of the most striking figures of the Victorian and Edwardian imperial landscape"⁸⁷—the Caucasus was imagined as a space of adventure and thrill. Aspiring to present themselves as such colonial hunters and global explorers, traveling men and women embraced photography as an indispensable tool to convey messages about themselves through which they ultimately also shaped their audience's perception of the region.

see for instance Behdad and Gartlan, ed., *Photography's Orientalism*; Ayse Erdogdu, "Selling the Orient: Nineteenth Century Photographs of Istanbul in European Markets" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1989), 138–186. Western Europeans were however not the only tourists looking for photographs as souvenirs for which commercial studios elsewhere also focused on other themes as their primary product depending on the potential tourist customers. One example would be pilgrimage photography as offered in Northeastern Iran (see Peyman Eshaghi, "To Capture a Cherished Past. Pilgrimage Photography at Imam Riza's Shrine, Iran," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 8 (2015): 287–289).

84 Not always did photo amateurs however encounter the desired results when they developed the roll films upon their return home. Occasionally, "the Kodak pictures on being developed turned out [...] to be practically useless for the purpose of illustrating" their travelogues. See William Barnes Steveni, *Through Famine-Stricken Russia* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co, 1892), x. If they had not yet brought their own camera or just to be on the safe side, travelers also continued to resort to hiring local, unfortunately mostly unnamed, local photographers, for instance when a British colonel visited Baku and wanted to publish some images from inscriptions at the Ateshgah (or "Fire Temple") of Baku along with his travel report. See Charles E. Stewart, "Account of the Hindu Fire-Temple at Baku, in the Trans-Caucasus Province of Russia," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 29, no. 2 (1897): 313.

85 See for instance the collection of photographs by the Russian military officer and amateur photographer Alexander I. Iyas (Iias, 1869–1914) from early twentieth-century Iran as described in John Tchalenko, "Persia through a Russian Lens, 1901–1914: The Photographs of Alexander Iyas," *History of Photography* 30, no. 3 (2006): 235–244.

86 Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, 99–139.

87 *Ibid.*, 99.

In an era that witnessed transcontinental races across Russia as large media events with reporting correspondents and production of hundreds of photographs en route,⁸⁸ huntsmen and huntswomen from Russia and abroad did little to shatter established romanticist-orientalist tropes about the Caucasus when they advertised their trips to a region where one could be “enchanted by its wild beauty and grandeur”⁸⁹ or travel to “an alluring, beckoning, magical country, where the centuries mingle in confused contrast, and Nature plays protagonist to herself” and where “the very name breathe[s] the weird suggestive mystery of a primitive environment, the rough-hewn fascination of barbaric peoples.”⁹⁰ The book *Hunting in the Caucasus (Okhoty Kavkaza)* by the Russian huntsman and member of the Caucasus army, Anatolii A. Kalinovskii, was produced for the 1900 Paris World’s Fair, and tells a professional story of imperial self-representation in 199 photographs. These images show members of the tsarist family on large-scaled hunts in the Caucasus, many of which are group photographs profiling dignitaries such as Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolaevich (1832–1909, Figure 1.2), who is flanked by his hunting party and local guides in the background posing with trophies of their hunting expeditions and/or guns. These images build on the iconography of the colonial hunter while the visual presence of the empire’s highest representatives is symbolic of the Russian claim to both the Caucasus landscapes and animals as property of the imperial crown.

The British huntswoman Agnes Herbert, who had already written travelogues about hunting expeditions in Somaliland and Alaska, used twenty-two photographs to visually co-narrate her itinerary across the Caucasus in her book published in 1912. The spectrum of her photographs is therefore broader and is not confined to the hunt (in fact, only five images are directly related to her hunting activities, showing slain Caucasian turs or two local guides posing for the camera as drying the skin of a killed bear) but includes city views and mountain vistas. The presented viscourse thereby aligned with her written account in what is essentially an orientalist rendering of the Caucasus as a mystical and underdeveloped realm that is ready to be discovered by the enlightened European adventurer.

88 Luigi Barzini, *La metà del mondo vista da un' automobile. Da Pechino a Parigi in 60 giorni* (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1908).

89 “Kharakter mēstnosti porazhaet svoeiu kartinmost'iu i velichiem. / [...] il [le Caucase, DGS] nous enchante par sa beauté sauvage et sa grandeur.” Anatolii A. Kalinovskii, *Okhoty Kavkaza / Les chasses au Caucase* (St. Petersburg: A.I. Vil'borg, 1900), 3.

90 Herbert, *Casuals in the Caucasus*, 3.



Figure 1.2. “Karaiaz. A Hunt of His Imperial Highness, Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolaevich. Result of one Hunt.” Kalinovskii, *Okhoty Kavkaza*, unpaginated.

While the photographic oeuvre in *Okhoty Kavkaza* was facilitated by the state’s generous sponsorship, which brought electric light to nightly hunts in case the moonlight was not bright enough⁹¹ and state-of-the-art photographic technology that was increasingly tailored to the needs of explorers around the world,⁹² Herbert’s travelogue attests to a change in photography that allowed the emergence of an amateur scene. The English huntswoman doesn’t elaborate on what she understands to be “an average camera”⁹³ that she (or a member of her party) was using on her trip to the Caucasus, but this new quality of amateur travel and leisure photography by the turn of the century included fairly effortless outdoor snapshots on the road and became possible after a new type of cameras had allowed for the emergence of an amateur photo scene.

The introduction of the roll film camera by the US-American company Eastman Kodak in 1888 likely contributed to the single biggest revolution in

91 Kalinovskii, *Okhoty Kavkaza*, 35–37.

92 On technological developments to photographically capture movement in nature, see Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, 128–130.

93 Herbert, *Casuals in the Caucasus*, 205.

photographic technology in the late nineteenth century since it allowed a larger share of the population to partake in photography and laid the foundation for its role as a mass-leisure activity by the end of the century. Kodak's concept, captured in their famous advertising slogan "You press the button, we do the rest," forever changed the photographic practices of Caucasus travelers. For example, the Frenchman Joseph de Baye (1853–1931) used his handheld camera to photograph street scenes in turn of the century Baku of veiled women (fig. 1.3),⁹⁴ that is, images that would have been impossible to take if he had to set up bulky equipment prior to releasing the shutter. Kodak's concept also changed the photographic scene in the region itself. The spread of cameras into the hands of the middle class relied mainly on the increasingly affordable prices of handheld models, which entered markets from St. Petersburg and Tehran throughout the 1890s and became cheaper by the year in the early 1900s.⁹⁵ Innovations in the photographic sector, such as Eastman Kodak's Brownie camera model, first released in 1900 and requiring almost no technical knowledge to operate, allowed more people to take photos (of themselves) which made them independent of professional studio photographers.

The introduction of roll film cameras thereby facilitated the establishment and growth of an amateur photographer scene, which led to an increasing number of established journals informing its readership about the latest innovations, events, and purchasing possibilities.⁹⁶ This development toward a commodification of

94 De Baye was not the only one to secretly take photos of locals in the streets thanks to his handheld camera. His fellow French traveler Hugues Krafft ("En Transcaucasie et en Asie Centrale," *Bulletin du Photo-Club de Paris* 9 [1899]: 260) praised his Photo-Jumelle magazine camera by Jules Carpentier, an early adopter of 4.5 x 6 cm plates, as it gave him the opportunity to quickly take images without drawing the attention of the Muslim or other public to himself. The German orientologist Carl Friedrich Lehmann-Haupt also writes about his Kodak camera allowing him to secretly take a photo of a "typical Georgian" in Tbilisi. See Carl Friedrich Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenien einst und jetzt*, vol. 1 (Berlin: B. Behr, 1910), 66.

95 Between 1901 and 1905 for instance, the price for Kodak folding cameras on Russia's market dropped from 150 rubles to as little as 2.5 to 26 rubles (depending on the model). See as advertised in the journal *Fotograf-Liubitel'*, nos. 1901/10 compared to 1905/01 and 1905/09, cited in Christopher Stolarski, "The Rise of Photojournalism in Russia and the Soviet Union, 1900–1931" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2013), 87. On a comparable advent of handheld cameras in Iran, see Tahmasbpour, "Photography during the Qajar Era," 64–65, 73–74.

96 Within a couple of decades, the Russian readership could choose between journals such as *Fotograficheskii vestnik* (est. 1887), *Fotograf-Liubitel'* (1890), *Fotograficheskoe obozrenie* (1895), *Russkii fotograficheskii zhurnal* (1895), *Fotograficheskii listok* (1906), *Fotograficheskie novosti* (1907), and *Vestnik fotografii* (1908). For a detailed discussion on photo journals in the Russian Empire, see Olga S. Golovina, "Russkaia fotograficheskaia periodika (1858–1918)," *Fotografiia—Izobrazhenie—Dokument* 1 (2010): 55–75. Furthermore, companies such as Kodak also had an interest to reach out to an amateur readership and published their



Figure 1.3. Joseph Berthelot de Baye. “Baku 1900, in the Streets.” Musée du quai Branly—Jacques Chirac.

photographic practices also commercialized supply networks. As the potential customer base for photo materials increased yearly, it also became a lucrative sector for middlemen. In St. Petersburg and Moscow, it were particularly German entrepreneurs⁹⁷ such as Bruno Sanger (Zenger) and Joachim Steffen who ran photographic supply stores, published self-teaching manuals⁹⁸

own commercially motivated periodicals such as *Liubitel'-Kodakist* (1908) where one could read the latest on equipment and accessories made by the US-American firm. The introduction of roll film cameras had a similar effect also on the photographic scene in neighboring Iran where the number of books published on self-taught photography increased after 1888. See Tahmasbpour, “Photography in Iran,” 10–11.

97 On the German influence on early Russian photography, see Aleksandr Kitaev, “Nemetskii vklad v rossiiskuiu fotografii XIX veka,” *Photographer.ru*, December 14, 2014, <https://www.photographer.ru/cult/history/6521.htm>.

98 Bruno Zenger, *Samouchitel' fotografii* (St. Petersburg: Bruno Zenger, 1887).

and periodicals,⁹⁹ translated photo-technical treaties into Russian,¹⁰⁰ and organized photographic exhibitions.¹⁰¹ In the Ottoman Empire, it was the Armenian photographer On(n)ig Diradorian (Diradour) who was not only the first to import Kodak cameras but also became the firm's official agent in the Middle East.¹⁰²

The southern Russian Empire's urban centers were no exception to these developments, where all around the region, the introduction of the roll film camera had a lasting effect on photographic practices as they commodified and commercialized the technology. Associations such as the Baku Circle of Amateur Photographers (*Bakinskii kruzhok fotografov-liubitelei*, 1891) were founded, which brought together practitioners across the city and offered lectures aimed to acquaint more people with photography. With an entry fee of five to ten rubles, participants learned the latest about photographic technology and used materials provided by the club for their practical exercises.¹⁰³ Such clubs appealed to city dwellers who could afford to invest in photography as a hobby and eventually allowed for greater social mobility within photography circles once equipment became affordable for the middle classes. By the mid-1900s, Prokudin-Gorskii believed that a division between professionals and amateurs was widely superfluous, since great works came from the ranks of the latter, and photography was promising to eventually become a mass leisure activity also in the Russian Empire.¹⁰⁴

The images taken by nurse and photographer Nino Jorjadze (1884–1968) on the Caucasus front battlefields between 1914 and 1917, however, also demonstrate how the Kodak camera created a new visual experience of war scenes beyond the works of officially commissioned photographers traveling with the army.¹⁰⁵ Jorjadze became acquainted with photography through her brother

99 Steffen was the editor in chief of the journal *Fotograficheskie novosti* whereas his competitor Adolf Reine was responsible for the publication of *Fotograficheskoe obozrenie*.

100 Rafaël Édouard Lizegang (Raphael Eduard Liesegang), *Fotograficheskaiia khimiia*, trans. Bruno Sängner (St. Petersburg: Bruno Zenger, 1895).

101 Anna M. Moisinovich, "Zhurnal 'Fotograficheskie novosti' i vystavka 1912 g. v Sankt-Peterburge," *Vestnik IArGU. Seriiia Gumanitarnye nauki* 39, no. 1 (2017): 10–16.

102 Sarah Graham-Brown, *Images of Women. The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East 1860—1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 55–56; Stephen Sheehi, "Glass Plates and Kodak Cameras: Arab Amateur Photography in the 'Era of Film,'" in *The Indigenous Lens? Early Photography in the Near and Middle East*, ed. Markus Ritter and Staci G. Scheiwiller (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 257.

103 "Bakinskii kruzhok fotografov-liubitelei," Nash Baku, accessed May 31, 2021, https://our-baku.com/index.php/Бакинский_кружок_фотографов-любителей.

104 Sergeï M. Prokudin-Gorskii, "K chitateliu," *Fotograf-Liubitel'* 17, no. 1 (1906): 5.

105 See Lordkipanidze, *nino jorjadze*.

Giorgi, an officer in the Russian army who had participated in the Russo-Japanese War and—as a keen photographer—had himself created a photo series of his time in Manchuria. He provided her with a Kodak for her deployment with the Red Cross during World War I which she used to produce a unique chronicle of war that not only captured its bleakness (including close-up photographs of dead bodies), but also gave women an unprecedented visual expression of agency in early twentieth-century Caucasus photography.

Conclusions

The continuous development of photographic technology since its introduction to the public in 1839 and throughout the long nineteenth century was informed through a circulation and negotiation of knowledge within networks of power and commerce and had a lasting effect on photographic practices. In what is the case for a global history of photography as much as for local histories of photography in the Caucasus, the material performance of photography in the form of salts, silver, or glass and its limitations dictated the possibilities for the earliest images taken which at the same time led to a global diffusion of knowledge and globally valid technical prerequisites shaping shared viscourses on the one hand and amalgamation processes with local pictorial traditions on the other hand. The related high costs for equipment and chemicals furthermore regulated social access to photography. These developments were, however, neither chronological, linear, nor all-encompassing but resulted in the parallel use of photographic technologies and were dependent on social, cultural, economic, or political preconditions. The produced images attest to the technological influence on pictorial practices and are illustrative of varying adoptions of a global innovation across different cultural-political spaces.

Wars and imperial exploration were significant factors in the development and introduction of advancements such as the wet collodion process, the gelatin silver process, and dry plates, as various actors developed an interest in photography as a tool of representation. Thereby, photographic technology shaped viscourses but it was subjected to change and evolution through discourses of power and representation itself. As the century progressed, the development of smaller and lighter cameras allowed the use of photography in new, more mobile ways. Outdoor scenes in rugged terrain, such as higher altitudes, became possible when it was no longer necessary to develop the exposed plates immediately. Handheld devices allowed photographers to take snapshots of a population that had remained skeptical toward new visual technologies. Simultaneously sinking

prices further broadened the producers' target audience, which increasingly allowed photography to reach the hands of the growing middle class by the turn of the century. These changes on the market resulted in a developing scene of amateur photographers that started to come alive in the urban centers of the Caucasus by the 1890s, decades after other spheres of public life, such as ethnographic-anthropological exhibitions, had long been permeated by the power of the photographic image.

CHAPTER 2

“Typical Natives.” The Circulation of Ethnographic- Anthropological Photography from the Caucasus

Throughout the first decades of its existence, photography was an elite product that only few could afford to buy or even take images on their own. The instant fascination of the medium from its earliest days, however, captured the attention of a much wider audience once photographic images were exhibited in shopfronts. Various actors readily embraced the images' expressive potential and confronted a growing audience with the results of their photographic production. Travelers and explorers alike understood that photography gave their reports a massive boost of attention in providing readers and sponsors with photographic images from their journeys. Artists and architects contributed to surveys intending to establish all-state registers of historic monuments by taking cameras on their hunt for architectural antiquities. A special place in photography's introduction to public awareness was taken in by science and academia, which laid the foundation for the age of exhibitions in the second half of the nineteenth century and also led to the establishment of various museums which made extensive use of photography in preserving and presenting objects of interest. Visual anthropologists have repeatedly pointed to the parallel establishment and development of photography and its entrance into the public sphere on the one hand, and the professionalization and institutionalization of academic disciplines such as ethnography and anthropology on the other.¹ This chapter therefore explores this

1 Among the first and most thorough discussions, see Elizabeth Edwards, ed., *Anthropology and Photography, 1860–1920* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology*.

intrinsic relationship between photography and an emerging academic field of study in the Russian Empire and the subsequent representation of the Caucasus in academically grounded discourses.

When during the long nineteenth century, the imperial seizure of the borderlands in the Caucasus and Central Asia was accompanied by an increasing number of photographs from former blanks on the mental maps of many, the rise of academic scholarship and the scientific exploration played a vital role in diffusing images within the empire itself but also providing global networks of knowledge production with a new quality of input about the regions in question. While these images may at first glance seem neutral and invaluable insights into an imperial past, the state realized photography’s vast potential very early and decided to actively support and disseminate photographic production within the empire’s peripheral provinces. Under the pretext of exploration and objectivity, an allegedly scientific corpus of imagery came into existence which included a variety of ethnographic scenes and anthropometric surveys of the native population. The photographic production thereby reflects the inherent colonial gaze that constituted the mindset behind the incorporation of the new territories into the state as well as the political and private ambition to capture, collect, and present “types.”² It touches on global academic discourses of race and ethnographic “typicality,” the imperial states’ ambition to survey and collect the ethnography of their provinces, and the authority’s goal to exhibit the empire both to a domestic and a global audience. This chapter investigates the appearance and appropriation of a Caucasus beyond the Romantic imagination of poets and writers from the 1820s and 1830s by connecting the parallel advent of photography and ethnography/anthropology within the Russian Empire. It also discusses photography’s role at Moscow’s 1867 All-Russian Ethnographic Exhibition and 1879 Anthropological Exhibition before closing with an exploration of the multimedial circulation of “Caucasus Types.”

2 On “type” photographs as a nineteenth-century idea within anthropology and ethnography on how to define and categorize ethnic groups based on physiological features, see Elizabeth Edwards, “Photographic ‘types’: The pursuit of method,” *Visual Anthropology* 3, no. 2–3 (1990): 235–258.

Photography and the Institutionalization of Ethnographic-Anthropological Knowledge

In the Russian Empire, ethnography was institutionalized earlier than in Western Europe. It drew on an extensive history of expeditions during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century by which vast amounts of data and material had been amassed.³ The St. Petersburg-based Academy of Sciences had coordinated and financed these collection attempts of ethnographic knowledge and now supported the endeavor to order and present the findings. In 1837, the Russian imperial capital became the venue for the world's first ethnographic museum—a decade before Copenhagen (1848) and half a century before Berlin (1873), Paris (1878) or Vienna (1884) saw equivalent houses open their doors.⁴ The new museum was built on the foundation work of the famous *Kunstkamera* with its rich collections from the Petrine era. Whether or not Andreas Sjögren (Andreï Shëgren) held the first chair for ethnography (*ètnografïa*)⁵—the Russian equivalent to ethnology or cultural anthropology—at the Academy is a point of scholarly debates. However, it is known that from 1844 he contributed to the discipline's institutionalization in his function as director of the Ethnographic Museum.⁶

By the time of Sjögren's appointment, new societies had been founded that articulated a particular interest in exploring the empire's new provinces—not at last due to the lack of universities and Academy of Sciences branches outside the imperial centers. The foundation of the Russian Geographical Society (RGO, Russkoe Geograficheskoe Obshchestvo) in St. Petersburg in 1845 allowed a new institution to play a major role in the professionalization of ethnography within the Russian Empire and represented the nineteenth century in encouraging people to organize along their interests and fields of study. The society, which was not an official state organization, stood “at an awkward juncture between

3 Marcus Köhler, *Russische Ethnographie und imperiale Politik im 18. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: V&R unipress 2012); Justin Stagl, “Exploration of Russia from Herberstein to Sjögren. The International Context, 1549–1850,” in *Defining Self. Essays on emergent identities in Russia. Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Michael Branch (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2009), 31–46.

4 Werner Petermann, *Die Geschichte der Ethnologie* (Wuppertal: Hammer, 2004), 414.

5 In Sjögren's case a chair for languages and ethnography of Finnish and Caucasus peoples.

6 Alexis Hofmeister, “Imperial Case Studies: Russian and British Ethnographic Theory,” in *An Empire of Others. Creating Ethnographic Knowledge in Imperial Russia and the USSR*, ed. Roland Cvetkovski and Alexis Hofmeister (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014), 41; Han F. Vermeulen, *Before Boas. The Genesis of Ethnography and Ethnology in the German Enlightenment* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 409.

the forces of science, empire, and nationality” but nevertheless received generous funding and included Russia’s most prominent scholars, which allowed it to quickly become a key player in scientific development.⁷ Tribute was paid to this importance in 1849 when Tsar Nikolai I bestowed the RGO with the title “Imperial” (*Imperatorskoe*). The four disciplines intended to constitute the backbone of the society that were therefore given their own founding sections were general geography, the geography of Russia, statistics, and ethnography.⁸ The establishment of the latter section clearly differentiated the geographical societies that had been established in Western Europe over the previous couple of decades, for instance in Paris (1821) and London (1830).

Different visions of “ethnography” characterized the early years of the (I) RGO’s work. While RGO co-founder and naturalist Karl Ernst von Baer understood the discipline as a science of empire emphasizing the diversity of the human race, that is, physical anthropology as Johann Friedrich Blumenbach had envisioned it, the section’s long-term chairman and folklorist Nikolai I. Nadezhdin pursued the study of nationality (*narodnost’*) with the Russian people specifically in mind rather than the peoples of Russia.⁹ This initial division in conceptualizing *ètnografiia* correlated to the difference between the German *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde*. The society’s ethnography was divided in its foundational orientation but united in its endeavors to preserve, collect, and order information on the Russian Empire. Baer’s priority was to preserve rare ethnographic data while Nadezhdin’s dominating approach, on the other hand, sought to amass new materials. The success exceeded the hopes of the (I) RGO’s leadership. Of the seven thousand copies of ethnographic surveys distributed in 1848, over two thousand responses with ethnographic descriptions from diverse places and groups returned.¹⁰ By the mid-nineteenth century—and in response to both the era of Great Reforms and the RGO’s success and prestige—reports and expeditions to the Russian Empire’s provinces had become booming enterprises.¹¹

7 Nathaniel Knight, “Science, Empire, and Nationality. Ethnography in the Russian Geographical Society, 1845–1855,” in *Imperial Russia. New Histories for the Empire*, ed. Jane Burbank and David L. Ransel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1998), 108.

8 Pëtr P. Semenov, *Istoriia poluvekovoi deiatel'nosti imperatorskago russkago geograficheskago obshchestva 1845–1895* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia V. Bezobrazova i Ko., 1896), 8.

9 Knight, Science, 117–118.

10 Ibid., 122–125.

11 See, for instance, Catherine B. Clay, “Russian Ethnographers in the Service of Empire, 1856–1862,” *Slavic Review* 54, no. 1: 45–61.

Despite Nadezhdin's prevailing focus on national ethnography and its orientation toward ethnic Russians, great interest remained in the study of the empire's non-Russian peoples, which the IRGO eventually also contributed by institutionalizing the study of the *inorodtsy*.¹² In 1851 amidst the sparked interest in exploring Siberia and the Caucasus, the IRGO's first regional branches were opened in Irkutsk and Tbilisi. The latter saw an additional opening of the Caucasus Museum of Regional Studies in 1856—a museum that became a repository for collections from all over the region.¹³ The institutionalization within the periphery intensified during a time of rising nationalist sentiments within the Russian Empire, which included the messianic vision of Russian patronage over Slavic lands and peoples and the substitution of the opposition to the West by a growing focus on its neighbors to the east and south.¹⁴ Oriental Studies in particular was thought to constitute an ideal basis for imperial domination within a scholarly network where knowledge and authority remained intrinsically interlinked.¹⁵

By the 1860s, the IRGO was faced with institutional competition from the Society of Amateurs of Natural Science, Anthropology, and Ethnography (Imperatorskoe obshchestvo liubitelei estestvoznaniia, antropologii i *ètnografii*, IOLEAÈ) in Moscow. Founded in 1863 under the name Society of Amateurs of Natural Science, an anthropology section was added a year later at the behest of zoologist Anatolij P. Bogdanov, who had recently taken up the post of director at Moscow University's Zoological Museum. The museum collection's poor conditions might have been the decisive push for Bogdanov to appeal to the learned society for help, since it promised better chances for public fund raising than the university.¹⁶ Bogdanov represented Moscow's natural scientists who, according to Marina Mogilner, in contrast to their fellow academics in the empire's capital considered "physical anthropology the logical culmination of

12 Knight, *Science*, 128–129. *Inorodtsy* is a legal term used to designate a set of imperial Russia's ethnic minorities, who comprised a distinct legal category from 1822 to 1917.

13 Austin L. Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire. North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845–1917* (Montreal: McGill-Queen University Press, 2012), 66–67.

14 Mark Bassin, "The Russian Geographical Society, the 'Amur Epoch,' and the Great Siberian Expedition 1855–1863," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 7, no. 2 (1983): 241; *ibid.*, *Imperial Visions. Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 94–101.

15 Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization. Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 164–168; Vera Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient*, 69–84.

16 Galina Krivosheina, "Long Way to the Anthropological Exhibition: The Institutionalization of Physical Anthropology in Russia," *Centaurus* 56 (2014): 278.

the expansion of evolutionism into the sphere of knowledge about the natural world, including humans.”¹⁷

On university level, a titular division between ethnography and (physical) anthropology was institutionalized only in the academic year 1879–1880, when a chair of anthropology was founded at Moscow University. Dmitrii N. Anuchin, Bogdanov’s student, became its first holder after spending almost three years abroad attending lectures in anthropology and studying anthropological collections in Western European museums. In Paris, he became acquainted with Paul Broca’s newly founded School of Anthropology (1876), signed up for classes at the Sorbonne and the Collège de France, joined archaeological expeditions,¹⁸ and—on behalf of the IOLEAË—became a leading organizer of the Russian anthropological section at the 1878 World’s Fair.¹⁹ It was also at the initiative of the IOLEAË and Bogdanov himself that led to the eventual establishment of a chair in anthropology at Moscow University during the same year that Munich’s Johannes Ranke became the first holder of a chair in anthropology at a German university. What is particular about the first chair of anthropology at a Russian university is that it was endowed by a private enthusiast whose donation administered by an academic society (IOLEAË) led to the discipline’s institutionalization within the university system, not from the state, but from an engaged public.²⁰ Under Anuchin, the Moscow anthropology chair and its emphasis on the “imperial type” constituted a new opposite pole to St. Petersburg’s model of colonial race science.²¹ As an active journalist and follower of network science, Anuchin engaged both with the international community and educated public, thereby propelling his school to the top of Russian anthropology at the turn of the century.²² Meanwhile, the mutual resentments shared by both

17 Marina Mogilner, *Homo Imperii. A History of Physical Anthropology in Russia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 20. Previously published as Marina Mogil’ner, *Homo Imperii. Istoriiia fizicheskoi antropologii v Rossii* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2008).

18 Cf. Dmitrii N. Anuchin, *Poezdka k doistoricheskim pamiatnikam iuzhnoi Frantsii* (Moscow: Tipografiia M. N. Lavrova, 1878).

19 Mogilner, *Homo Imperii*, 36–37.

20 *Ibid.*, 10.

21 *Ibid.*, 98, 133–136.

22 The (non-)centrality of Anuchin’s role in the emergence of Russian anthropology is subject to a scholarly debate (see Krivosheina, “Long Way to the Anthropological Exhibition,” 295–296) whereas I do not wish to classify any of the pioneering naturalists, zoologists, and anthropologists as the discipline’s ultimate “founding father” but acknowledge the contribution of them all in developing the field of nineteenth-century anthropology in the Russian Empire.

sides prohibited the schools in St. Petersburg and Moscow from forming a joint research agenda.²³

What united ethnographers and anthropologists was their struggle to normalize their disciplines on an institutional level while relying on the associated societies' networks to disseminate knowledge within the Russian Empire's educational system. These ambitions intensified when the imperial army concluded decades of brutal warfare within the Caucasus region (1817–1864) and the manifold diversity of the southern borderlands attracted scholars with a rich data set to be systematized and interpreted. The Moscow school of anthropology in particular emphasized regions rather than ethnic groups as its concept of the discipline's development foresaw a broad picture of the empire's groups with no differentiation between objectified non-Russians on the one hand and Russians as the state's titular nation on the other.²⁴ The lack of state support for Caucasus regional studies, however, meant that scholars coming from institutions across the Black Sea and further into Western Europe—for instance, the Transylvanian Saxon naturalist Friedrich Bayern,²⁵ the French anthropologist Ernest Chantre,²⁶ and the German anthropologist Rudolf Virchow²⁷—had to develop the field and overshadow the works of Russian anthropologists building their work from private initiatives and external resources—a circumstance about which Anuchin bitterly complained.²⁸ An important role in establishing a local tradition of anthropological research and connecting it to contemporary

23 Björn Felder thereby questions Mogilner's label of Anuchin and Moscow anthropology as "liberal anthropology" given the school's lack of openness, pluralism, tolerance, and democracy while it was rather being driven by ideology to a high extent. See Björn Felder, "Eugenik und Anthropologie in Osteuropa," review of *Homo Imperii. A History of Physical Anthropology in Russia*, by Marina Mogilner, *HSozKult*, August 4, 2015, <https://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/reb-20263>.

24 Mogilner, *Homo Imperii*, 108.

25 Bayern had come to the Caucasus for the first time in 1849 and would dedicate the next fifteen years of his life to the exploration of the region's natural history, thereby contributing a great deal to the collections of the first Caucasus museum in Tbilisi, before eventually focusing on regional archaeology. See Friedrich Bayern, *Untersuchungen über die ältesten Gräber- und Schatzfunde in Kaukasien* (Berlin: A. Asher & Co, 1885).

26 Ernest Chantre, *Recherches paléoethnologiques dans la Russie méridionale et spécialement au Caucase et en Crimée* (Lyon: Henri Georg, 1881); *ibid.*, *Recherches anthropologiques dans le Caucase*, vols. 1–4 (Paris and Lyon: Charles Reinwald and Henri Georg, 1885–1887); *ibid.*, *Les Arméniens. Esquisse historique et ethnographique* (Lyon: Henri Georg, 1896).

27 Rudolf Virchow, *Das Gräberfeld von Koban im Lande der Osseten, Kaukasus. Eine vergleichend-archäologische Studie* (Berlin: A. Asher & Co, 1883); *ibid.*, *Über die culturgeschichtliche Stellung des Kaukasus unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der ornamentierten Bronzegürtel aus transkaukasischen Gräbern* (Berlin: Königl. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1895).

28 Mogilner, *Homo Imperii*, 142.

anthropology in Western Europe was undertaken by the former military doctors and veterans of the Caucasus War who came together in the Society of Caucasus Physicians, acquired anthropological instruments, and published their own findings, sometimes based on the field work of incoming scholars.²⁹ They furthermore welcomed and assisted these scholars coming to the region from the centers of academic anthropology within the Russian Empire and from Western Europe who were eager to join forces and organize excavations north and south of the mountain range and partaking in congresses in Tbilisi.³⁰

Despite their occasional reciprocal criticism, particularly of Anuchin’s “partially poor knowledge”³¹ or Virchow’s not being “entirely right,”³² the two anthropologists with their leading positions at the IOLEAË’s anthropology section and the Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology, and Prehistory represented high interest in questions of “race” and ethnicity in the Caucasus region coming from both Russian and Western European politics and academia. For the Russian Empire, the Caucasus represented colonial borderlands with high cultural capital and an enormous potential to underline any ambition of exploring the empire as a multiethnic space. For proponents of physical anthropology from Western Europe on the other hand, the Caucasus held a special place thanks to Johann Friedrich Blumenbach’s 1775 *De generis humani varietate nativa* in which he claimed that people of European, North African, and Middle Eastern origin were part of the “Caucasian” race.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the number of expeditions to the Caucasus increased and with the lowered technical and financial barriers for photography usage, the number of studies building on visual aids documenting fieldwork likewise rapidly increased. For his 1881 work on Ossetian burial mounds, Virchow described taking drawings of Arabic inscriptions to present them to orientologist Johann Gottfried Wetzstein, who helped him read them upon his return to Berlin.³³ Chantre travelled across the Caucasus with a French military man, Captain Maximilien-Étienne-Émile Barry, who brought a camera on their journey through the region from the south from Van, Yerevan, and

29 Stepan F. Stsepura, *Opyt antropologicheskogo issledovaniia makrokefalicheskikh cherepov naïdennykh g. Baïernom v grobnitsakh drevnego Samtavrskogo kladbishcha, bliz seleniia Mtskheta v Gruzii* (Tiflis: Obshchestvo Kavkazskikh vrachei, 1875).

30 Dmitrii N. Anuchin, *Otchet o poezdke v Dagestan* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Suvorina, 1884), 12–13; Rudolf Virchow and Wassili Dolbeschew, “Der archäologische Congress in Tiflis (1881),” *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 14 (1882): 73–111; Virchow, *Das Gräberfeld*, 12.

31 Virchow, *Das Gräberfeld*, 92.

32 Anuchin, *Otchet o poezdke v Dagestan*, 17.

33 Virchow, *Das Gräberfeld*, 8.

Tbilisi to Vladikavkaz before heading back west through Poti and Trabzon. A portfolio of fifty-six photographs documents the scientific mission along contemporary urban sites throughout the region and captured local ethnic groups' allegedly typical physiological features and traditional clothes by including both profile and front portraits of individual sitters. It cannot be ruled out that some of these portraits were actually not taken by Barry himself but bought by Chantre in one of the region's—probably Tbilisi—photo shops though.³⁴ Anuchin went to Dagestan in the summer of 1882 and although the exploration of relief paintings was central to his study, he did not yet rely on photography to document his findings.³⁵ A decade later, photography had already become a common research tool when Anuchin was joined by fellow anthropologist Alekseï A. Ivanovskii (1866–1934) who was deployed to the southern Caucasus in 1893 on behalf of the Moscow Archaeological Society and the IOLEAË and who photographed what he believed was the biggest part of the region's cuneiform inscriptions.³⁶ Chantre had in the meantime moved on to the Anatolian highlands where he became the first scholar to produce a larger photographic survey of Hattuša, the capital of the Hittite Empire.³⁷

By the 1890s, both photographic technology itself and its adoption as a research tool had however already progressed significantly in academic circles. Debates over its utility for research were nearly as old as photography itself, with the (short-lived) “Société Ethnologique de Paris”—the first learned society focused on race—founded in 1839, the same year and in the same city that Daguerre presented his daguerreotype to the Académie des sciences. Therefore,

34 *Mission Scientifique de Mr. Ernest Chantre dans la haute Mésopotamie, le Kurdistan et le Caucase. Photographies.* Getty Research Institute, 2018.R.23, accessed August 28, 2024, <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/2018r23>.

35 Anuchin (*Otchet o poezdke*, 87) does however mention the Georgian photographer Aleksandre Roinashvili who had later acquired some cult objects he did not manage to buy himself due to the owner's absence. Roinashvili traveled extensively throughout Dagestan in the 1880s and took the first images of the very same Dagestani aul (Kubachi, no. 577 in Roinashvili's catalogue) that Anuchin had described in 1882. Also, photographs of archaeological findings, e.g. from Ani, had been discussed at the 1881 archaeological congress in Tbilisi (see Virchow and Dolbeschew, “Der archäologische Congress,” 95).

36 Alexis Iwanowski, “Die Mongolei. Ethnographische Skizze” (PhD diss., University of Leipzig, 1895), iii.

37 The first photos of Hattuša were already taken in 1861 and in the framework of the French archaeologist Georges Perrot's expedition to the site. It was however not the archaeologist but the party's physician, Dr. Jules Delbet, who had decided to take a crash course in photography before departing and now signed responsible for the first ever photographs of Hattuša's reliefs which later also got published by Perrot. See Georges Perrot, *Souvenirs d'un Voyage en Asie Mineure* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1864), 2; Andreas Schachner, *Hattuscha. Auf der Suche nach dem sagenhaften Großreich der Hethiter* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2011), 23.

curiosity in photography as a new technology was high among scholars of the developing disciplines. Across the continent, anthropologists, ethnologists, and archaeologists alike engaged in debates that centered on the benefits of using photography, which emerged as an increasingly vital mode of data capture and transmission.³⁸ The British Association for the Advancement of Science published guidelines “to promote accurate anthropological observation,”³⁹ which defined a set of photographic apparatus as a desirable measuring instrument, at least “where a larger outfit can be taken, or where the observer is stationary.”⁴⁰ The French archaeologist Salomon Reinach published a manual for fellow amateurs, which included recommendations for every traveler to take along a camera, arguing that only photography could provide an exact idea of reliefs or other ornaments.⁴¹ Moreover, the only image accompanying his text is an engraving of a camera in a travel bag, which implicitly connects the archaeologist’s work to documentation through photography.⁴² Archaeologists such as Reinach began collecting antiquities through photographs, allowing the object in question to become part of a wider, transimperial scientific network through which the circulation of images/objects accelerated.

Driven by the idea that photography could produce “exact” representations, scholars of other institutionalizing disciplines, such as ethnography and anthropology, embraced photography for its ability to objectify their research’s documentation and make use of a medium, which increasingly supplanted other processes of reproduction. An image, however, is not a simple reproduction of a specific circumstance or matter but rather co-constructs knowledge by modifying, organizing, or even creating it.⁴³ Images play an important role in the production of knowledge and, thus, function as more than mere scientific illustrations. The altered use of images often supported changing visual habits.⁴⁴ This means that not only did the criteria for scientific evidence change across time but the understanding of science of itself and its objectivity concepts also

38 Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology*, 21.

39 *Notes and Queries on Anthropology, for the Use of Travellers and Residents in Uncivilized Lands* (London: Edward Stanford, 1874), iv.

40 *Ibid.*, 1–2.

41 Salomon Reinach, *Conseils aux Voyageurs Archéologues en Grèce et dans L’Orient Hellénique* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1886), 28–29.

42 Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed*, 142.

43 Peter Geimer, “Einleitung,” in *Ordnungen der Sichtbarkeit. Fotografie in Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technologie*, ed. Peter Geimer (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), 7.

44 Michael Hagner, “Mikro-Anthropologie und Fotografie. Gustav Fritschs Haarspaltereien und die Klassifizierung der Rassen,” in *Ordnungen der Sichtbarkeit. Fotografie in Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technologie*, ed. Peter Geimer (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), 254.

changed, as Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison have shown.⁴⁵ In the nineteenth century, the emergence of photography changed the way scientific evidence was produced. Objectivity meant increasing mechanical objectivity created by the camera without a scientists' intervention. However, the selection of motifs and interpretations of photographs remained a matter for scientists that was vigorously discussed.

The Russian Empire's increased scientific exploration did not immediately correspond with an embrace of photography. The dominant IRGO faction around Nadezhdin followed the tradition of European humanism, seeking the meaning of texts through linguistic analysis and treating visual representation as an aesthetic by-product rather than an essential factor in interpretation.⁴⁶ Thus, the society's early publications in the 1850s are widely missing illustrations while proposals to undertake photographic expeditions to the empire's peripheral provinces were negatively evaluated by a properly constituted committee.⁴⁷ This contrasted with the tradition of visual representation playing a key role in the Academy's ambition of exploring faraway provinces—a tradition based on its integral contribution to investigative processes in natural sciences, represented by Baer but subordinated to Nadezhdin and his colleagues.⁴⁸ While the RGO opened a branch in Tbilisi already by 1851, engagement with photography as a means of documenting the Caucasus was initially confined to the military. Graduates from the Military-Topographical Department (Voenno-topograficheskii otdel, VTO) were instructed to photograph the landscape and the native population's lives and customs within the framework of military interests—paralleling photography in Central Asia when considering the background of the famous “Turkestan album.”⁴⁹ Therefore, it needed a new circle and institution to step up and sustainably influence the use of photography and the public imagination of the empire—a role that Bogdanov and the IOLEAÈ readily accepted.

45 Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*.

46 Nathaniel Knight, “Russian Ethnography and the Visual Arts in the 1840s and 1850s,” in *Visualizing Russia. Fedor Solntsev and Crafting a National Past*, ed. Cynthia Hyla Whittaker (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 141.

47 *Ibid.*, 127–130.

48 *Ibid.*, 141.

49 See, for instance, Dikovitskaya, “Central Asia in early photographs,” 104–108.

Representation Ordered by the State: The 1867 All-Russian Ethnographic Exhibition

Bogdanov dedicated his research agenda to physical anthropology within the confines of natural sciences—endeavors that were more open to visual practices and influenced the new society.⁵⁰ The society quickly conceptualized its first major project in the 1867 All-Russian Ethnographic Exhibition (*Vserossiiskaia ètnograficheskaia vystavka*) where the active use of visual material dominated both preparation and execution. The 1867 Exhibition constituted the first attempt to order, visualize, and present knowledge about the entire Russian Empire while its planning, however, coincided with the end of the conquest of the southern borderlands. Photography played a major role in production and presentation since it became a medium of knowledge exchange, with the conveners of the 1851 “Great Exhibition” in London’s Crystal Palace hosting the first World’s Fair and this exhibition’s anthropological section particularly inspiring Bogdanov and his committee. They later planned and exhibited a similar event in the Russian Empire intended to fill the gap left by the absence of a display of Russia’s peoples in London.⁵¹ In doing so, Bogdanov aimed to confront the audience with representations of the various ethnic groups’ “characteristic features” and to bridge a significant knowledge gap in the Russian public, which appeared to know more about the populations of Africa and Australia than about the indigenous peoples of their own empire.⁵²

On April 22, 1867, the Moscow Ethnographic Exhibition opened under patronage of Grand Duke Vladimir Aleksandrovich.⁵³ For two months, the Moscow Manege was transformed into a panopticon that took the visitor across the empire’s thousands of kilometers, introducing them to the peoples who inhabited the vast space from Poland in the West to Russian America in the East. Thousands of visitors flocked to the exhibition center to see the event Bogdanov had conceptualized as a didactic dimension intended to reach the masses more

50 Knight, “Russian Ethnography and the Visual Arts,” 144.

51 Bogdanov later (in 1884) remembered his visit to London as an eye-opening experience and a much-needed impetus to transform the British exhibitions into similar endeavors in the Russian context: “Seeing London, the British Museum and the Crystal Palace in particular, evoked in me a sense of shame for the miserable role we played then (in 1859) with our textbooks and threw me into the multi-year work of replenishment of at least the most essential by means of exhibitions.” (Cited in Krivosheina, “Long Way to the Anthropological Exhibition,” 278).

52 *Ètnograficheskaia vystavka 1867 goda Imperatorskago Obshchestva Liubitelei Estestvoznaniia, Antropologii i Ètnografii* (Moscow: Tipografiia M. N. Lavrova, 1878), 1.

53 “Vnutrenniia izvēstīia,” *Kavkaz* 22, no. 36 (May 11, 1867): 204.

than public lectures or popular writings.⁵⁴ The 1867 All-Russian Ethnographic Exhibition ultimately consisted of two sections: an anthropological section, which featured craniological measuring instruments and approximately five hundred skulls and brains preserved in formaldehyde, and ethnographic displays arranged by geographical region, allowing the ethnic groups inhabiting the Russian Empire to recreate the corresponding geographical space.⁵⁵ The interested public could also view more than three hundred mannequins, divided into almost sixty national and regional groups, wearing genuine native costumes and surrounded by artefacts of everyday life.⁵⁶ After initial attempts to replicate the Crystal Palace figures failed due to poor available conditions,⁵⁷ photography took on a major role in producing and presenting the Moscow Exhibition. First, it served as a medium for knowledge exchange with the organizers of the London Fair. Second, the organizing committee chose photography as a tool to document the empire's ethnic groups—photographs that became both exhibited in their own rights and, allegedly, objectifying blueprints for the mannequins at the exhibition's center.⁵⁸

While the exhibition's published protocols have repeatedly attracted scholarly interest, Ewa Manikowska already pre-2022 documented the difficulty in accessing the photographic collection preserved today by funds raised by the Russian Museum of Ethnography in St. Petersburg⁵⁹—an experience that correlates with the author's. An in-depth analysis of the two thousand photographs (and drawings) gathered during the first all-Russian photographic survey, which later formed the foundation of the Daškov Ethnographic Museum founded in the aftermath of the exhibition, remains a scholarly desideratum. The exhibition's protocols and press coverage reveal that the use of photography—tied to what Nathaniel Knight calls the “imperative of authenticity”—limited the organizers' efforts to assert a primacy of “Russianness” within the empire.⁶⁰ While it was in the interest of the state to collect, order, and display knowledge, the organizers struggled to accommodate both state structures and ethnic affiliation

54 *Ėtnograficheskaia vystavka 1867 goda*, 1.

55 Nathaniel Knight, *The Empire on Display: Ethnographic Exhibition and the Conceptualization of Human Diversity in Post-Emancipation Russia* (Washington, DC: NCEEER, 2001), 10–11.

56 *Ibid.*, 1.

57 *Ibid.*, 12–13.

58 *Ėtnograficheskaia vystavka 1867 goda*, 4–6.

59 Ewa Manikowska, *Photography and Cultural Heritage in the Age of Nationalisms. Europe's Eastern Borderlands (1867–1945)* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 19–24.

60 Knight, *The Empire on Display*, 21.

within a context of competing identity models. The London exhibition had left no room for displaying the old continent but exclusively exhibited primitive non-European peoples, thereby implying a self-ascribed civilizational superiority.⁶¹ For Russia, such an exclusionary approach was not feasible. Instead, relying on photography to search for typicality led to an integrative display that portrayed ethnic Russians as one nation among the many inhabiting the empire, while the mannequins and artefacts displayed did little to suggest a superior character over the other groups. On the contrary, contemporary commentators considered the ethnic Russian mannequins to be an altogether ugly and unsightly lot by no means adequate to the task of representing a distribution of cultural achievements in their favor.⁶² By its very nature, the exhibition supported the idea of a diverse, multiethnic Russian Empire that led to both a conflict of interest with increasingly important ethnic nationalism but also to a visual integration of colonial space, such as Central Asia or the Caucasus, into a pan-imperial narrative framework.

Manikowska's⁶³ and Božidar Jezernik's⁶⁴ studies have shown that attempts to visualize (Slavic) peoples within and outside the Russian Empire had long-lasting implications for the (self-)representation of the groups on display in Moscow and often constituted a milestone in the development of regional photographic practices.⁶⁵ The very same photographic types produced by the Warsaw-based photographer Karol Beyer used in the exhibition to produce a narrative of imperial diversity were eventually reproduced in the context of scholarly books and other exhibitions to underscore a distinct Polish ethnicity.⁶⁶ If the organizers in Russia had emphasized their ambition to capture “typicality” in the displays, the local respondents in Poland carefully staged picturesque scenes and chose the most exceptional costumes.⁶⁷ They compiled an assortment of idealized figures that were suitable for re-interpretations within a different regulatory framework.

61 Ibid., 3–4, 11.

62 Roland Cvetkovski, “Empire Complex: Arrangements in the Russian Ethnographic Museum, 1910,” in *An Empire of Others. Creating Ethnographic Knowledge in Imperial Russia and the USSR*, ed. Roland Cvetkovski and Alexis Hofmeister (Budapest: CEU Press, 2014), 215–216.

63 Manikowska, *Photography and Cultural Heritage*.

64 Božidar Jezernik, “The Moscow Ethnographic Exhibition of 1867,” *Zbiór Wiadomości do Antropologii Muzealnej* 6 (2019): 7–27; *ibid.*, “The Priest Matija Majar and the Moscow Ethnographic Exhibition of 1867,” *Traditiones* 40, no. 2 (2011): 45–76.

65 See, for instance for Lithuania, Dainius Junevičius, “Lietuvos fotografų nuotraukos pirmojoje Rusijos etnografijos parodoje 1867 m.,” *Lietuvos kultūros tyrimai* 10 (2018): 142–162.

66 Manikowska, *Photography and Cultural Heritage*, 41.

67 Ibid., 23.

The Polish photographs and mannequins were part of a section emphasizing the exhibition's second dimension beyond an imperial narrative, which had wider-reaching political implications. The event coincided with the Second Slavic Congress, which took place in St. Petersburg and Moscow. The exhibition was thus not only aimed at compiling a mosaic of the Russian Empire but also at displaying Slavic unity under Russian patronage. The Slavic section also portrayed peoples living under Ottoman or Habsburg rule for which political implications superimposed the IOLEAË's scholarly ambitions. The call for contributing photographs and costumes reached beyond the borders of the Russian Empire, including the Slav citizens of the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire who were provided with an informative German-language handbook containing guidelines about the ethnographic objects collection.⁶⁸ Eventually, twelve photographs of four men and two women were produced as the model for the wax figures that were presented at the Moscow Exhibition under the title "Slovenians from the Zilja Valley."⁶⁹

The Polish reservation to pan-Slavism, understanding it as a form of Russian imperialism, found its manifestation in the representation in Moscow and in the subsequent interest to re-interpret the Polish photographs. As the exhibition constituted an expression of power relations and circled around the question of representation, the Polish exhibits were designated by their provenance rather than by their ethnonym,⁷⁰ while the very opposite was implemented in the display of the Habsburg Zilja-Gail Valley.⁷¹ The latter case irritated the Austrian press which condemned the exhibition as a "Slavic-national demonstration" evidenced in the title page of the Viennese newspaper *Die Debatte und Wiener Lloyd* on April 25, 1867: "A pan-Slavic fraternization is a conspiracy against Austria—whoever participates in it, challenges all of Austria and a cry of outrage is the only conceivable answer, which the peoples of Austria can give to those who participate in such an outrageous assassination attempt on Austria's existence."⁷² On the other hand, this act of naming was gladly picked up by the

68 Jezernik, "The Priest Matija Majar," 48–50.

69 Ibid., 48, 63.

70 *Ukazatel' Russkoï ètnograficheskoi vystavki* (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia Katkov i Ko, 1867), 63–68.

71 Ibid., 73–76; Jezernik, "The Priest Matija Majar," 57–70.

72 "Eine Verbrüderung auf panslavistischer Grundlage ist eine Verschwörung gegen Oesterreich—wer sich an jener betheiligt, fordert ganz Oesterreich heraus und ein Schrei der Entrüstung ist die einzig denkbare Antwort, welche die Völker Oesterreichs Jenen geben können, die sich einem so frevelhaften Attentat an Oesterreichs Existenz betheiligen."

Slovene writer France Jaroslav Štrukelj, who in the aftermath of the Moscow Exhibition made the following call to his compatriots: “Let’s say what the Slavs said of the exhibitions in Moscow: ‘We won’t give away a single shack to the foreigners anymore!’”⁷³ Both the Polish and the Slovenian exhibits influenced debates on national identities and upheld photographs as objects for future reference and re-interpretation.

The Caucasus was, despite its central symbolic capital in Russian nineteenth-century culture, portrayed comparatively poorly. The society’s 1878 volume on the exhibition reveals that, despite the region’s famed diversity, the exhibition included only thirteen mannequins from the Caucasus—most of them representing groups south of the mountain range—while omitting others such as the Ossetians or Chechens from the stage of the Moscow Manege. For the latter, the society included an explanatory footnote that the late arrival of costumes from the Caucasus had made the timely production of mannequins impossible. However, as long as the lack of mannequins was compensated by photographs of the peoples in questions, the exhibition’s organizers were satisfied by their ability to provide scholars and the public with visual aids in the study of the empire’s ethnography.⁷⁴ Indeed, for the Caucasus, photographs and drawings gave the audience a much more comprehensive image of the southern borderlands. More than three hundred pictures, which included views from the Georgian Military Highway or Tiflis (Tbilisi) and two series comprising more than 130 Caucasus “types,” were intended to confront the visitors with a broad overview of the lands along the empire’s southern mountain range and the *inorodtsy* inhabiting them.⁷⁵

To produce and use these photographs, the committee outlined a set of clear rules that everyone participating in the exhibition had to follow. For example, the purpose of the mannequin’s head production and the establishment of a photographic collection required the sitter’s face and profile to be taken.⁷⁶ This requirement and intention to establish a corpus of comparable images was underlined by the exhibition planning committee’s decision to offer a gold medal to anyone providing at least fifty pairs of portraits in a larger format of 22–27 cm in length.⁷⁷ Nizhnii Novgorod based photographer Baptiste

73 Cited in Jezernik, “The Priest Matija Majar,” 70.

74 *Ėtnograficheskaia vystavka 1867 goda*, 29, 45–46.

75 *Ibid.*, 65–67.

76 *Ibid.*, 4.

77 *Ibid.*, 86.

Barrault (B. Barro), who is also one of the few to be named in catalogue and minutes of the 1867 exhibition, is known for informing the organizers about his intention to produce at least fifty portraits and advertise his business with a referral to the received prize after the exhibition.⁷⁸ He and the other photographers interested in contributing were asked to search for “typicality” as the most central feature of the images and to submit their works by January 1, 1867 at the latest.

However, the committee soon realized that they lacked enough photographers for several of the regions on display, and thus turned to local governors, asking them to organize photographic portraits through their clerks.⁷⁹ The Caucasus was one of such regions, and the organizers relied on the viceroy’s financial co-contribution for the acquisition of ethnographic objects⁸⁰ evidenced by the services of the brothers Simonenko from the Moscow-based studio “Caucasus Photography.” After the death of his brother Aleksandr in 1865 (who founded the studio), Pëtr Fëdorovich Simonenko continued to run the business and became one of the many early “Caucasus photographers” who mastered photography with the Caucasus Army.⁸¹ These professional ties to the southern borderlands likely influenced the studio’s name, as was Pëtr Simonenko’s illustrious career as both a photographer and military member. The graduates of the VTO working in the Caucasus Army’s photographic unit, which had been established in 1863, were thus asked to support the collection of topographical and ethnographic data on the region. As a result, the names of those who eventually conducted the assigned works often remain unknown, which is also the case for many of the 1867 exhibition’s Caucasus photographs that carried an imprint of VTO rather than a private studio—with exceptions such as Pëtr Simonenko, who was awarded a silver medal for his contribution.

The All-Russian Ethnographic Exhibition of 1867 is the first example of a large-scale project aimed at creating a public image of the Russian Empire. It also serves as a primary example of such an initiative relying on a photographic survey in both planning and implementation. The produced photographs were considered to be a medium of documentation but were simultaneously a medium

78 Ibid., 91.

79 Ibid., 79–80.

80 Ibid., 37.

81 Shipova, *Moskovskie fotografy*, 322.

of knowledge circulation, actively contributing to the re-imagination of space ready to be co-opted for political purposes. Thereby, the goals of the exhibition and learned societies such as the organizing IOLEAË aimed to promote Russia through “the study of foreign lands can only be a supplement to the study of our own,”⁸² that is, the Russian Empire. This contributed to a new mental appropriation of imperial provinces such as the Caucasus, which had until then been primarily understood as an external Other.

One of outcomes of the exhibition was the creation of the first national photo collection, as contributing photographers were required to donate their works to the newly established Dashkov Museum of Ethnography within the Rumiantsev Museum, Moscow’s first public museum.⁸³ This collection was later expanded through a photographic survey by Torval’d Mitreïter (Torvald Mitreiter, also Mitreyter)—a Danish photographer serving the imperial court⁸⁴—who was commissioned in the 1880s to produce a set of c. 250 photographs of the 1867 mannequins on display in the Dashkov Museum.⁸⁵ The production of such a set of photographs, taken against the very same background, constituted the last step toward the exhibition’s ambition to publicly collect and display imperial space as united in diversity, thereby including also formerly exoticized realms in the borderlands.

82 Address by co-founder Grigorii E. Shchurovskii to an 1867 IOLEAË meeting. Cited in Bradley, “Pictures at an Exhibition: Science, Patriotism, and Civil Society in Imperial Russia,” 941.

83 The collector and amateur ethnographer Vasilii A. Dashkov (1819–1896) had helped out the IOLEAË in the first place by providing it with the necessary funds to proceed with the planning of the exhibition when the society was running short on money. In return, Dashkov not only became a member of the organizing committee but also got guaranteed that the exhibition would be transferred to the Rumiantsev Museum as a new museum of ethnography. Furthermore, his presence in the committee contributed to the exhibition’s primary emphasis on ethnography over physical anthropology (despite a respectable craniological collection of 600 skulls, etc., which was transferred to Bogdanov’s Zoological Museum). Cf. Krivosheina, “Long Way to the Anthropological Exhibition,” 285–286.

84 Mitreïter opened the studio Venskaia fotografiiia in Moscow in 1879 but signed it over to his wife Mariia I. Mitreïter a year later. The studio advertised its services by calling itself “photographer of the Moscow Public and Rumiantsev Museum” (Fotograf Moskovskogo publichnogo i Rumiantsevskogo muzeev). See Shipova, *Moskovskie fotografy*, 247.

85 Manikowska, *Photography and Cultural Heritage*, 25–26; Karina Iu. Solov’eva, “Obrazy narodov Rossiïskoï imperii 1860-kh godov. Po materialam Ètnograficheskoi vystavki 1867 goda,” in *Slaviane Evropy i narody Rossii. K 140-letiiu Pervoi ètnograficheskoi vystavki 1867 goda*, ed. Natal’ia M. Kalashnikova (St. Petersburg: Slaviia, 2008), 60.



Figure 2.1. Torval'd Mitreiter. "A Circassian." New York Public Library.⁸⁶

86 The album *Moskovskii publichnyi i Rumiantsevskii muzei* (NYPL, b11614109, accessed August 28, 2025, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/moskovskii-publichnyi-i-rumiantsovskii-muzei>) gives an insight into the conceptualization and collections of the museum along Mitreiter's photographs. The ethnographic part of the album consists of twelve types from the Russian Empire whereas the Caucasus is represented by a "Circassian man" in traditional attire, standing high above the symbolic river (Terek) with a snow-capped summit rising in the background (fig. 2.1).

Exhibitions and Museums: A Visibility Boost for a Developing Discipline

The exhibition’s transition into an official museum had a lasting impact that extended beyond its two-month run in the Moscow Manege. Upon his first visit to Europe, Iranian shah Nasr-ed-Din toured the continent’s museums and, having left Tehran by travelling north through Astrakhan’, the first collection he viewed was that of the Dashkov Museum of Ethnography in Moscow. For May 21, 1873, the shah’s diary reads:

I went to the Ethnographic Museum, a fine building, in which they have collected wax images of all the different tribes and nationalities subject to Russia, each dressed in its special local costume, so as to look like living men. There I also saw the arms and implements of the savages of America and Africa, which are exhibited as curiosities.⁸⁷

After traveling west through St. Petersburg (with a stop at the Hermitage) and across the entire continent, Nasr-ed-Din Shah returned from his *Tour d’Europe* via land through Tbilisi where he visited again in 1878 during a second trip to Europe. He visited the “Caucasus Museum” and met its director, Gustav Radde, who showed his prominent guest around the collections.⁸⁸ Equally, as much as photography held a special place for Nasr-ed-Din Shah, the “Photographer King,”⁸⁹ the newly established museums in the Russian Empire became internationally renowned landmarks (see fig. 2.2 for a 1898 stereograph by the US-American company Underwood & Underwood) whereas the 1867 exhibition became a permanent collection in Moscow and laid the foundation for a model of educational diffusion of state-sponsored narratives on imperial provinces that was followed-up soon by another organization and institution.

87 James W. Redhouse, *The Diary of H.M. the Shah of Persia during his Tour through Europe in A.D. 1873* (London: John Murray, 1874), 40.

88 Daniel T. Potts, “Pre-modern globalization and the rediscovery of Iranian antiquity,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Archaeology and Globalization*, ed. Tamar Hodos (London: Routledge, 2017), 925–26.

89 See Tahmasbpour, “The Photographer King.” A “chief photographer” was part of the shah’s entourage and in his diary, Nasr-ed-Din describes how photography was integrated into diplomatic practices when he joined the Russian foreign minister Prince Aleksandr M. Gorchakov on a visit to a photographer (Sergei L. Levitskii) to have several negatives taken of them (Redhouse, *The Diary*, 63), and how he exchanged portrait photographs with Queen Victoria upon his visit to Windsor (*ibid.*, 203).



Figure 2.2. “The Rumiantsev Museum, Moscow, Russia.” Library of Congress.

Bogdanov himself immediately developed two new projects as soon as the 1867 exhibition was finished. Both were again conceptualized as exhibitions which became newly established museums, making up for the previous lack of public museums of natural history and public interest in them.⁹⁰ In the summer months of 1872, Moscow became the site for the Polytechnical Exhibition—an event resulting from IOLEAË’s plan to exhibit applied science and thereby build the foundation of a new museum attracting visitors interested in technology and industry, for which planning of exhibition and museum ran in parallel from the very beginning of the project.⁹¹ The ambition to popularize science and at the same time foster patriotic sentiments was supported by the state and relied on knowledge of a broad variety of organizations beyond the IOLEAË’s capacities. The Association for the Dissemination of Technical Knowledge (*Obshchestvo rasprostraneniia tekhnicheskikh znaniĭ*) was in charge of the photography display where the latest progress of photographic technologies was fully integrated into an all-encompassing display of the mining, steel, and railway industries.⁹² The 1872 exhibition furthermore had a decisive influence on the development of anthropology in the Russian Empire when, despite the discipline being represented only in the Turkestan section, Bogdanov’s enthusiasm and

90 The first public museum in the city of Moscow was established only in 1862 when the Rumiantsev Museum was transferred from St. Petersburg to Moscow. See Krivosheina, “Long Way to the Anthropological Exhibition,” 277.

91 Joseph Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia. Science, Patriotism, and Civil Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 142–168.

92 *Ibid.*, 154–156.

professionalism attracted the attention of entrepreneur Karl von Meck, who donated twenty-five thousand rubles to IOLEAË—a substantial sum which funded teaching posts in anthropology at the University of Moscow.⁹³ The Caucasus, just like Turkestan, was represented in an individual pavilion at the Polytechnical Exhibition. The section was curated by Gustav Radde, who had established the “Caucasus Museum” in Tbilisi in 1865 and made ample use of photography for the representation of the Caucasus in Moscow. He had received a budget of fifteen hundred rubles for acquiring ethnographic objects and producing 150 photographs, predominantly of “old churches and other architectural monuments from Christian and Mohammedan times,” from Governor-General Michael Nikolaevich and put together a display that ended up in Radde’s museum and the World’s Fair in Vienna the following year.⁹⁴

Bogdanov’s second project came out of his conviction that the 1867 exhibition had fulfilled the ambition to capture the Russian Empire’s ethnographic dimension, but he was determined to design an equally ambitious anthropological display. The Moscow Anthropological Exhibition of 1879 was therefore meant to address the anthropological shortcomings and pave the way for a chair of anthropology at the University of Moscow. Bogdanov’s threefold goals for the exhibition were contributing to the development of anthropology as a scientific discipline, establishing an Anthropological Museum with a chair of anthropology at Moscow University and, finally, popularizing anthropology among the public.⁹⁵ The society therefore spent more than eighteen thousand rubles on expeditionary equipment to travel across the empire, from the northern provinces to the Caucasus and from the Baltics to the Ural, providing as many as fifty scholars with travel and excavation subsidies for the exhibition.⁹⁶ Unlike with the 1867 exhibition, Bogdanov managed to mostly avoid its political usurpation and furthermore attracted several of the most prominent names in European anthropology, including Paul Broca, to join him in the Moscow Manege. Anuchin also returned from his studies abroad in time to partake in the exhibition, which

93 Anatolii P. Bogdanov, *Kratkii obzor Antropologicheskoi vystavki 1879 g.* (Moscow: Tipografia M. N. Lavrova, 1879), 3; Mikhail I. Brodovskii, *Katalog Turkestanskogo otdela Politekhicheskoi vystavki* (Moscow: Universitetskaiia tipografia, 1872); Krivosheina, “Long Way to the Anthropological Exhibition,” 288.

94 Annegret Plontke-Lüning, “Gustav Radde und die kaukasische Archäologie,” *Phasis* 18 (2015): 221. For a description of the photography collection in the Caucasus Museum, see Gustav Radde, ed., *Kollektsii Kavkazskago muzeia*, vol. 5 (Arkhologiiia) (Tiflis: Tipografia Kantseliarii Glavnonachal’stvuiushchago grazhdanskoiu chastiiu na Kavkazě, 1902), 218–231.

95 Bogdanov, *Kratkii obzor Antropologicheskoi vystavki 1879 g.*, 3–4.

96 *Ibid.*, 5.

would later be affiliated to his chair as its museum. Clear parallels can be drawn between the two events: firstly, in their aftermath, as the 1879 exhibition was donated to the University of Moscow and eventually became its Museum of Anthropology; and secondly, in the central role photography played in both displays. The Anthropological Exhibition was structured around six sections, one of which was dedicated to photography and was informed by ethnographer and demographer of Central Asia Mikhail M. Virskii.⁹⁷

Visuality was key for all the exhibition's different sections, beyond the already proven and established dioramas with mannequins of selected ethnic groups within and outside the borders of the Russian Empire. Visual items were additionally seen as tools to support the presentation of ancient history, through large paintings of Egyptian pharaohs, and items of material culture, exemplified by photographs of tenth-century silver coins from the Vladimirian Rus'.⁹⁸ The accentuated significance of the photographic display within a separate section was furthermore aligned with the increasing importance of photography as a methodological tool of both research and knowledge circulation within the international sphere of academic exchange. The "Slavic extravaganza of 1867"⁹⁹ was mostly overcome, although the prominent display of Bulgarians and Montenegrins on separate boards with forty-two respectively twenty-nine photographs of these groups must be interpreted in that light and against the backdrop of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877/1878 and the subsequent formation of an autonomous Bulgarian principality and an independent Montenegrin state. Given the heated phase of the "Great Game" in Central Asia and the latest territorial acquisitions by the Russian state in the region, a certain emphasis on the Uzbek city of Samarqand and its population also carried a political note (fig. 2.3). Other than that, the photographic section largely supported the exhibition's overall ambition to explore universal evolutionism, as formulated in its goal to "make the public acquainted with types of different currently existing and already extinct tribes and peoples, predominantly inhabiting the Russian Empire."¹⁰⁰ The photographs were considered to "capture racial and tribal particularities," and were taken by some of the most renowned photographers in Russia

97 The other five sections addressed geology and paleontology (Aleksandr A. Tikhomirov and Nikolai Iu. Zograf), prehistoric antiquities (Dmitrii N. Anuchin), craniology (Anatolii P. Bogdanov), medical anthropology (Egor A. Pokrovskii), and ethnography (Elpidifor V. Barsov). Cf. Anatolii P. Bogdanov, *Antropologicheskaia vystavka 1879 goda*, vol. 3/2 (Opisanie predmetov vystavki) (Moscow: Tipografiia M.N. Lavrova, 1879–1880).

98 Bogdanov, *Kratkii obzor Antropologicheskoi vystavki 1879 g.*, 15–17.

99 Knight, "The Empire on Display," 26.

100 Bogdanov, *Antropologicheskaia vystavka 1879 goda*, 4:1.

at that time, for instance by Mikhail M. Panov,¹⁰¹ Lidiia K. Poltoratskaia,¹⁰² and William Carrick.¹⁰³ They boasted not only types and views from Southeastern Europe, “the peoples of Turkey,” and more than one hundred images from Victoria, Australia, but an extensive portrayal of a broad variety of ethnic groups living under the tsar’s rule.¹⁰⁴



Figure 2.3. Diorama of a “Samarqand Group.” *Vidy antropologicheskoi vystavki v Moskve 1879 g.*, no. 10.

The Caucasus was represented through 116 photographs which were divided into nine categories of the section “Views and Types of the Kuban Oblast.” 108

101 Shipova, *Moskovskie fotografy*, 287.

102 Natal’ia P. Matkhanova and Elena V. Barkhatova, “Ee prevoskhoditel’stvo Fotograf,” *Nauka iz pervykh ruk* 26, no. 2 (2009): 62–75.

103 Elena Barkhatova, “The Russian Fate of the Scotchman William Carrick,” in *Russkie fotografy XIX veka. Vil’iam Karrik. Kartiny russkoĭ zhizni / Russian XIX Century Photographers. William Carrick. Scenes of Russian Life*, ed. Elena A. Glushkova et al. (St. Petersburg: Rosfoto, 2010), 39–62, 62.

104 Bogdanov, *Antropologicheskaiia vystavka 1879 goda*, 4:1.

of them depict men and women of all ages from the Kabardian, Abazin, Nogai, Karachai, Bzhedug, Abzakh, Temirgoy, and Shapsug peoples, while the ninth category subsumes “different Caucasus tribes” and includes portraits of Ossetians and those from the Southern Caucasus. The choice of producing and exhibiting images of elders and middle-aged generations, as well as of young adults and children, resulted in an average age of the sitters of around 30 across all categories. The other eight images confronted the audience with “localities which are more or less of anthropological interest”¹⁰⁵ and included views of a Karachai mill or an Imeretian bathhouse. In the description of the photographic section, the organizers thereby noted that the photographers had successfully overcome all difficulties regarding skepticism of images prevailing among the Muslim sitters when producing portrait series of the Qasim Tatars inhabiting the lands between the Central Russian and Volga uplands.¹⁰⁶ This theoretical obstacle that the photographers in service of the Russian Empire also likely faced when compiling the images for the exhibition’s part on the Caucasus remained an issue for scholars traveling the region aiming to compile (visual) data of the region’s population.¹⁰⁷

The exhibition was a success, with more than eighty thousand visitors flocking to the Manege between April and August 1879 thereby giving the young discipline a substantial visibility boost.¹⁰⁸ The integration of international scholars who actively participated in the exhibition by presenting reports at a symposium furthermore gave the event a universal authority for the public and scholarly community while invited academics, like the Bohemian archaeologist Heinrich (Jindřich) Wankel, praised the exhibition when writing their reviews for Western European bulletins.¹⁰⁹ A catalogue of the exhibition with twenty-four photographs but without accompanying text additionally served as an object of knowledge circulation, which was solely based on the images’ visual power brought by visitors and participants returning from Moscow.¹¹⁰ Thereby, as Mogilner puts it, the circle of Russian anthropologists finally managed to

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid., 4.

107 “Beaucoup d’individus se refusent à toute mensuration anthropométrique ou n’acceptent pas d’être photographiés; chez la plupart enfin ces manœuvres, étranges assurément pour eux, excitent leur méfiance et peuvent avoir des conséquences assez graves pour compromettre la sécurité de l’opérateur.” Chantre, *Recherches anthropologiques*, 1:xxxv.

108 Krivosheina, “Long Way to the Anthropological Exhibition,” 291–292.

109 Cf. for instance Heinrich Wankel, “Anthropologische Ausstellung in Moskau,” *Mittheilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 8 (1879): 185–187.

110 Cf. for instance Petr Kostrhun and Karel Sklenář, “Antropologická výstava v Moskvě 1879. Katalog fotografií z pozůstalosti J. Wankla a K. Absolona,” *Acta Musei Moraviae, Scientiae sociales* 95, no. 2 (2010): 113–139.

postulate “their own agenda of anthropological study of the Russian empire as a modernizing undertaking in the country”¹¹¹ and strongly relied on visuality when inscribing its vision into the discipline’s development when diffusing the vision to other parts of the continent.

The Multi-Medial Circulation and Popularization of Type Photography

The strong integration of photography into ethnographic-anthropological practices between the Moscow exhibitions of 1867 and 1879 correlated to a global trend of discussions regarding image production standardization within a scientific framework, as well as the necessity of distinguishing between “ethnographic” and “anthropological” photography. Just like with the division of different sections at the 1867 exhibition in Moscow, the former thereby refers to exhibiting people in the context of their lifestyles while the latter took individuals out of this context and showed them in a standardized setting where the background and the chosen poses would be identical for the entire set of produced images.¹¹² Through the latter, anthropologists furthermore pursued the goal of objectifying the relationship between themselves as scientists and the “objects” of their study. However, this ambition did not necessarily translate into an analytical primacy of the image in anthropological publications where the photographs often remained illustrative rather serving as empirical evidence.¹¹³ The number of such images in circulation would still constantly grow, however, since the involved anthropologists understood the dual utility of the photograph—not only as a tool of scientific understanding but also as a possibility to engage with a non-scholarly audience and transmit knowledge to the public. Long before becoming occupied with the prehistory of the Caucasus, the above-named Rudolf Virchow was one the pioneers in this endeavor and asked his colleagues to find ways to encourage natural scientists to enter into closer relationships with the public.¹¹⁴ A key way to achieve this was establishing

111 Mogilner, *Homo Imperii*, 31.

112 Christian Joschke, “Beyond Objectivity. Anthropometric Photography and Visual Culture,” in *The Invention of Race. Scientific and Popular Representations*, ed. Nicolas Bancel, Thomas David, and Dominic Thomas (New York: Routledge, 2014), 281–283.

113 *Ibid.*, 284–286.

114 Rudolf Virchow, *Ueber die nationale Entwicklung und Bedeutung der Naturwissenschaften. Rede gehalten in der zweiten allgemeinen Sitzung der Versammlung deutscher Naturforscher und Aerzte zu Hannover am 20. September 1865* (Berlin: August Hirschwald, 1865), 28.

a visual culture that supported the wide circulation of photography, serving both the scientific community and a general audience increasingly receptive to a visual exposure of anthropological and ethnological knowledge.

The epitome of this ambition to standardize these images were anthropometric photographs which functioned as tools of colonial classification and social categorization and followed a contemporary argument that the produced “composites refuted nominalist approaches to the human sciences, demonstrating with certainty the reality of distinct racial types” which eventually “amounted to an essentialist physical anthropology of race.”¹¹⁵ The idea that one could make connections between physical appearances and mental characteristics constituted the basis for nineteenth-century physical anthropologists’ interest in measuring people, or anthropometry,¹¹⁶ and extends to the theories suggested by the German naturalist-anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840) in his 1775 *De generis humani varietate nativa* (On the natural variety of mankind), in which he argued that there were five varieties (later called “races”) of mankind whose characteristics were encoded in their physical features rather than in social characteristics. Blumenbach is also the reason why the Caucasus held a special place within Western European anthropological circles and was prominently represented in almost any nineteenth-century survey¹¹⁷ that systematized—and thereby asserted power relations and control over—the peoples of the world. In his works, Blumenbach coined the term “Caucasian variety” and described it as the primeval one, which, in the second half of the nineteenth century when evolutionary theory permeated every sphere of anthropology, led to scholars ranking it highest in an imaginary hierarchy of mankind. Photography

115 Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39 (1986): 51.

116 For more information on the history of early anthropological-anthropometrical photography, see Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography & Exhibitions. Representations of the ‘Native’ and the Making of European Identities* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), 38–72.

117 See, for instance, Gustav Fritsch’s *Akt Studien von Rasse-Typen*, which according to Joschke (“Beyond Objectivity,” 287), includes photos of the “Caucasian race” taken in 1874 with poses that “in no way confirm to the criteria constitutive of anthropometric photography” but are “reminiscent of artistic anatomy,” or the brother Dammann’s *Ethnologischer Atlas sämtlicher Menschen-Racen in Photographien von C. & F. W. Dammann* (Hamburg: Otto Meissner, 1876). The latter’s eight-image plate on the “peoples of the Caucasus” however also includes contemporary criticism of the idea that Blumenbach’s “Caucasian variety” would constitute a primeval variety (“Wenn wir aber von Race im eigentlichen Sinne des Wortes sprechen wollen, d.h. von der unabänderlichen Wiederholung einer bestimmten Form der typischen Urart durch Jahrhunderte und Jahrtausende hindurch, so müssen wir in Hinsicht auf sehr bedeutende Variationen jener Völker den Ausdruck unhaltbar finden.” See Gustav Radde, *Vier Vorträge über den Kaukasus. Gehalten im Winter 1873/74 in den größeren Städten Deutschlands* (Gotha: Justus Perthes, 1874), 58).

was thereby an important tool in facilitating the racialization of anthropology. The long-term effects of this practice led to images being circulated not only within a globalizing scholarly community but also touching a nerve of widespread social curiosity about the “Other.”

The history of race is particularly complex in the case of the Russian Empire, and has since been subject to a substantial amount of studies, particularly in the recent years.¹¹⁸ Scholars have agreed that the previous notion of race being a marginal factor for the study of Russian intellectual traditions is outdated, but that both practices and explicit vocabularies of race were more prevalent than once thought.¹¹⁹ Vera Tolz¹²⁰ has thereby argued that Russia’s “imperial context has shaped the ways in which Russian thinkers engaged with the notion of race” which, similar to the contemporary heterogeneous Western discourse resulted in a dynamic and multilateral discourse. Within this context of a heterogeneous contiguous empire undergoing substantial reforms after the 1860s and into the following century, Russian anthropologists perceived, debated, and either applied or discarded different European racial theories in their ambition in understanding human diversity within the Russian Empire. While Anuchin’s “liberal” school of anthropology would use the concepts of “race” and “type” in a primarily descriptive way rather than in creating biologically determined hierarchies among the empire’s peoples, other discourses at the end of the century readily picked up on the concept of race as a tool to describe imperial diversity, which led to a more racially deterministic framework than in previous decades. This development stood in close relationship with perceived successes and failures of tsarist policies that sought to integrate minorities into the imperial state.

118 See, for instance, the discussion forums in *Slavic Review* 61, no. 1 (2002): 1–65, and *Slavic Review* 80, no. 2 (2021): 203–340; Eugene M. Avrutin, “Racial Categories and the Politics of (Jewish) Difference in Late Imperial Russia,” *Kritika* 8, no. 1 (2007): 13–40; Karl Hall (Khall), “‘Rasovye priznaki koreniatsia gluzhbe v prirode chelovecheskogo organizma’: neulovimoe poniatie rasy v Rossiiskoi imperii,” in *‘Poniatiiia o Rossii’: K istoricheskoi semantike imperskogo perioda*, vol. 2, ed. Aleksei I. Miller, Denis A. Sdvizhkov, and Ingrid Schierle (Shirle) (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2012), 194–258; Mogilner, *Homo Imperii*; David Rainbow, ed., *Ideologies of Race. Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context* (Montreal et al.: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019); Vera Tolz (Tol’ts), “Diskursy o rase: imperskaia Rossiia i ‘Zapad’ v sravnenii,” in *‘Poniatiiia o Rossii’: K istoricheskoi semantike imperskogo perioda*, vol. 2, ed. Aleksei I. Miller, Denis A. Sdvizhkov, and Ingrid Schierle (Shirle) (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2012), 145–193.

119 David Rainbow, “Race as Ideology: An Approach,” in *Ideologies of Race. Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context*, ed. David Rainbow (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019), 10.

120 Vera Tolz, “Discourses of Race in Imperial Russia (1830–1914),” in *The Invention of Race. Scientific and Popular Representations*, ed. Nicolas Bancel, Thomas David, and Dominic Thomas (New York: Routledge, 2014), 142.

Drawing on the work of Mogilner, Tolz, however, concludes that for this aim and “despite all the examples of the engagement of Russian thinkers with the concept of race, the application of race theories was not the most influential way.”¹²¹

The increasing academic exchange of the late nineteenth century found expression in a thriving scene of journals within and beyond imperial logistics and borders, resulting in a sphere of global exchange that, for instance, reviewed and reproduced Ivanovskii’s work in the *American Anthropologist*.¹²² Furthermore, Anuchin’s obituary in the same journal celebrated him as “a prominent figure in the anthropology not only in Russia but of the world, [...] occupying a position comparable to that of Boas in America.”¹²³ Russian anthropological circles were also eager to establish their own journals in the second half of the nineteenth century to target a national audience in Russian language publications. After the 1879 Anthropological Exhibition, IOLEAË concentrated on its publishing activities for which of its eight divisions and six commissions, nine published their own proceedings and four established their own scholarly journals.¹²⁴ When the technological prerequisites allowed for the integration of printed reproductions of photographs, the editors of many anthropological journal editors gladly incorporated them. Ongoing debates about the concept of race and related processes of racialization of ethnic groups thereby melded with photographic representations that facilitated the construction of images of difference. One of the leading platforms for visual anthropology in the Russian Empire was the *Russian Anthropological Journal* (*Russkii antropologicheskii zhurnal*, RAZh) which was established by the Moscow division of anthropology from the financial support of the imperial Ministry of Education, edited by Ivanovskii, and issued the first number in 1900. RAZh was produced and disseminated on a regular quarterly schedule until 1906, when it occasionally disappeared and returned in biannual form due to fires, financial problems, and the 1917 revolutions. In 1924, it again became a regular publication until 1929. Despite this turbulent early history, the journal became the central mouthpiece for Moscow’s “liberal anthropology” and not only paved the way for the discipline’s professionalization across the empire’s provinces by bringing and distributing direct instructions that adhered

121 Ibid., 136–141.

122 Ales Hrdlicka, “Physical Anthropology of Russia. By A. A. Ivanovskij,” *American Anthropologist* 9, no. 2 (1907): 400–403.

123 Eugene A. Golomshtok, “Anthropological Notes,” *American Anthropologist* 26, no. 1 (1924): 136.

124 Bradley, *Voluntary Associations*, 165.

to the school’s idea of an “empire of knowledge” into wider circulation but it also reached a wider educated public beyond strictly scholarly circles.¹²⁵

During its last imperial years, *RAZh* prominently covered the Caucasus in twenty-five articles by twelve different authors, with topics ranging from physical anthropology of various peoples living in Dagestan to the Assyrians living in the south of the Russian Empire.¹²⁶ The most prolific contributors were Konstantin M. Kurdov (1876–1913) with seven articles, particularly on Jewish life in the Caucasus, as well as Aleksandre Javakhishvili (1875–1973), a Georgian geographer and anthropologist from Gori who published under his russified name Aleksandr N. Dzhavakhov, and Samuil A. Väisenberg (Samuel Weissenberg, 1867–1928) with four articles each. The latter questioned the idea of a specific, homogeneous Jewish type for which he used photography as a tool to unmask this as an unsubstantiated preconception among his respondents.¹²⁷ Kurdov and Javakhishvili also contributed to the study of Jews in the Caucasus, thereby empirically falsifying claims of physiognomic differences between the Jewish and non-Jewish populations in the region, through the use of anthropometric measurements. Despite the unity in their analyses, at least Kurdov diluted his own findings by concluding two of his articles—in 1905 and 1912—with a preconditioned statement contradicting his own results on how an experienced eye would always recognize a Mountain Jew, as they’d sport a somehow specific *habitus* that could not be captured with an instrument or expressed in words.¹²⁸

125 Marina Mogilner, “Russian Physical Anthropology of the Nineteenth-Early Twentieth Centuries: Imperial Race, Colonial Other, Degenerate Types, and the Russian Racial Body,” in *Empire Speaks Out. Languages of Rationalization and Self-Description in the Russian Empire*, ed. Ilya Gerasimov, Jan Kusber, and Alexander Semyonov (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 164–165.

126 A. A. Arutinov, “K antropologii äisorov,” *Russkii antropologicheskii zhurnal* 12, no. 4 (1902): 88–100; Konstantin M. Kurdov, “K antropologii lezgin. Kiurincy,” *Russkii antropologicheskii zhurnal* 7–8, no. 3–4 (1901): 165–176; P. F. Sviderskii, “K antropologii archintsev,” *Russkii antropologicheskii zhurnal* 35–36, no. 3–4 (1913): 32–44.

127 See Samuil Väisenberg, “Kavkazskie evrei v antropologicheskom otnoshenii,” *Russkii antropologicheskii zhurnal* 30–31, no. 2–3 (1912): 137–151; *ibid.* (Samuel Weissenberg), *Die südrussischen Juden. Eine anthropometrische Studie mit Berücksichtigung der allgemeinen Entwicklungsgesetze* (Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg und Sohn, 1895), 108–113.

128 “[. . .] Opytnyi glaz vseгда uznaet gorskago evreia i otlichit ego kak ot ego zapadnogo sorodicha, tak i ot gortsa; sledovatel’no, habitus’u gorskago evreia prisushche chto-to svoje samostoiatel’noe, chego nel’zia ni ulovit’ instrumentom, ni vyrazit’ slovom, no chto pozvoliaet’ tol’ko glazu otlichit’ ego sredi drugikh narodnostei.” For this equally worded conclusion, see Konstantin M. Kurdov, “Gorskie evrei Dagestana,” *Russkii antropologicheskii zhurnal* 23–24, no. 3–4 (1905): 87; *ibid.*, “Gorskie evrei Shemakhinskago uezda, Bakinskoï gubernii,” *Russkii antropologicheskii zhurnal* 30–31, no. 2–3 (1912): 99.

What connected these scholars' studies beyond the epistemic and methodological uncertainties of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century (Russian) anthropology was that despite them embracing photography as both an important tool and a welcome means of illustration, it did not translate into a coherent visual language that underscored their main anthropometric arguments. Within a subdiscipline that aimed to establish standardized patterns of visual characteristics of the human body, the forty-one reproduced photos in Kurdov's contributions as well as the thirty-nine equivalents in the articles of Javakhishvili hardly contributed to a simultaneous standardization in a visual methodology of anthropometric studies. Especially the latter's assortment of images of groups and individuals alike shows a broad variety of different poses and were only occasionally based on the contemporary methodological approach to couple front and side profile portraits of the same sitter toward the production of a "type photograph." Meanwhile, those portrayed can be seen wearing different attires, from full-fledged national costumes in the center of the viewers' attention to simple clothing outside the main focus of the photograph.¹²⁹ In their pictorial versatility, these images however underscore what Mogilner¹³⁰ describes as Javakhishvili's "anticolonial academic and political agenda" of an anthropology of Georgia that sought to navigate between a nationalized disciplinary approach and an acceptance of empire as a superior framework of reference—an ambivalence that must be taken into account when considering photographic production and selection in early twentieth century Russian anthropological journals.

As inconsistent as the involved anthropologists were in their diverse use of photography in underscoring their systematic anthropometric work through illustrations, they contributed to establishing the "type photograph" in Russian scientific discourses, from where they found their way into the public sphere. These images had the main purpose of illustrating the "typical" characteristics of a racial group, which—despite the initial lack of a solid idea of what a "racial type" actually concretely constituted or how this typicality could ideally be captured through photography in the nineteenth century—led to debates about anthropological methodology and a profusion of type photographs by the end of the century.¹³¹ By then, the type photograph had become a global

129 See the images in Aleksandr N. Dzhavakhov, "K antropologii Gruzii. Gruziny Kakhetii," *Russkii antropologicheskii zhurnal* 27–28, no. 3–4 (1907): 127–167; *ibid.*, "K antropologii Gruzii. Gruziny Gurii," *Russkii antropologicheskii zhurnal* 30–31, no. 2–3 (1912): 51–86; *ibid.*, "K antropologii Gruzii. Gruziny Mingrelii," *Russkii antropologicheskii zhurnal* 33–34, no. 1–2 (1913): 99–161.

130 Mogilner, *Homo Imperii*, 208–211.

131 See Edwards, "Photographic 'types'."

phenomenon, which addressed the curiosity of the unknown and the allegedly exotic “Other,” whereas its popularization was facilitated by new modes of innovation and commerce. It was thereby not exclusively scholars showing interest in purchasing type photographs, but many such images were widely available to tourists looking for visual souvenirs for their private collections in the local photography shops. This transition from public production to private collection was facilitated by two mid- to late nineteenth-century media innovations, namely the introduction of the *carte de visite* and of the picture postcard.

Cartes de visite appeared in the late 1850s and played a significant role in the popularization of photography, as these photo cards with a standardized 6 × 10 cm format enabled customers to obtain affordable and portable images, while photographers and printing businesses anticipated a boom in the mass market. Furthermore, *cartes de visite* soon became status tokens with ritualized roles as items of social exchange that allowed for circulation much wider than immediate networks of friends and co-workers.¹³² These photo cards thereby simultaneously became commodities and forms of representation, which included a wide range of thematic subjects. However, representations of ethnic “types” were particularly successful on the market, as *cartes de visite* signified collectability and uniformity correlating to ideas of photographic types capturing the essence of the portrayed group. As the public fascination with the exotic grew in the 1860s and 1870s, the market for collectible type photographs spiked and European customers became particularly interested in images of peasants and the many ethnic groups living in the Russian Empire. Both travelling photographers coming to the Caucasus and local photographers quickly discovered the economic potential of such type *cartes*, meaning that the lines between scientific and commercial interests became blurry in these early days of anthropological-ethnographic photography and translated into a wide range of subjects in collections of *cartes de visite* from the Caucasus. Quite like the diverse array of visual representations presented in contemporary academic journals, these collections included photo cards with anthropometric photographs, pseudo-ethnographic scenes, staged studio portraits with allegedly traditional, nationalized props and attire, and even images of nineteenth-century anthropologists working in the region, and are the expression of an increasing circulation and stabilization of typecast knowledge about ethnic groups living in the region.¹³³

132 Barkhatova, “The Russian Fate of the Scotchman William Carrick,” 44–45; Graham-Brown, *Images of Women*, 93–94; Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity*, 107–119.

133 Other than the many loosely to not at all connected pictorial visiting cards collections in archives and libraries, see Gründig, *Der Shah in der Schachtel*, 185–190 on the German

Shortly after the introduction of *cartes de visite*, the public was exposed to another form of visual mass media that took the world by storm. By the end of the nineteenth century, the picture postcard was produced in numbers dwarfing any other visual product allowing images to achieve new dimensions of mass distribution.¹³⁴ A complex medium on its own that became a prominent platform for expressing both textual and visual markers of social, religious, imperial, regional, local, and ethnic representation, it had an enormous influence on the creation of new and on the consolidation of already existing viscourses. Within the broad variety of subjects that found their way onto the front side of picture postcards, discussed type photographs as expressions of popularized ethnography and anthropology became popular choices for representing many regions, especially the Caucasus. These series of type postcards consisted of dozens of different images,¹³⁵ were printed in the Russian Empire and abroad,¹³⁶ and were mostly captioned bilingually (predominantly Russian and French but there was also a series in circulation that gave the second caption in Esperanto as “Kaŭkazaj tipoj”), which catered to the contemporary elite in the Russian Empire and tourists looking for souvenirs to send or bring back home. The pictorial language of

botanist Carl Haussknecht’s collection of types in form of *cartes de visite* from the Caucasus; or UCLA’s Biomed Manuscript Collection (no. 80) for an 1886 portrait of Rudolf Virchow among forty-eight other *cartes de visite* of European medical scientists and physicians in form of a collective album.

134 On the well-researched history of the picture postcard see, among the many, Mariia Ia. Chapkina, *Khudozhestvennaia otkrytka. K stoletiiu otkrytki v Rossii* (Moscow: Galart, 1993); Rowley, *Open Letters*; the contributions in “Zeigen, grüßen, senden. Aspekte der fotografisch illustrierten Postkarte,” ed. Timm Starl and Eva Tropper, special issue, *Fotogeschichte* 118 (2010). Rowley (*Open Letters*, 19–31) elaborates on the “postcard explosion” that also took place in Russia by the 1880s and the introduction of rotary presses which made the inclusion of pictures in print products the norm. From the introduction of the first postcard in Austria to 1869 to the turn of the century, the number of postcards handled by the International Postal Union had grown to 2.8 billion (*ibid.*, 22)—a trend that also caught on in the Russian Empire

135 See Taus Makhacheva, *Types du Caucase* (Paris: Onestar Press, 2014) for a collected overview of such a series.

136 A large number of picture postcards from the Caucasus were printed by the Stockholm-based publishing firm Granberg on the one hand and the Moscow-based Scherer, Nabholz & Co. Smaller locally rooted postcard manufacturers were however dispersed all over the empire, from Astrakhan’ to Chita and from Riga to Tbilisi, whereas the larger firms also relied on these local producers when it came to printing postcards with views from the imperial peripheries. For many of the photographers from the Caucasus such as Grigorii I. Raev or Dmitrii I. Ermakov, the Swedish firm Granberg was the first step into the world of printing picture postcards, also because the costs of printing them abroad were lower. By the beginning of the twentieth century, around fifty publishers both within the empire and abroad had picture postcards from the Caucasus in their portfolio (see Boglachëv, *Pervye fotografy Kavkaza*, 309–311; Rowley, *Open Letters*, 28–29).

these postcards is hardly different from what was in circulation already by the works of contemporary anthropologists or commercial photographers producing such types for *cartes de visite* a couple of decades earlier. These Caucasus type postcards reproduced a discourse of colonial exoticization through the essentialization of ethnic groups along their allegedly typical physiognomy or environments. Such postcards then were frequently integrated into private collections in the form of albums, often titled “Types of the Caucasus,”¹³⁷ making them an item of public mass diffusion and a private collector’s item at the same time.



Figure 2.4. Postcard Series “Types of the Caucasus.” National Museum of History of Azerbaijan.

137 See, for example, fig. 2.4 or collector’s albums by suggestive titles such as *Typy Kavkaza* (Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Muzei, I VI 14235). On collecting postcards in albums, see Eva Tropper, “Praktiken im Postkartenalbum. Spuren sozialer Netzwerke, biografische Narration und Wissensorganisation,” *Fotogeschichte* 161 (2021): 43–56.

Conclusions

Over the course of the second half of the long nineteenth century, a broad variety of ethnographic and anthropological photographs from the Caucasus was produced and widely circulated, which allowed an ever-growing audience to become familiar with imaginations of space and “typicality” in the empire’s southern borderlands. An increasingly institutionalizing academia played a vital role in this production and diffusion of Caucasus images, as Russian anthropologists had embraced photography by the 1860s within a framework of state surveying, collecting, and exhibiting their provinces. Moscow’s 1867 All-Russian Ethnographic Exhibition and 1879 Anthropological Exhibition were both strongly centered on visuality and contributed to the inscription of visions of the Caucasus and photography as a medium into public awareness. Around these events, the introduction of *carte de visite* and picture postcards provided a new platform that brought the quantity of circulating anthropological-ethnographic motifs from the Caucasus to a new level. However, the discourses presented at exhibitions and visual media were far from being unified but correlated to a complex network of scholarly approaches, an ambivalence of nationalizing visions within a framework that understood the empire as a superior framework of reference, and colonial exoticization and related commercial interests. Despite the occasional attempt to establish clear rules, the visual language within anthropological-ethnographic photography from the Caucasus remained incoherent throughout the remaining decades of imperial rule and oscillated between a vision of imperial space as united in diversity and ideas of exotic otherness. Staged across a broad variety of events and publication formats, the photograph itself thereby remained an autonomous object insofar as it was dependent on the narrative framing that came with the image but the global excitement for visual media helped popularize ethnographic-anthropological knowledge about the Caucasus.

CHAPTER 3

The State on the Stage. Visual Self-Representations of Progress and Power at World's Fairs

The technological progress of photography and the continued success of exhibitions led to a wave of such events accompanying the advent of photography, which became an omnipresent mass medium by the turn of the century. Photographic societies were established in the cities of the Russian Empire, and a growing number of amateur photographers sought to exhibit the results of their newly acquired passion. By the 1890s, ethnographic-anthropological knowledge was also visualized at regional branch exhibitions in separate photography sections,¹ while archaeologists strongly relied on photography to present their findings in their sections at these exhibitions.² The visualization of science increasingly permeated the cities in the empire's more peripheral provinces for which debates on the image of regions such as Central Asia, Siberia, and the Caucasus, to the formation of which a photographic vision along a scientific certificate of authenticity played a central role, consolidated also in the public imagination outside of St. Petersburg and Moscow.

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- 1 At the 1896 Latvian Ethnographic Exhibition in Riga for instance, the different Baltic districts (*uezdy*) were put on display in separate groups of photographs. To give an example, domestic life on the islands of Oesel and Mohn (Saaremaa and Muhu) was brought to the interested viewer by sixty photos and twenty chromolithographs. Cf. *Catalog der estnischen ethnographischen Sammlung auf der Ausstellung des X. archäologischen Congresses zu Riga 1896* (Dorpat: C. Mattiesen, 1896), 19; *Katalog latyšshkoï ètnograficheskoï vystavki ustroennoï po sluchaiu X. arkheologicheskago s'ezda v g. Rige v 1896 g.* (Riga: Kal'nin i Deichman, 1896), 35.
 - 2 *Katalog der Ausstellung zum X. archäologischen Kongress in Riga 1896* (Riga: W. F. Häcker, 1896).

Nineteenth-century exhibitions, however, were not exclusively domestic platforms, and neither did the organizers have to rely solely on a homegrown audience. In a period when almost everything was put on display, it was in the state's interest to present itself in a favorable light on an international stage and the world's fairs, which had started the exposition boom in the first place and had such a significant influence on the practice of organizing exhibitions, as seen at the 1851 London Fair and its impression on Bogdanov, became the ideal platform for such an endeavor. These exhibitions furthermore established new quantities of visitors, with the *Exposition Universelle* of 1900 attracting more than 50 million people in Paris.³ At the world's fairs, the two strands of photography and anthropology-ethnography once again came together, helping to build the foundation of a practice that mostly supported—but sometimes also undermined—the contemporary colonial gaze in representations of peoples living outside the national heartlands of the involved empires.⁴ As widely as the world's fairs were conceptualized, few parts of the exhibitions would become as popular as the displays of peoples from the imperial colonies and other “exotic” countries. Within these displays, the organizing Western European countries were able to once again stage representations based on ideas of the colonized peoples' primitiveness or backwardness—representations that did not necessarily differ from what Edward Said has analyzed in *Orientalism* (1978) along the lines of Western European literature and travelogues but which now confronted the audience with the unrestrained power of the visual.

Beyond being platforms for the representations of the “Other,” world's fairs, however, also constituted opportunities for countries to promote a self-image that they wished to convey to a global audience. According to Paul Greenhalgh, it was especially “imperial achievement [that] was celebrated to the full at international exhibitions,” whereas “the notion of empire at the exhibitions was not linked so much with feudal domination as with scientific and economic progress.”⁵ Timothy Mitchell has furthermore suggested that within an experience of the world's fairs as “object-worlds,” there was a connection between the (photographic) images on display and the way they shaped the perceiving visitors' worldview upon a “seemingly determined correspondence between mere representations and reality,” not at last due to a claim of certainty or truth based

3 “Expo 1900 Paris,” Bureau International des Expositions, accessed October 15, 2023, <https://www.bie-paris.org/site/fr/1900-paris>.

4 See Maxwell, *Colonial Photography & Exhibitions*.

5 Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas. The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 52, 74.

on an alleged indexicality of photography, despite reality being “a place whose life was not lived.”⁶ The present chapter examines the complex position of the wider Caucasus region and the representation of its semicolonial status between three adjacent empires throughout the long nineteenth century. Despite an abundance of literature on world’s fairs itself,⁷ a comparably small number of studies has addressed the role of photography in planning and organizing these global exhibitions which is particularly true for the displays of the Russian, Ottoman, and Qajar Iranian empires and their approaches toward (parts of) the Caucasus region. This chapter looks at the networks that informed the production, selection, and circulation of these images, exploring dynamic representations from agriculture to infrastructure, as well as the agency of the state on the one hand and of private actors on the other—all making use of photography in diplomatic and symbolic exchange, as a tool of commercial interests, and in performing imperial identities.

Entering the Stage. Photography at the First World’s Fairs

World’s fairs made ample use of the power of visuality from the very beginning, and photography played a crucial part in this process. As a medium, photography was integrated into the very first fair, the “Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations” at London’s Crystal Palace in 1851, within two distinct sections: machinery and fine arts.⁸ The initial focus rested on how to produce photographs, that is, on photographic technology presented firmly within

6 Timothy Mitchell, “The World as Exhibition,” *Comparative Studies of Society and History* 31, no. 2 (1989): 226–228.

7 On the history of world’s fairs and the “age of exhibitions” cf. Winfried Kretschmer, *Geschichte der Weltausstellungen* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 1999); Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs. The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Valerii N. Shpakov, *Istoriia vseмирnykh vystavok* (Moscow: Zebra-E, 2008). For an important intervention toward an exploration of smaller exhibitions, see Marta Filipová, *Cultures of International Exhibitions 1840–1940. Great Exhibitions in the Margins* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015). For an eighty-eight-page bibliography on their history, see Alexander C. T. Heppert, Jean Coffey, and Tammy Lau, “International Exhibitions, Expositions Universelles and World’s Fairs, 1851–2005: A Bibliography,” 3rd ed., (November 2006), https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/fmi/astrofuturismus/publikationen/Geppert_-_Expo_bibliography_3ed.pdf.

8 *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, 1851* (London: Spicer Brothers, 1851). At the 1851 world’s fair, daguerreotypes were exhibited alongside “Talotypes” (Calotypes) while photographers and opticians from the United States (William and Frederick Langenheim), German states (e.g. F. Strauch), and France (e.g. Gustave Le Gray and Charles Chevaliers) joined their colleagues from the British Empire in the opportunity to present their latest inventions and works on a global stage.

the concept of the fairs as an international stage of industrial production and technological progress. These exhibits were further important steps in the popularization of a still very exclusive practice. The transition from the daguerreotype to paper-based (albumen) prints made the production and circulation of photographs much easier. Not least, the royal interest of Queen Victoria in the stereoscopic displays at the 1851 exhibition certainly boosted the popularity of the photograph as a medium and object. The interested visitor could furthermore purchase these stereoscopic views as souvenirs to relive the fair—a result of photography becoming the method of choice for any organizer constructing and controlling the publicized image of the fair in question. Within a decade, a stereoscope viewer with an accompanying set of images became a standard item in the Victorian middle-class family's inventory.⁹ However, in form of the exhibited images of colonized peoples, photography had a much profounder influence in its ability to convey a positively connoted understanding of imperialism as benevolent. Photography also helped reassure audiences of a Western European monopoly on civilization and high culture in times when only a tiny fraction of the fair's millions of visitors were able to travel to these faraway destinations on display. Furthermore, photographs were central in confirming, reproducing, and diffusing racial theories and stereotypes onto which the colonializing states built the legitimacy of their expansion.¹⁰

The world's fairs, on the one hand, represent an era of increasingly globalized exchange, and on the other hand, offer insight into the respective participants' self-image and the narratives of national self-profiling they sought to promote. The Russian Empire would itself never host a world's fair but it was interested in exhibiting its industry from the very first fair in London 1851, becoming a regular guest at the following fairs across Western Europe and in the United States.¹¹

9 "Stereoscopic Photographs in the Collection," National Portrait Gallery, accessed October 15, 2023, <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/about/photographs-collection/stereoscopic-photographs-in-the-collection/>.

10 Maxwell, *Colonial Photography*, 7–9; Benedict Burton, "Rituals of Representation: Ethnic Stereotypes and Colonized Peoples at World's Fairs," in *Fair Representations. World's Fairs and the Modern World*, ed. Robert W. Rydell and Nancy Gwinn (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994), 28–61.

11 Anthony Swift, "Russia and the Great Exhibition of 1851: Representations, Perceptions, and a Missed Opportunity," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 55, no. 2 (2007): 242–263. For a detailed discussion of the Russian displays at the world's fairs in the nineteenth century, see *ibid.*, "Russian National Identity at World Fairs, 1851–1900," in *World Fairs and the Global Moulding of National Identities. International Exhibitions as Cultural Platforms, 1851–1958*, ed. Joep Leerssen and Eric Storm (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 107–143; David C. Fisher, "Exhibiting Russia at the World's Fairs, 1851–1900" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2003); *ibid.*, "Kremlin on the Trocadero. The unexpected claim to modernity in Russian architecture

The Russian exhibit at the 1851 fair already introduced an image of the Russian Empire as a country particularly rich in natural resources and confronted the audience with a broad variety of metals and crops.¹² Interestingly, it did not include machinery and other heavy industries, which suggests that the Russian section organizers felt uncomfortable presenting the empire's belated industrialization vis-à-vis the industrial era's flagship countries, such as France and Great Britain. Thereby, the self-representation employed different approaches when it came to showcasing Russia on the global stage or promoting industrial modernity to a domestic audience at Russia's own fairs. As an alternative, the organizers of the Russian section at the London fair therefore resorted to a traditional-national view of Russia which affirmed the contemporary Western European image of a backward Eastern Europe that Larry Wolff described in his *Inventing Eastern Europe* (1994) at a time of widespread Russophobia in the hosting country due to conflicting strategic interests of the British and Russian empires in Central Asia.¹³ Objects from peasant life were increasingly supported by a specific "Russian style" architecture in form of an *izba*, a traditional countryside dwelling first to be seen at the Paris world fair of 1867. In combination, the chosen self-representation of a traditionally minded country rich in natural resources served the expectations of Western European visitors and proved to be a popular section at the world's fairs.¹⁴

Exhibits from the Caucasus were integrated into the Russian display already at the London fair, as the regional administration, especially Governor-General Prince Mikhail S. Vorontsov, was eager to seize an opportunity to demonstrate Russia's self-proclaimed ambition to bring civilization to its southern borderlands on the one hand and to attract foreign investment on the other.¹⁵ Minerals, fabrics, tobacco, and plant seeds from the Caucasus provinces were

at the world's fairs," in *A History of Russian Exposition and Festival Architecture, 1700–2014*, ed. Alla Aronova and Alexander Ortenberg (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 97–112; Mirjam Voerkelius, "Russland und die Sowjetunion auf den Weltausstellungen," in *Globalisierung imperial und sozialistisch. Russland und die Sowjetunion in der Globalgeschichte 1851–1991*, ed. Martin Aust (Frankfurt: Campus, 2013), 207–224.

12 *Katalog Rossiiskim proizvedeniam otpravlennym na Londonskuiu vystavku 1851 goda* (St. Petersburg: Departament vishnei trgovli, 1851); *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition*, 296–301.

13 See Fisher, "Exhibiting Russia at the World's Fairs," 48–51 on the British press describing Russia as "the very antithesis of the 'spiritual idea of progress and improvement' that prevailed in Britain" on the occasion of the Russian section opening to the public at the London fair, later highlighting also the juxtaposition of the neighboring Russian and American sections as reflections of "pure despotism side by side with perfect self-government."

14 Voerkelius, "Russland und die Sowjetunion auf den Weltausstellungen," 210–213.

15 Swift, "Russia and the Great Exhibition," 246–247.

displayed alongside a collection of leopard and tiger pelts from Lenkoran. More importantly, the very small ethnographic section was primarily composed of pieces from the southern borderlands and included felted cloaks of the Lezgins, gallooned collars and enameled gold trinkets from Shemakhi, as well as jewelry and daggers from Nakhichevan' (on Don).¹⁶ Understandably, given the still ongoing and hardly glorious war in the region, the North Caucasus was not at the center of attention in the Russian display, and the organizers did not yet attempt to extend the region's symbolic capital within Russian culture to an international audience. The smaller displays of the Ottoman and Qajar empires similarly built their presentations on rich collections of crops and fabrics, whereas the section on ethnographic artefacts did not rely on exhibits from Eastern Anatolia or Iranian Azerbaijan but took the interested audience to the Near East and Northern Africa.¹⁷

The Russian, Ottoman, and Iranian sections in London were not yet based on photography; however, overall, technological progress was prominently displayed and discussed for its future potential and merits. Against the backdrop of the exhibits by the Imperial Printing-Office of Austria, the represented galvanoplastic process was retrospectively defined by the exhibition's jury as being "to typography what photography is to the art of drawing."¹⁸ The jury furthermore considered photography "the most remarkable discovery of modern times" by which "we perhaps expect to behold a transcript of objects and compositions more elaborate and more truthful than any the greatest genius could ever hope to achieve."¹⁹ The connotation of 'truthfulness' that would "commence a new era in pictorial representation [. . .], greatly enrich[ing] us with authentic records of works, that would otherwise pass away" and the conviction that "the plain and truthful records of Photography afford [great service] to the historians of future ages"²⁰ eventually had to find expression in the composition of the growing ethnographic sections at the world's fairs. However, it was not until the 1870s that photography, anthropology, and the Caucasus became subjects of more prominent discussion on the global exhibition stage.

In many ways, the London fair of 1851 set the tone for the coming decades of the age of exhibitions. Only four years later, France was set to surpass the Crystal

16 *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition*, 296–301.

17 *Amtlicher Katalog der Ausstellung der Industrie-Erzeugnisse aller Völker, 1851* (London: Gebrüder Spicer, 1851), 276, 305–306.

18 *Reports by the Juries on the Subjects in the Thirty Classes into which the Exhibition was Divided*, in four volumes, vol. 3 (London: Spicer Brothers, 1852), 895–896.

19 *Reports by the Juries*, 1:243–245.

20 *Ibid.*, 244.

Palace experience and host the second world's fair in Paris. By that time, the Russian Empire was, however, not only occupied with a colonial war in its southern borderlands, but any public display also occurred under the impression of the Crimean War, which would have further mitigated the impact of the Russian Empire's ambition to confront a Western European audience with an unmediated self-image. Due to the war, the Russian Empire was not invited to participate in the second world's fair in 1855. It thereby missed out on a contemporary debate on photography standing between national and universalist approaches,²¹ which ultimately took shape under the influence of the Crimean War as it was fueled by the public interest in the first steps of photojournalism from the frontlines in the Black Sea Region.²² The images from the Crimean War on display at the Paris fair constituted yet another example of Russia's lack of control over the representation of realms claimed as its sphere of interest and rule.

Seven years later, the organization was back in British hands, and London invited the world for another exposition. While the Russian state was busy trying to transform the insights gained from the defeat in the Crimean War into much-needed domestic reforms, it was at the same time grateful for any opportunity to restore its position as a full-fledged member of the international community. Russia's exhibit organizers for the 1862 London fair were attempting to redefine "Russianness" by displaying objects that were both distinctly Russian and previously unknown to the Western European audience.²³ Ultimately, the Russian participation emphasized the presentation of "raw materials." The Caucasus provinces provided the organizers with lucerne seeds from Aleksandropol' and a "collection of ores, coal, and other Transcaucasian minerals," whereas the photography section, despite a popular guide to the exhibition considering it having "advanced from a chemical toy to a fascinating art and a useful branch of industry,"²⁴ was mostly limited to a few portraits made by seven photographers from St. Petersburg, Warsaw, and Riga.²⁵

21 François Brunet, "Nationalities and Universalism in the Early Historiography of Photography (1843–1857)," *History of Photography* 35, no. 2 (2011): 98–110.

22 For a contemporary debate of the Crimean War photography as discussed in Paris 1855, see Ernest Lacan, *Esquisses photographiques à propos de l'Exposition universelle et de la Guerre d'Orient* (Paris: Grassart, 1856), 155–183.

23 Fisher, "Exhibiting Russia at the World's Fairs," 88–90.

24 Edward McDermott, *The Popular Guide to the International Exhibition of 1862*, 4th ed. (London: W. H. Smith and Son, 1862), 8. The host's photographic section already made ample use of the medium to represent its colonies and their native population from New Zealand to South Africa (see *ibid.*, 124–125, 183).

25 *The International Exhibition of 1862. The Illustrated Catalogue of the Industrial Department*, vol. 4, *Foreign Division* (London: Printed for her Majesty's Commissioners, 1862), 1–26

The following exposition, again in Paris in 1867, witnessed a substantial change in that respect. Not only were the photographic exhibits from the Russian Empire's provinces favorably reviewed in the international press with "a few of the finest portrait photos [...] sent from Warsaw,"²⁶ but they included the work of a key actor in the development of photography in the Caucasus region: the Russian military. Having learned from the resonance of photography during the Crimean War and the lack of inclusion in global debates on photography at the previous exposition, the organizers of the Russian section for the 1867 fair ensured the integration of the latest results from cartographic, lithographic, and photographic production within the military context.²⁷ It displayed albums of the Caucasus, presenting the region as more than a battleground, and, instead, as a fully incorporated imperial territory not to be contested by any other foreign power interested in the region. Within a world of exhibitions fueled by the logics of empires managing representation of their spheres of interest, the Russian military thereby contributed a great deal to establishing a new visual culture by which the state wanted to be seen on the global stage beyond the occasional contribution to the sections of portrait photography.

Variety in Unity at the *Wiener Weltausstellung*

As the 1867 All-Russian Exhibition had shown in the case of the Russian Empire, photography had come to play an essential part in the visualization of ethnic diversity which now increasingly began to constitute the answer to the visitors' curiosity of the "exotic Other" that they imagined populated the faraway colonies and provinces of the exhibiting empires. In 1873, visitors flocked to Vienna, where they did not yet experience the large-scale ethnographic expositions

(Russia). The Ottoman section did not submit anything to class 14 (Photographic apparatus, and photography) while Qajar Iran did not participate at all.

- 26 George Wharton Simpson, "Photography at the International Exhibition at Paris," *Philadelphia Photographer* 4, no. 43 (1867): 201–204.
- 27 Next to the names of other exhibiting Russian photographers at the fair, catalogues and guides for the Russian section (*Illustrirovannoe opisanie vseмирnoī promyshlennoī vystavki v Parizhe, 1867 goda* [St. Petersburg: Vil'gel'm E. Genkel', 1869], 40; *Ukazatel' russkago otdela Parizhskoi vseмирnoī vystavki 1867 g.* [St. Petersburg: Tovarishchestvo 'Obshchestvennaia pol'za', 1867], 27) simply refers to photographs by the "Main Staff of the Caucasus Army" (*Fotografiia glavnago shtaba Kavkazskoi armii*, which were given an honorable mention at the fair) rather than specifying on the names responsible for the images and albums. For a thorough debate of military photography and its presentation at world's fair of 1867, see Sonntag, "Genesis of the *Turkestan Album*," 150–155.

(*Völkerschauen*) that visitors, such as those at later fairs in Paris (1889) or Brussels (1897), would see. However, the individual national displays were organized in separate pavilions to invite the audience on a trip around the world. The Russian Empire again upheld its *izba* style and its popularity with the visitors, despite prominent critics like Vladimir V. Stasov criticizing it as an invention.²⁸



Figure 3.1. György Klösz. The Russian Emperor's Pavilion at the Vienna World's Fair, 1873. Wien Museum.

National particularities and ethnic typicalities were visualized similarly to the All-Russian Ethnographic Exhibition, which had been staged six years earlier but had not yet been presented across the entire exhibition and therefore not

28 Voerkelius, "Russland und die Sowjetunion auf den Weltausstellungen," 212–213. The respective national pavilions included a broad variety of these replicas of vernacular architecture and became part of a comprehensive photographic survey of the Vienna fair itself that spanned from the "Russian restaurant" (Wien Museum, Nr. 174005/94), the "Russian emperor's pavilion" (ibid., 78080/256, both taken by György Klösz, see Figure 3.1), to the "Persian house" (ibid., 204811), and the "Turkish café" (ibid., 174005/62, both taken by Josef Löwy). See *General-Catalog photographischer Erzeugnisse der Wiener Photographen-Association für die Weltausstellung 1873* (Vienna: Wilhelm Köhler, 1873) for an insight into the photographic documentation of the exhibition.

in a comparable systematic approach. The planners of the Russian *izba*, however, relied on their experience from attending the 1867 Moscow exhibition and put together a separate Caucasus section (fig. 3.2), where traditional folk costumes, pastimes, and artifacts were showcased within an imperial-colonial representation of the newly acquired territories in the south and Central Asia. The Caucasus also once made the title page of the illustrated newspaper for the Vienna World's Fair, where an image of weapons, instruments, and jars framed a lengthy discussion of the Caucasus section. According to the *Allgemeine Illustrirte Weltausstellungs-Zeitung*, the Caucasus had at previous fairs showcased "strange, industrial products" but would in Vienna represent a region "rich in natural beauties with its ideal climate, its abundant vegetation, with its remaining early Christian architectonic monuments and its likeable Circassian population."²⁹ Other reports also particularly praised the quality of the cartographic, lithographic, typographic, and photographic works exhibited in the Caucasus section, where albums with industrial photographs, ethnographic "types" (by Vladimir V. Barkanov from Tbilisi), and views of landscapes (by the Rudnev brothers from Vladikavkaz), were displayed.³⁰ While internally, Russian observers were unhappy with the quality of the display and suggested that future contributions needed to be more attractive to the public,³¹ the Russian display was still one of the frontrunners on the world's fairs' path from separate ethnographic ensembles toward the later *Völkerschauen*.

Furthermore, photography played an important part in representing multiethnic imperial identities and in satisfying the audience's ever-growing appetite for the "exotic." Less so within the Russian display—though it featured contributions from some of most renowned portrait photographers of the 1870s empire, from Levitskii to Andrei I. Den'er (Heinrich Johann Denier, 1820–1892)³²—but

29 "Wenn der Kaukasus in früheren Ausstellungen, namentlich auch in der Pariser Weltausstellung 1867, sich durch seine eigenartigen industriellen Erzeugnisse hervorthat und die Besucher fast ausschliesslich mit seiner Industrie bekannt machte, so hat dieses an Naturschönheiten so reiche Land mit seinem idealen Klima, seiner üppigen Vegetation, mit seinen hinterbliebenen altchristlichen architektonischen Denkmälern und mit seiner sympathischen tscherkessischen Bevölkerung sich in der Wiener Weltausstellung eine höhere Aufgabe gestellt." "Der Kaukasus in der Ausstellung," *Allgemeine Illustrirte Weltausstellungs-Zeitung* 5, no. 8, October 26, 1873, 87.

30 "Die Kartographie der kaukasischen Abtheilung," *Allgemeine Illustrirte Weltausstellungs-Zeitung* 4, no. 11, August 10, 1873, 165.

31 Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia*, 153.

32 *Catalogue spécial de la section russe à l'Exposition universelle de Vienne en 1873* (St. Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1873) 123–124, 171–173; *Ukazatel' russkago otdela Venskoï vsemirnoï vystavki 1873 g.* (St. Petersburg: Obshchestvennaia pol'za, 1873), 122–125.



Figure 3.2. Oscar Kramer. The Caucasus at the Vienna World's Fair, 1873. Wien Museum.

more prominently in other parts of the world's fair, where folk costumes from around the world were exhibited on mannequins and through photographs. Whereas the Habsburg Monarchy's ethnographic section displayed Croatian and German folk costumes, the organizers of the Ottoman display additionally compiled a bilingual French-Ottoman 320-page album, the so-called *Elbise-i Osmaniyye*, with seventy-four photographs depicting women and men in traditional dress and a "geographical description of each region, moral customs of the inhabitants and information on their vocations as well as comments on industrial and commercial developments."³³ The album features 210 variations of Ottoman costumes, thereby documenting more than 80 percent of the 258 costumes on display on mannequins watching over the "Turkish Gallery" in the Hall of Industry at the Vienna World's Fair (fig. 3.3). In the preface to the album, the editors wrote that the costume "offering ethnographic and social studies an inexhaustible source of certain information and of powerful interest" while realizing "the rational definition of the beautiful and the good, which, as one knows,

33 *L'Orient Illustré*, no. 62, April 4, 1874, 80; cited in Erin Hyde Nolan, "You Are What You Wear: Ottoman Costume Portraits in the *Elbise-i Osmaniyye*," *Ars Orientalis* 47 (2017): 178–179.

is *variety in unity*.”³⁴ As Erin Hyde Nolan stresses, it is the role of the album’s photographs to animate the Ottoman textiles and eventually “invoke a sensorial and embodied experience” by depicting real people in a way that the exhibited mannequins could never have achieved.³⁵



Figure 3.3. Josef Löwy. “Turkish Gallery” at the Vienna World’s Fair, 1873. Wien Museum.

The photos were taken by Pascal Sébah, one of Istanbul’s most renowned photographers. As the son of an Armenian mother and a Syrian Catholic father himself, he embodied the multicultural nature of the city and empire, which the *Elbise-i Osmaniyye* intended to capture. He, however, did not bother to travel to the far-flung corners of the empire but worked with models in Istanbul, for which certain sitters were asked to fulfil several roles by wearing different costumes.³⁶ This

34 “Le costume [. . .] offre aux études ethnographiques et sociales une source inépuisable de renseignements certains et d’un puissant intérêt. [. . .] On voit que le costume réalise la définition rationnelle du beau et du bon, qui est, comme on le sait, *la variété dans l’unité*.” Osman Hamdy Bey, Victor Marie de Launay, and Pascal Sébah, *Les costumes populaires de la Turquie en 1873* (Constantinople: The Levant Times & Shipping Gazette, 1873), 5–6.

35 Nolan, “You Are What You Wear,” 180.

36 Nolan (“You Are What You Wear,” 197–199) has furthermore shown against the backdrop of a set of eighteen costume cabinet cards how Sébah was autonomous in his image production insofar as these images would show how his studio had made these prints in tandem with those in the album, making use of the same clothes and models, to sell them as souvenirs to international tourists. The simultaneous production and circulation of these images as part of an album that aimed to underscore Ottoman multiplicities on the one hand and catering to visitors looking for a souvenir that satisfied their curiosity in the exotic “Other,” complicates their analysis.

aspect is interesting because it contradicts the contemporary ethnographers' and anthropologists' aim to identify and extrapolate racial typicality through photography and its inherent claim to authenticity. The sitters' physiognomies were overshadowed by the importance of the costumes, which were supposed to represent plurality in diversity rather than individuality in typicality. The *Elbise-i Osmaniyye* was therefore organized by geography rather than by ethnic groups, and for instance showed the Armenian, Jewish, and Greek population together in one image within the section on Istanbul (fig. 3.4).



Figure 3.4. Pascal Sébah. “An Armenian Bride, a Jewish Woman from Constantinople, and a Young Greek Girl.” Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The population of the Eastern Anatolian vilayet of Erzurum was equally portrayed as multicultural and provides us with an example of the sitters' flexibility, depicting the very same aging, bearded man as both a worker from the surroundings of Erzurum with an Armenian and a Muslim woman, and, on the following image, as an Armenian priest from Aghtamar with two Kurdish military men (figs. 3.5 and 3.6). In her analysis of the entire *Elbise-i Osmaniyye*, Nolan argues that it is this repetition that forges visual relationships and eventually transforms the sitters into mannequins themselves.³⁷ The accompanying text takes a secondary role to Sébah's phototypes and is often borrowed from already published sources from the 1850s and 1860s, indicating that the Vienna installation actually was an expanded version of the limited section that had already been incorporated at the 1867 Paris fair.³⁸ What was new, however, was the use of photography to perform imperial cohesion within the Ottoman state.

Meanwhile, Qajar Iran created the greatest impact through Nasr-ed-Din Shah's visit to Vienna, where he was among thirty-three reigning monarchs, thirteen crown princes, and twenty princes at the 1873 World's Fair.³⁹ His visit was announced "for several days on colored placards on every street corner"⁴⁰ and initiated a veritable shah-mania, thereby becoming a prime example of the accelerating process of news mass circulation during the weeks of the world's fairs. Newspapers across the continent informed their readership of the latest developments at the scene, while illustrated newspapers included almost daily lithographs from the exhibitions.⁴¹ The Iranian Exhibition filled a single, relatively small hall and, despite communicating the country's rich cultural traditions and production, did little to counter a Eurocentric, orientaling gaze at an empire that couldn't match the industrial displays of the states in Western and Central Europe.⁴² Rather than a powerhouse of technological progress against the backdrop of exhibited railway tracks, engines, and other machinery, Qajar Iran was portrayed as a country of rich traditions in art and crafts and also, parallel to the Russian strategy of self-promotion, rich in natural resources. The latter, from fruits and plants to minerals and caracal skins, were especially collected

37 Ibid., 194.

38 Ibid., 204.

39 Jutta Pemsel, *Die Wiener Weltausstellung von 1873. Das gründerzeitliche Wien am Wendepunkt* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1989), 43.

40 "Der Schah von Persien im Volksgarten," *Neue Freie Presse*, no. 3213, August 3, 1873, 3–4.

41 See Volker Barth, "Weltausstellung und Nachrichtenwelt. Presse, Telegrafie und internationale Agenturen um 1873," in *Experiment Metropole. 1873: Wien und die Weltausstellung*, ed. Wolfgang Kos and Ralph Gleis (Vienna: Czernin, 2014), 36–43.

42 Ladislav Charouz, "Naser al-Din Shah's 1873 Visit to the World's Fair in Vienna," *Iran—Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 60, no. 1 (2022): 135–147.

from Iranian Azerbaijan, which also provided the basis for portraying the country's crafts and trades.⁴³

Although the shah was known for his enthusiasm about photography, which also played an essential part in the diplomatic encounters during his travel to Europe (see above), the Iranian display did not yet rely on photography as a means of self-representation in any way comparable to the Ottoman use of it in the *Elbise-i Osmaniyye*. It, however, went the other way as Jakob Eduard Polak describes in his report on the Iranian display at the Vienna World's Fair.⁴⁴ The Iranian display was strongly conceptualized and organized from Vienna, and it was the Austrian consul-general to Trabzon, Julius von Zwiedinek-Südenhorst, who was delegated to Tabriz to oversee the realization of the country's participation in the world's fair—hence the strong presence of objects from Iranian Azerbaijan. He thereby secured the help of the British-Swiss company Ziegler & Co., which had only recently taken advantage of Nasr-ed-Din's 1872 decree, allowing autonomous production by foreign firms in Qajar Iran.⁴⁵ More importantly, though, Polak had also published a brochure on "Persia's Participation at the Vienna World's Fair," which was translated into Farsi and enriched by numerous photo-lithographs. Many copies were then sent to Tehran for this brochure was thought of as a point of reference for the Iranian partners to know which objects were to be collected and submitted to the organizing committee. Hence, photographs were not incorporated into the Iranian self-promotion strategy at the Vienna World's Fair, but they served as an instrument of survey, order, and persuasion in the exhibition's preparation. Nasr-ed-Din Shah eventually embraced the Austrian initiative and assured Vienna of his cooperation, sending a delegation that included Armenian Iranian diplomat and modernist Mirza Melkum Khan (Hovsep Melkumyan) to the capital of the Austro-Hungarian

43 Jakob Eduard Polak, *Officieller Ausstellungs-Bericht. Herausgegeben durch die General-Direction der Weltausstellung 1873. Persien. Beiträge zum zweiten Bande* (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1873), 35–52.

44 Polak was an old acquaintance of the shah for the Austrian physician had played an important part in the introduction of modern medicine in Iran as one of the Austrian teachers invited by the country's prime minister Amir Kabir to contribute to the establishment of modern higher education at the Dar al-Funun, Iran's first polytechnic, in 1851.

45 *Ibid.*, 35; Constant von Wurzbach, "Zwiedinek-Südenhorst, Julius Freiherr von," in *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich*, vol. 60 (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1891), 343–344. On the background of Iran's display at the world's fair and the Austrian organization see also Helmut Slaby, *Bindenschild und Sonnenlöwe. Die Geschichte der österreichisch-iranischen Beziehungen bis zur Gegenwart* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1982), 112–127.



Figure 3.5. Pascal Sébah. "A Laborer from around Erzurum, a Muslim Woman from Van, and an Armenian Woman from Van." Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Figure 3.6. "An Armenian Priest from Aghtamar, a Kurdish Horseman from Djoulamerk, and a Kurdish Infantry Soldier from Djoulamerk." Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Empire to participate in the planning of the Iranian display.⁴⁶ After several requests from the Iranian side to change and re-model parts of the structure and display, it eventually was ready, not for the overall opening of the world's fair on May 1 but on July 30, that is, for the shah's visit, which remained the most important contribution from Tehran for the country's self-representation and the media coverage of Nasr-ed-Din's visit to Vienna.⁴⁷ The shah himself appeared to have been at least satisfied with what he saw. He attested that his country's display was composed of "a fair quantity of precious stuffs and productions," and the Persian mansion was to be built "with great taste."⁴⁸

Going Global. The Transcontinentality of Empire and Representation

Every few years now, the world came together for another showcasing of the industrial nations' newest innovations—a practice that had now become an increasingly global undertaking. In 1876, Philadelphia hosted the "Centennial Exposition" to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Melbourne also hosted the southern hemisphere's first World's Fair in 1880/81. In North America, photography was exhibited in a special hall for the first time, separated from art and from industry, where not only images but also chemicals, apparatus, and other accessories were displayed.⁴⁹ Different catalogues give varying names of exhibiting photographers from the Russian Empire, but it seems safe to say that their total number did not exceed ten, as the Russian contribution consisted of a small but award-winning section where six exhibitors from St. Petersburg, Nizhniï Novgorod, and Warsaw were awarded prizes by the exhibition jury. This section mainly consisted of portraits but also featured a curious collaboration between the Polish travelers-photographers Benedykt Henryk Tyszkiewicz and Bronisław Jaworski, who exhibited images from their travels to Algeria not only at the world's fair in Philadelphia but also presented their works to Tsar Alexander II the following

46 *Special-Catalog der Ausstellung des Persischen Reiches* (Vienna: Selbstverlag der Persischen Ausstellungs-Commission, 1873), 5.

47 "Der Schah von Persien in der wiener [sic!] Weltausstellung am 3. August. Originalzeichnung von V.[inzenz] Katzler." *Illustrierte Zeitung*, no. 1574, August 30, 1873, 156.

48 Redhouse, *The Diary*, 328–329.

49 Hermann Vogel, "Photographic Sketches from the Centennial Grounds," *Philadelphia Photographer* 13, no. 151, July 1876, 213.

year.⁵⁰ Overall, participation in the overseas exhibition had declined considerably, allowing the American “Centennial Photographic Company” to represent other regions by exhibiting a collection of portraits, entitled “Our foreign visitors,” which was intended to “show the characteristic features of Tunisians, Algerians, Japanese, Chinese, Persians, Turks, Egyptians, etc.” and included a take on the genre-defining orientalist subject of the “Circassian beauty.”⁵¹ An approach to presenting photographs in a way that was supposed to illustrate the exhibiting countries’ character rather than the progress of photography itself, and where the French, Brazilian, and British displays extended this idea also into the main centennial building,⁵² the Caucasus was—other than three years before—nowhere to be seen. The same was true for the Melbourne exhibition, where the Russian Empire was not officially represented and participated with a single exhibit (of its leather industry) alongside three Ottoman exhibitors showcasing “carpets and different nick-nacks from Jerusalem and Bethlehem” (out of a total of 12,792 exhibitors).⁵³

Between the exhibitions in the United States and in Australia, Paris hosted its third world’s fair in 1878 where the IOLEAÈ was strongly involved within the agricultural, technical, and natural history sections for the Russian Empire and put instructional materials on display.⁵⁴ In a celebration of difference and national particularity, the concept of the national pavilions was now extended to the *rue des nations*, which offered the visitor the opportunity to stroll along these nationalized displays in separate streets. The Russian organizers stuck to their formula of presenting the country in a traditional nationalized way, removed from any ambitions to blend into a more universal presentation of the world which was positively received by visitors looking for the nationally distinctive

50 Aldona Snitkuvienė, “Benedykt Henryk Tyszkiewicz (1852–1935) z czerwonego dworu—zapomniany fotograf,” *Dagerotyp* 6 (1997): 14–15; Hermann Vogel, “Photographic Sketches from the Centennial Grounds,” *Philadelphia Photographer* 13, no. 153, September 1876, 284–285; *International Exhibition 1876. Official Catalogue. Part II. Art Gallery, Annexes, and Outdoor Works of Art. Department IV—Art*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: John R. Nagle and Co, 1876), 145; “The Centennial Awards,” *Philadelphia Photographer* 13, no. 155, November 1876, 322; *Ukazatel’ russkago otdela filadel’fiiskoi mezhdunarodnoi vystavki 1876 goda* (St. Petersburg: Obshchestvennaia pol’za, 1876), 184–186.

51 Hermann Vogel, “Photography in the Great Exhibition,” *Philadelphia Photographer* 13, no. 153, September 1876, 263; “Circassian Beauty,” Getty Museum Collection, 84.XD.1157.736, accessed October 15, 2023, <https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/107HEB>.

52 Julie K. Brown, *Making Culture Visible. The Public Display of Photography at Fairs, Expositions and Exhibitions in the United States, 1847–1900* (London: Routledge, 2001), 78–79.

53 *Melbourne International Exhibition, 1880–1881. Official Record* (Melbourne: Mason, Firth & M’Cutcheon, 1882), 1–2, cxxiv

54 Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia*, 166.

in these buildings and who commented on Russia having “constructed the most original building, one of olden style, truly national, and consequently most in accordance with that spirit which is there so rapidly reviving.”⁵⁵ On the other hand, the political implications of the anthropological exhibitions of the time were not necessarily inscribed into the program of the world’s fair as can be seen by a comparison of the 1867 All-Russian Ethnographic Exhibition and the relatively apolitical anthropological exhibition that Anuchin had organized for the Russian anthropological section in Paris and where anthropology as a science stood in the foreground rather than ideas of Slavic unity or a Russian *mission civilisatrice*.⁵⁶

Photography was integrated into a broad spectrum of thematic displays, ranging from the Ministry of Education using it to put pupils and schools on display to a visual survey of the Balkan front in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 by the Kharkiv-based photographer Aleksandr D. Ivanov.⁵⁷ Fellow VTO-photographers Dmitrii A. Nikitin and Dmitrii I. Ermakov, both having their basis in Tbilisi, contributed types from the Caucasus, views of ancient monuments, and landscape photographs from the region, by which they brought the most popular genres of Caucasus photography to Paris and thereby extended a photographic section that was until 1878 mostly a representation of the latest trends in portrait photography. Despite being on the constant rise in terms of technological advancement, the impact of photography for the visualization of the exotic “Other” at exhibitions had in the meantime however been diminished to a certain extent insofar as photographic images and mannequins had received serious competition in the respective organizers’ ambition to attract attention for these sections when human displays became a staple at larger exhibitions during the heyday of late nineteenth-century colonialism. These ethnographic expositions or *Völkerschauen* were organized around “native villages” (*villages indigènes*) and, for the first time in 1878, put people from non-Western cultures on display when around four hundred natives from French overseas colonies (Indochina, Senegal, Tahiti) were supposed to educate and entertain the audience.⁵⁸

55 *The Illustrated Catalogue of the Paris International Exhibition* (London: Virtue & Co, 1878), viii.

56 Vladimir V. Bogdanov, *Dmitrii Nikolaevich Anuchin. Antropolog i Geograf (1843–1923)* (Moscow: Moskovskoe obshchestvo ispytatelei prirody, 1941), 14–17; Mogilner, *Homo Imperii*, 28.

57 *Catalogue de la section russe à l’Exposition universelle de Paris* (Paris: Lahure, 1878), 21, 43–44.

58 Raymond Corbey, “Ethnographic Showcases, 1870–1930,” *Cultural Anthropology* 8, no. 3 (1993): 341.

After a stop in Barcelona 1888⁵⁹—which is briefly mentioned to represent a series of smaller-scaled world’s fairs with universal aspirations carried by private, commercially motivated actors rather than governments promoting their state on the international stage—the 1880s concluded with another fair in Paris. Alongside other European monarchies, the Russian Empire did not officially participate in the fair due to its celebratory character marking the one hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution, but it allowed its entrepreneurs to display their products outside a nationalized section.⁶⁰ The lack of the government’s sponsorship allowed private enterprises to represent themselves and, in doing so, inadvertently represent Russia on an international stage, at a time of transition since the Paris fair of eleven years earlier. It allowed entrepreneurs to present their factories on a strictly commercially motivated basis, which meant that regions such as the Caucasus were now predominantly represented through their booming oil industry and as the embodiment of Russian industrialization at the turn of the century, rather than as obscure, colonial realms. What had until the 1880s been overshadowed by the narrative of Russia being a vast country rich in natural resources, now gradually made way for a demonstration of the industrial progress made in Russia.⁶¹

The efforts of private individuals and voluntary associations from the Russian Empire contributed to ambivalent imagery between established pattern of representation and modern visions or, as Laurence Aubain has suggested, to a Russian section that offered visitors of the fair a five-fold impression: Firstly, an image of an “eternal Russia” excelling in strangeness and mystery with all the characteristics of a savage, even barbaric country. Secondly, an opulent “mysticism” that sought to establish a connection to the narrative of Russia being the new Byzantium. Thirdly, a wealth based on the continental expansion, which was especially connected to the advancement of the railway projects in Asia

59 Marina Muñoz Torreblanca, “Barcelona’s Universal Exhibition of 1888: An Atypical Case of a Great Exhibition,” in *Cultures of International Exhibitions 1840–1940. Great Exhibitions in the Margins*, ed. Marta Filipová, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 45–67. The Russian Empire was present in Barcelona but with a fairly small section where a good part of it only arrived after the exhibition had already opened (*Guide illustré de L’Exposition universelle de Barcelone en 1888* (Barcelona: Robert López, 1888), 178–179).

60 For a contemporary description of the state’s decision not to officially participate and the Russian industry’s excitement “to take advantage of such a rare opportunity” to present itself (as well as a reference to the lack of governmental funds as justification for the poor reception of the Russian section in the press coverage of the fair), see Konstantin A. Vargunin et al., *Predvaritel’nyi otchet vo vseмирnoi Parizhskoi vystavke 1889 g.* (St. Petersburg: Dom Prizreniia Maloletnikh Bednykh, 1890), 7–9, 13–14, 34–35.

61 Voerkelius, “Russland und die Sowjetunion auf den Weltausstellungen,” 215.

but also to the display of gems and semiprecious stones from the Urals and the Caucasus. Fourthly, a munificent exoticism is conveyed through the exhibition of fabrics that symbolize Russia's proximity to the Orient. Fifthly, an impenetrable remoteness that could be seen for instance in the display of richly ornamented sabers from Armenia.⁶² Visuality was a central aspect in these five characteristics, but given the state's reluctance to send representatives of its own photographic departments, the Caucasus was not represented in an otherwise highly praised overall photography section that impressed the audience with the many innovations of the late 1880s.⁶³

At the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the Russian Empire did not participate with its own national pavilion, but unlike four years prior, the government was involved in planning and implementing the Russian exhibits. The 1889 shift toward a more industry-centered display was continued as the acclaimed promotion of the Trans-Siberian Railway stood representative for the Russian ambition to arrange an official representation of "an imperial power incorporating its colonies and its annexed peripheries, and in so doing, reinventing itself"⁶⁴ using a visually enhanced demonstration of technological advancement. While the Trans-Siberian Railway was certainly the flagship project of the Russian Empire's goal to match the Western European powers' displays of industrial modernity,⁶⁵ the state aimed to portray also other provinces, such as those in Central Asia and the Caucasus, as examples for a policy of development and progress in the imperial peripheries that contrasted the Western European empire's exploitative colonialism. Five years after the introduction of roll film cameras and with a steady popularization of photography, such narratives were strongly supported by visual aids at the world's fairs of the 1890s and 1900s. As a result, the visual materials exhibited at the Chicago fair made the North American spectators familiar with views of the Nobel Brothers' oil fields and factories in Baku through a series of photo albums and also extended beyond the confines of the Russian section, including illustrations by the Swedish-American illustrator Thure de Thulstrup who had adopted the motifs of a "Military Road

62 Laurence Aubain, "La Russie à l'Exposition universelle de 1889," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 37, no. 3 (1996): 356–358.

63 P. Raïskii (Iosif I. Kolyshko), *Parizhskaia vystavka* (St. Petersburg: V. P. Meshcherskii, 1889), 137.

64 Claudia Weiss, "Representing the Empire: The Meaning of Siberia for Russian Imperial Identity," *Nationalities Papers* 35, no. 3 (2007): 448.

65 See an outline of this idea in the fifth volume of a series entitled *The Industries of Russia* that was organized by the Ministry of Finance for the Chicago Exposition and addressed "Siberia and the Great Siberian Railway" in translation by US consul general to Russia, John M. Crawford.

in *The Caucasus*” and “Circassians of the Imperial Guard” in his works.⁶⁶ Albums of photographic views were meant to document Russian advancements in its newest provinces, which, for instance, included images from an expedition to the Amu Darya River in 1879/1880 and information by the Ministry of Ways of Communications on the latest constructions on the Vladikavkaz Railway.⁶⁷

In 1897, the circus of the world’s fairs returned to the old continent and opened its gates to the public in Brussels. It became an exhibition mostly remembered for another episode of European colonialism and racism, as Belgium seized the opportunity to use the exposition as a platform to stage a parallel exhibit of its Congolese territories. Thereby, the hosting monarchy not only put stuffed animals and export products, such as coffee and cocoa, on display but allowed visitors to gaze at a copy of a Congolese village in which 267 men, women, and children from Congo lived for the duration of the fair. This concept of ethnic shows, or a “human zoo,”⁶⁸ which had been well-established at similar events since the 1870s, was hugely popular with visitors who flocked in masses to the 1889 *Jardin d’Acclimatation Anthropologique* or the 1904 Native American Village in St. Louis, and was also symptomatic of the galloping commercialization and consumerism that the world’s fairs represented. Robert Rydell described this visual representation of non-whites on display at turn of the century fairs “as natural resources to be exploited as readily as mineral deposits.”⁶⁹ This shameless practice of patronizing colonized peoples furthermore played into the theatrical character of these fairs where exoticized places such as “Street in Cairo” or “Turkish Village” could be imagined and performed to negotiate concepts of race, identity, and belonging. All these were eventually etched into the audience’s memory by producing photographs as souvenirs that they could take home to remember and share.⁷⁰ The three empires that could have staged (parts

66 Moses P. Handy, ed., *World’s Columbian Exposition, 1893. Official Catalogue*, vol. 10, *Department K: Fine Arts*. (Chicago, IL: W. B. Conkey, 1893), 50.

67 *World’s Columbian Exposition, 1893 Chicago. Catalogue of the Russian Section* (St. Petersburg: Imperial Russian Commission, Ministry of Finances, 1893), 438–440, 454–455.

68 There is an abundance of literature on the many episodes of human showcases at exhibitions. Among the many, see for instance Anne Dreesbach, *Gezähmte Wilde. Die Zurschaustellung “exotischer” Menschen in Deutschland 1870–1940* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2005); Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 82–111; Sadiah Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade. Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

69 Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 20–21.

70 Representative for many similar productions, see the images of “Damascan swordsmen,” a “Soudanese baby,” or an “Egyptian juggler” from the 1893 “World’s Columbian Exposition” in *Glimpses of the World’s Fair. A Selection of Gems of the White City seen through a Camera* (Chicago, IL: Laird & Lee, 1893).

of) the Caucasus region in a similarly patronizing manner did not adopt such an approach on the global stage, while Russian commentators showed themselves irritated by the French enthusiasm for the colonial exhibits that an “impartial foreigner” would not be able to share.⁷¹ One might, however, point out that this estrangement over Western European colonial practices and the idea to present a different approach to imperial rule through the Russian exhibits at world’s fairs does however conflict with ongoing practices of human showcases in the empire’s urban metropolises.⁷²

A Colonial Caucasus at the Trocadéro

By the turn of the century, Russia’s self-representation in general and the representation of its imperial provinces were no longer based on the traditional-national view of Russia within a backward Eastern Europe. The narrative that had coined the country’s display at the first world’s fairs was now complemented by visions of progress and imperial greatness. The 1900 Paris Exhibition marked a triumphant return of the Russian Empire to the stage of national self-representation, as it could build on its close diplomatic ties with hosting France, which found its symbolic manifestation in the inauguration of the Pont Alexandre III. The new bridge spanning the Seine was named after the Russian tsar who had concluded the Franco-Russian Rapprochement in 1892 and set the tone for a generous inclusion of Russian exhibits in the 1900 Paris fair.⁷³ The return to an official participation resulted in the most significant number of exhibitors that the Russian Empire would ever send to a world’s fair and mirrored the ambition to present a Russian “exhibition of progress”⁷⁴ amidst the state’s new political alliance—an ambition that Western European commentators partially

71 Raiskii (Kolyshko), *Parizhskaia vystavka*, 71. “Mozhno li bezpristrastnomu inostrantsu razdeliat’ frantsuzskii entuziazm v otnoshenii vystavki kolonii? Mne kazhetsia—net. Net, prezhde vsego potomu, chto eta vystavka, bolee chem chto nibud’ drugoe, est’ vystavka sensatsionnaia, *politicheskaia* [. . .].”

72 For a discussion of long nineteenth-century human showcases in Warsaw, St. Petersburg, and Moscow, see Dominika Czarnecka, “Black Female Bodies and the ‘White’ View. The Dahomey Amazon Shows in Poland at the End of the Nineteenth Century,” *East Central Europe* 47, no. 2–3 (2020): 285–312; Maria Leskinen, “A Century of Elision? Ethnic Shows in Saint Petersburg and Moscow, 1879–1914,” in *Staged Otherness. Ethnic Shows in Central and Eastern Europe, 1850–1939*, ed. Dagnosław Demski and Dominika Czarnecka (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2021), 295–327.

73 Weiss, “Representing the Empire,” 446.

74 Georg Malkowsky, ed., *Die Pariser Weltausstellung in Wort und Bild* (Berlin: Kirchhoff & Co, 1900), 464.

acknowledged but who would also continue to attribute Russia a character of “an agricultural country *par excellence*.”⁷⁵

Russia was, however, not represented with its own national pavilion on the *rue des nations* as its location on the Quai d’Orsay along the Seine was considered unsafe for a planned visit of the Russian emperor.⁷⁶ Instead, the Russian exhibits were scattered across the different classes on the Champ de Mars and found place in smaller pavilions all over the fairgrounds and also in common pavilions. The Russian section of mining and metallurgy did not avoid any comparisons to its Western European counterparts as the organizers had rented space just in between the German and Belgian sections. At the same time, they had established their own special *Pavillon de la Régie des Boissons* on the Champ de Mars by which Russia sought to demonstrate the state’s management of its alcohol sector. The Russian committee furthermore compiled and put on display an authored overview with close to one thousand pages, which addressed themes such as political structure, economy, agriculture, industries, commerce, fine arts, communication, and education in the Russian Empire.⁷⁷ Since such publications, just like the 1893 *The Industries of Russia*, were eventually given as gifts to institutions abroad such as libraries, ministries, scientific societies, or simply respected authorities in science and commerce, they were important pieces in a public relations puzzle that ultimately aimed at attracting foreign investors to the Russian markets.⁷⁸

Outside the *rue des nations*, the Parisian audience strolled in masses toward the Chaillot hill, on top of which the Trocadéro Palace had already been erected for the 1878 *exposition universelle*. Its gardens now housed most of the colonial pavilions and nestled in between the displays of China and the Dutch East Indies, Russia had established a pavilion dedicated to its colonial borderlands—a pavilion that replicated the design of Moscow’s Kreml’, was split into three major parts on Siberia, Turkestan, and the Caucasus, with a smaller segment on the arctic north, and served the audience’s curiosity in a “strange exoticism, where Persian traditions and Chinese inspiration come together in an

75 “Malgré le prodigieux essor de ses industries, malgré le rôle croissant qu’elles jouent dans la production du pays, la Russie est restée un pays agricole par excellence.” *Catalogue général de la section russe* (Paris: Paul Dupont, 1900), vi.

76 Julius Meier-Graefe, ed., *Die Weltausstellung in Paris 1900* (Paris: F. Krüger, 1900), 206.

77 Kovalevsky [Kovalevskii], W[V]ladimir I., ed., *La Russie à la fin du 19^e siècle* (Paris: Paul Dupont, 1900). See pages 926–927 for a brief discussion of photographic societies and journals in the Russian Empire.

78 Fisher, *Exhibiting Russia*, 214–215.

extraordinary originality.”⁷⁹ An accompanying publication (available both in Russian and French) was furthermore supposed to provide the interested visitor with “a correct understanding of the natural resources of Russia’s Asian borderlands, of the degree of culture of their diverse population, and of their methods to exploit their natural resources.”⁸⁰ The all-colonial context of the Trocadéro Gardens thereby, for the first time, allowed the Russian state to put forward a clear-cut self-representation of itself as an empire. Siberia stood in the spotlight just like in 1893 with one of the entire exposition’s main attractions being a virtual train journey that took the fair’s visitors within forty-five minutes and along a rolling 950-meter-long panorama canvas from “Moscow” through the Siberian landmasses all the way to “Beijing” where they were met by clerks in traditional Chinese attire. In fact, the “travelers” had only made about eighty meters when they reached “Beijing” in China’s section.⁸¹ The Trans-Siberian Railway not only changed mobility within the Russian Empire but became a turning point in its self-representation as it was suitable as a symbol for a self-proclaimed “cultural movement to the East,”⁸² the ongoing industrialization program, and the opening of new profitable markets, not at last for the partners in Russia’s new alliances that were met in the form of presenting a precious, gem-bearing map of France

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- 79 “Toute une civilisation inconnue s’affirmait ainsi en art d’un exotisme étrange, où se mêlaient les traditions persanes et les inspirations chinoises, dans une originalité extraordinaire.” Paul Gers, *En 1900* (Corbeil: Édouard Crété, 1901), 166. On the expression of a pseudo-Russian identity through the pavilion constructions at world’s fairs that ended up in an unintended perception of an exotic orientalized Russian Empire in the eyes of the visitors, see Olga Kazakova, “Les pavillons russes aux Expositions Universelles du XIXe siècle: expression de l’identité qui n’a jamais existé,” *Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea* 18, no. 2 (2014): 19, 50, doi:10.4000/diacronie.1411.
- 80 “[. . .] imeet tsel’iu dat’ posvetiteliu Russkago Okrainnago Otdela Parizhskoi vystavki pravil’noe poniatie ob estestvennykh bogatstvakh aziatskikh okrain Rossii, o stepeni kul’turnosti ikh raznoobraznago naseleniia i upotrebliaemykh im sposobakh èkspluatatsii svoikh prirodnykh ressursov.” See preface to Pëtr P. Semënov, ed., *Okrainy Rossii. Sibir’, Turkestan, Kavkaz i poliarnaia chast’ Evropeiskoi Rossii* (St. Petersburg: Brokgauz-Efron, 1900); *ibid.*, *La Russie extra-européenne et polaire. Sibérie, Caucase, Asie centrale, Extrême-Nord* (Paris: Paul Dupont, 1900).
- 81 Maxwell 2000, 25; Schenk, *Russlands Fahrt in die Moderne*, 106–107; Weiss, “Representing the Empire,” 439. Panoramas were a popular means of bridging space at exhibitions and the 1900 fair was no exception as its visitors could not only traverse Siberia that way but also cross the Mediterranean or the Atlantic Ocean while the highlight was likely the globe-spanning *Tour du Monde*.
- 82 “Kul’turnoe dvizhenie Rossii na Vostok vydaiushchimsia obrazom predstavliala Sibirskaia zheleznaia doroga [. . .].” *Uchastie Rossii na Vsemirnoi Parizhskoi Vystavke 1900 g. Otchet general’nago kommissara russkago otdela* (St. Petersburg: Isidor Gol’dberg, 1901), 48.

and a Russian choir singing the Marseillaise when the French delegation came to visit the Russian exhibit at the Trocadéro.⁸³

To enter the Caucasus hall of the borderlands pavilion, one had to pass through two “Circassians” made of wax before being welcomed by another diorama featuring the snow-capped summits of the Caucasus mountain range.⁸⁴ The mannequins continued the tradition of conventionalized type representations of the region’s diverse population, with the male mannequin sporting both a *papakha* (woolen hat) and a *chokha* (woolen coat), while a long-bladed dagger dangled in front of the latter. The female mannequin was shown wearing a bridal dress, thereby alluding to the trope of the “Circassian beauty.” Parallel to the audience being confronted with the entire pavilion’s overall impression of a juxtaposition between a Trans-Siberian flagship of modernity on the one hand and orientalizing representations of colonial borderlands on the other, the display of the Caucasus in the 1900 fair oscillated between a celebration of Russian industrial progress and a colonial viewpoint on a allegedly underdeveloped province where industries “had not yet succeeded to advance to a such of factories and manufacturing.”⁸⁵ The only exception to that narrative was the region’s booming oil industry, which consequently had the Apsheron peninsula end up in the center of attention of the Caucasus hall. Within the fairly cramped space, the story of an oil industry on the rise that would overtake the American pendant by delivery volume numbers was complemented by long cabinets and show cases that were curated by the naturalist and director of the Caucasus Museum in Tbilisi, Gustav Radde, and were supposed to give the audience an impression of the traditional way of life in the region by gazing at models of rural dwellings and pre-industrial tools. As the organizers themselves acknowledged, the borderlands pavilion and its Caucasus hall did not constitute “an industrial exhibition in the strict sense of the word.”⁸⁶ Instead, it told a story of a complex

83 Gers, *En 1900*, 164–165.

84 Malkowsky, *Die Pariser Weltausstellung*, 462; M.A. Orlov, *Vsemirnaia Parizhskaia Vystavka 1900 goda v illiustratsiakh i opisaniakh* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia brat. Panteleevykh, 1900), 162–163.

85 “Do ètogo umirotvoreniia kul’tura i promyshlennost’ razvivalis’ medlenno, zemledelie, v obshirnom smysle ètogo slova, pri vsem svoem raznoobrazii, obuslovlennom blagoslovennoiu prirodou Kavkaza, ne stoialo vyshe, chem v sosednikh Turtsii i Persii, a promyshlennost’ obrabotyvaiushchaia ogranichivalas’ ruchnoiu pererabotkoiu bogatykh i raznoobraznykh proizvedeniï strany, i takzhe, kak v Turkestane, ne uspela eshche pereiti v fabrichnuiu i manufakturnuiu i tol’ko v poslednee vremia odna otrasl’ promyshlennosti, a imenno, neftianoe proizvodstvo, pri bystrom i neimovernom svoem razvitii priobrela mirovoe znachenie.” Semënov, ed., *Okrainy Rossii*, 3–4.

86 *Ibid.*, 4.

relationship between notions of Russia and the Russian Empire and related ideas of a European *mission civilizatrice* and non-European exotics—notions that Russia adopted for the territories where the state thought it had a similar role as its Western European counterparts in their overseas dependencies and were narrated at the Paris fair along a represented backwardness that Russia's colonial rule over the borderlands was supposed to help overcome.

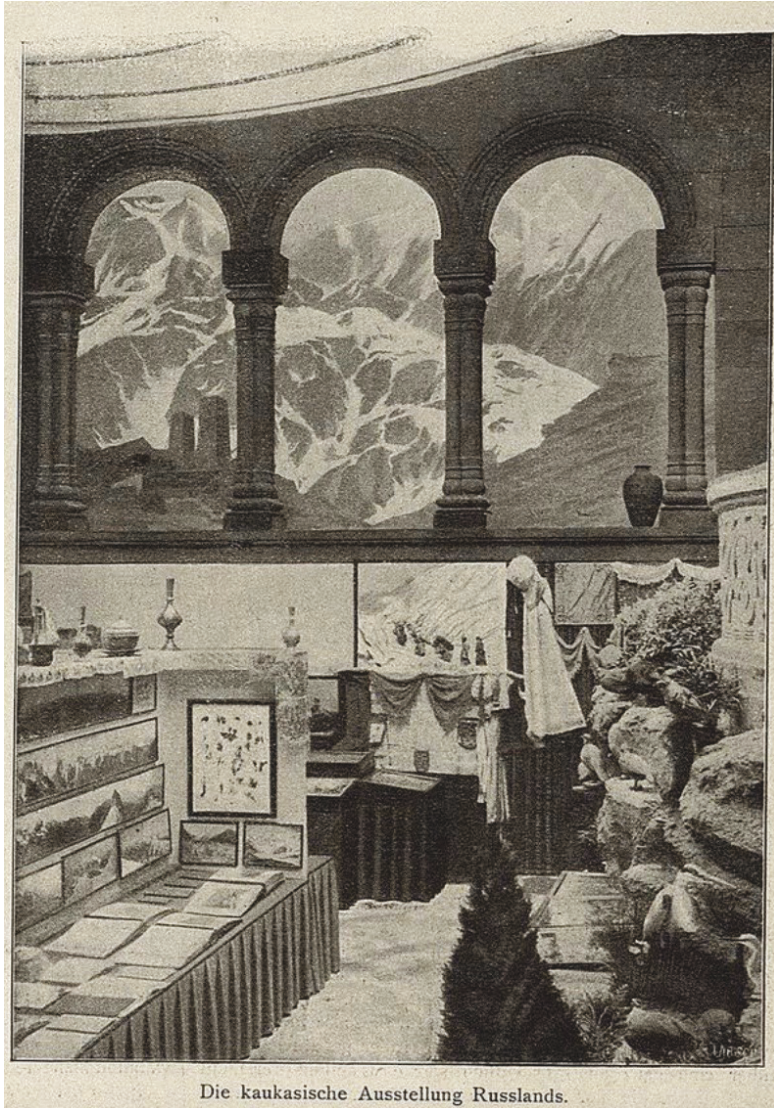


Figure 3.7. The Caucasus at the Paris World's Fair, 1900. Malkowsky, *Die Pariser Weltausstellung*, 467.

Visual images had a vital role within this self-representation of an industrializing, colonial powerhouse that was in the middle of a self-proclaimed mission to bring culture and modernity to the peoples inhabiting its borderlands on display. Organizations such as the Russian Technical Society, the Russian Red Cross, and private companies such as Scherer, Nabholz & Co., were integrated into wider, transnational networks and exhibited their latest works in the thematic sections of standard fair pavilions along the logic of contemporary academic exchange and commerce.⁸⁷ Within the borderlands pavilion at the Trocadéro, it was especially the section on the Caucasus that was built on photography as local organizations, many coming from Tbilisi, contributed a great deal of their exhibits in the form of photo albums. Visitors could engage with the latest innovations in the field of Russian sericulture in Tbilisi and the manganese mining industry around Kutaisi while they were also presented with albums that showed the educational sector the Russian administration had established in the urban Caucasus.⁸⁸ Photo albums compiled by (semi-)private actors such as the then Kislovodsk-based photographer Grigoriĭ I. Raev and military man and huntsman Anatoliĭ A. Kalinovskii helped promote the Caucasus as a realm of idyllic spa tourism and even “a natural Eldorado” worth exploring for anyone looking to be “enchanted by its wild beauty and grandeur.”⁸⁹ The idea of both mentally and physically conquering the Caucasus furthermore let the organizers move the high altitudes into the center of visual attention, not only by the panorama on canvas that greeted the audience upon entrance but also by relying on the latest works by the Italian respectively Hungarian alpinists-photographers Vittorio Sella and Mór Déchy, whose works are discussed at greater length in the sixth chapter. The section’s organizers installed panoramas consisting of several photographs taken at high altitudes on the back wall of open showcases to convey images of the alpine sublime as a colonial sphere already conquered in the name of the empire.

The hierarchies among the empire’s provinces and what the state considered a colony that let it stand its ground in the European competition for dependencies around the globe were reflected in the example of the representation of the Great Duchy of Finland at the Paris fair. Despite being ruled by Russia as an autonomous state within the empire and against the odds of troubled Russo-Finnish relations, Finland not only had its own pavilion at the 1900 Paris Fair, but it was

87 *Uchastie Rossii*, 21–22, 37–38.

88 *Catalogue général de la section russe*, 461–463.

89 “[. . .], on peut comparer le Caucase à un grand Eldorado naturel [. . .], il nous enchante par sa beauté sauvage et sa grandeur.” Kalinovskii, *Okhoty Kavkaza / Les chasses au Caucase*, 1–3.

even standing on the *rue des nations* where all the other exhibiting states (but not Russia itself) made use of the offered exposure to a global community. The *exposition universelle* let Finland formulate a vision of national and cultural distinctiveness from the Russian Empire which then again also came at the expense of the duchy's non-Finnish communities such as the indigenous Sámi.⁹⁰

Conclusions

The 1900 World's Fair in Paris constituted the pinnacle of the Russian Empire's participation in these exhibitions, which it would never again exceed in absolute numbers of exhibitors or in the accompanying relevance of political alliances. Furthermore, parts of the global community of exhibiting countries developed a certain unease about the character of the world's fairs, especially regarding their funding and the quality of objects on display, which led to a transnational movement to reform the expositions by the first decade of the new century.⁹¹ It took until 1928 that a convention on international exhibitions was established, but in a certain way, the public excitement and global interest that had come with these events declined for the upcoming fairs in St. Louis (1904),⁹² Belgium—not only in its capital (1910) but also in Liège (1905) and Ghent (1913)—and Milan (1906) and San Francisco (1915) whereas the 50 million visitors that had flocked to Paris in 1900 would only be surpassed by the Japan World Exposition in Osaka in 1970. Furthermore, by the early twentieth century, the medium of film complemented photography, and the latter soon lost its primacy as the main visual channel for transporting images of (self) representation.

For most of the imperial times, however, the world's fairs had constituted prominent venues for the exchange of knowledge, where not only the latest innovations were presented but also each participating country was offered an unrivalled level of exposure while individuals used the records of their participation,

90 On the background and lasting impact of the Finnish pavilion, see Bart Pushaw, "Our country has never been as popular as it is now! Finland at the 1900 Exposition Universelle," in *Expanding Nationalisms at World's Fairs. Identity, Diversity, and Exchange, 1851–1915*, ed. David Raizman and Ethan Robey (London: Routledge, 2018), 130–146.

91 Muñoz Torreblanca, "Barcelona's Universal Exhibition of 1888," 45–46.

92 On the Russian government's discontent with the results of previous world's fairs, the assessment of the minister of finance that it was inappropriate to spend such large sums of public funds on another participation, and the eventual refusal to official participate in the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, see Andrei I. Makurin, "K voprosu ob uchastie Rossii v mezhdunarodnoi vystavke 1904 goda v Sent-Luise," in *Chelovek, obshchestvo i kul'tura v XXI veke*, ed. E. P. Tkacheva (Belgorod: APNI, 2017), 13–17.

or ideally, awards, as long-lasting imprints of self-representation. Visual culture, especially photography, played a decisive role in the articulation of these images at the world's fairs, which ultimately mirrored the contemporary commercialization and commodification of networks that sought to express political and cultural dominance in spheres touching upon imperial rule and the arrival of industrial (and visual) modernity. Photographs exhibited at a world's fair profited from a new quality of circulation and reception that built on networks of power and rule standing behind the processes of production and selection for the respective national section in question. The images of the Caucasus that were circulated by the exhibiting states throughout the nineteenth century were thereby the expression of a vast network of actors, ranging from the military to oil magnates and alpinists. They were shaped by global nineteenth-century discourses on diplomacy, national particularities, and imperial variety, or colonialism, which led to dynamic and multifaceted representations intended to manage the balancing act between the self-representation of an industrializing powerhouse and the portrayal of semicolonial peripheries. Performing such complex imperial identities with the need to strike a balance at the nexus of the narrative of industrial modernity and inner-imperial Othering, however, at times led to an unwanted self-orientalization for which, at least for the representation of the Caucasus, one particular genre thrived: industrial photography.

CHAPTER 4

Visions of Railway Tracks and Oil Pipelines. The Reimagination of a Region through Industrial Photography

In 1884, a photographer by the name of Aleksandr M. Mishon (1858–1921) moved from the Kharkiv Governorate to the Caspian port city of Baku, where he significantly contributed to the development of the belatedly nascent field of photography over the next quarter of a century. His path to becoming a pioneering photographer in the region was almost predestined. Born to a Polish-French family that had migrated to the south of the empire in the 1850s, his father had already opened the first photo studio in the city of Slaviansk in 1870.¹ It was primarily portrait photography that provided a steady income for the Mishons but the emergence of an industrial sector in the area became an appealing theme for which Mishon—albeit uncertain whether father Mikhail or son Aleksandr—travelled to Iuzovka (today’s Donetsk) where he photographed the factory founded by Welsh engineer John Hughes, who also gave the city its name. Following the example of his father, the young Aleksandr learned the photography trade and inherited the family business by the end of the decade before eventually moving to the South Caucasus. It took Mishon three years to receive a permit to run a photo studio in Baku, but as soon as he opened it in 1887, he was quick to reach the public by placing advertisements in the most prominent newspapers, such as *Kaspiï*, in which he informed potential

1 Arkadiï Iu. Khil'kovskii et al., *Aleksandr Mishon. Fotograf, Izdatel', Kinematografist* (Khar'kov: Torsing plus, 2013), 10–18.

customers about his new studio on central Torgovaia ulitsa. In addition to portrait photography, Mishon “accepted orders for shots of factories, businesses, architectural buildings, etc., for the most inexpensive prices,”² thereby setting the tone for the expected repertoire of photographers in Baku. His early experience with photographs from the industrialization of the Donbas came in handy now, as he had come to a region on the industrial rise. Due to the increasing importance of oil, the Caspian port city became a place of global interest and the Russian Empire’s ambition to industrialize and integrate its southern provinces into the all-imperial networks of communication and logistics. By the turn of the century, modern factories and a new quality of capital and capitalists had arrived in the region while trains ran from east to west and from south to north, developments that both local and foreign photographers were eager to capture on glass plates and film.

This chapter explores the entanglement of industrialization and photographic practices, inquiring how visions of modernity built on or broke with traditional representations of the Caucasus region. It examines the state’s interest in maintaining control over the visual representation of its ambitions toward industrial modernity and the private commercialization of the industrial sector, which was one of the latter’s driving forces. In three subchapters, I firstly discuss the relationship between industry and photography against the backdrop of the latter half of the nineteenth century in the Caucasus. The second part is dedicated to the question of a *vision ferroviaire*³ or “railroad vision”⁴ and includes a visual content analysis of photographs of imperial railway projects in the region. I conclude the chapter by discussing global and local agencies in photographs produced during the decades of Baku’s oil boom and the city’s dynamic industrialization at the Caspian Sea. These three steps aim to illustrate the connection between the arrival and development of photography in the imperial borderlands, on the one hand, and the beginnings of the region’s industrialization, on the other. It is a story of the visualization of infrastructure influencing spatial imaginations, of the industrial revolution going hand in hand with a global exchange of photographic practices, and of imperial actors embracing photography as a welcome vehicle for promoting the integration of imperial peripheries through the narratives of state-controlled industrial progress.

2 “Fotograf A. Mishon,” *Kaspii*, no. 240, December 5, 1887, 1.

3 Clément Chéroux, “Vues du train. Vision et mobilité au XIXe siècle,” *Études photographiques* 1 (1996): 1–11.

4 Anne M. Lyden, *Railroad Vision. Photography, Travel, and Perception* (Los Angeles, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003).

Photography, Industry, and Empire

In 1977, the French semiotician Roland Barthes posited in an interview that photography and film were pure products of the industrial revolution, and that photography was treated as an orphan of high culture.⁵ His implicit criticism of the lack of theoretical debate on photography came more than fifteen years before the declaration of the “iconic” or “pictorial” turn, but and the visual representation of industrial sites often remains a rarely explored subject, even among debates on “picturing place,”⁶ and especially in comparison to other genres such as portrait, landscape, and architectural photography.⁷ The same holds true for Russia, where Lenka Fehrenbach has addressed this scholarly desideratum and demonstrated how photography was used within the context of industrialization.⁸ For practical reasons, her work is, however, confined to the European and Russian-speaking parts of the empire and therefore does not cover the connection between the advent of photography and industrialization in regions such as the Caucasus. Yet, the enactment of industrial innovation already constituted a powerful tool in imperial times and was readily adopted by both state and private actors, including those in the state’s peripheries, with results that left an imprint on the representation of the southern borderlands.

A sharp distinction between “industrial photography” and other genres such as landscape and social photography is thereby difficult to identify, as the respective subjects could often be subsumed under multiple categories. Furthermore, a retrospective interpretation of the images in question defines them as part of such a genre only in relation to the interested viewer’s guiding questions. In this acceptance and within the context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, my understanding of industrial photography as discussed in the

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- 5 Roland Barthes, “Über Fotografie. Interview mit Angelo Schwarz (1977),” in *Paradigma Fotografie. Fotokritik am Ende des fotografischen Zeitalters*, ed. Herta Wolf (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), 82.
 - 6 Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan, eds., *Picturing Place. Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003).
 - 7 In a global perspective, one may well argue that the rise of industrial capital is predominantly central to Euro-American histories of photography whereas it was elsewhere “arising from artisanal rather than industrial spheres” (see Jennifer Bajorek, *Unfixed. Photography and Decolonial Imagination in West Africa* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020], 83–84) but industrial photography has still often been overlooked in places where industrialization across a region has had a significant impact on its development (see Max Quanchi, “Researching early photography of the Pacific Islands: An overview,” *Journal of New Zealand & Pacific Studies* 8, no. 2 [2020]: 275).
 - 8 Lenka Fehrenbach, *Bildfabriken. Industrie und Fotografie im Zarenreich (1860–1917)* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2020).

present chapter is therefore rather wide and primarily oriented at visual sources relating to industrialization processes in the Caucasus, that is, the gradual transition of a region's socioeconomic order from a primarily agrarian into an industrial society. It goes beyond definitions that aim to define industrial photography via its provenance in the archives of industrial factories⁹ or put the factory in the center of attention,¹⁰ but encompasses all photographs being produced during a region's and society's industrialization.

The visual survey of industrialization is thereby both globally interconnected and strongly dependent on the local context in which it is situated. Similarly, a variety of actors were interested in industrial photography, including states and private entrepreneurs, who sought to document and promote industrial innovations within their territories and companies. As processes of industrialization transformed societies all around the globe, photography as one of its products of an "age of mechanical reproduction" was adopted to document industrial progress, for example, when a newly built railway track cut across the landscape or where a pipeline brought the global economy closer together by transporting natural resources from port to port. This potential value of photography to the industrial sector was recognized as early as the 1840s,¹¹ but due to technical limitations, such as the difficulty in rendering shades of green, it took another few decades before a higher number of photographs of factories in Western Europe or the Russian Empire were taken.¹² However, already from the mid-1850s, major engineering projects increasingly accompanied photographic production,

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- 9 Reinhard Matz, *Industriefotografie. Aus Firmenarchiven des Ruhrgebiets* (Essen: Kulturstiftung Ruhr, 1987), 9.
 - 10 Clemens Zimmermann, "Zur Definition der Industriefotografie. Von der Hochindustrialisierung bis zu den dreißiger Jahren," in *Forschungsaufgabe Industriekultur. Die Saarregion im Vergleich*, ed. Hans-Walter Herrmann, Rainer Hudemann, and Eva Kell (Saarbrücken: MDV, 2004), 375–390.
 - 11 See, for instance, the proposition of the Scottish civil engineer Alexander Gorton to the Institution of Civil Engineers to consider using photography as a documenting medium for industrial progress for it would allow "views of building works, or even of machinery when not in motion, to be taken with perfect accuracy in a very short space of time and with comparatively small expense." Cited in Nuno Pinheiro, "Industrial Photography," in *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, vol. 1, ed. John Hannavy (New York: Routledge, 2008), 741.
 - 12 Fehrenbach, *Bildfabriken*, 83–84. A prominent example of the early use of photography for industrial self-promotion was the image production by the German company Krupp which, beginning in the 1860s, commissioned large-scaled portraits of its production plants and made sure of a wide circulation of these photographs via exhibitions, giveaways to major customers and popular magazines. See Daniela Mysliwietz-Fleiß, *Die Fabrik als touristische Attraktion. Entdeckung eines neuen Erlebnisraumes im Übergang zur Moderne* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2020), 184–185.

which captured different aspects of representing industrialization. In America, the brothers William and Frederick Langenheim produced a series of stereographs exhibiting motifs such as the newly built bridges across the Niagara River (Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge), the world's first railway suspension bridge with the railway tracks very much at the center of the image, and across the Harlem River in New York City (High Bridge) and the Philadelphia Harbor on the Delaware River.¹³ Early photography in Australia reveals a particular emphasis on ports, railways, bridges, and farms, since photographers profited financially from presenting the continent's colonization successes, especially due to the lack of a romanticized antiquity to which the colonists wished to connect.¹⁴ In Brazil, the British railway engineer Charles Blacker Vignoles coordinated the construction of the Bahia to São Francisco Railway and hired the fellow British photographer Benjamin R. Mulock to document its progress (1859–1862).¹⁵ Vignoles had already overseen the construction of a chain bridge across the Dnipro River in Kyiv (1848–1853) where he relied on the visual services of Roger Fenton and John Cooke Bourne.¹⁶ And when the Welsh businessman John Hughes established a steel plant and coal mine in the Donbas region, industrial photography became a lucrative business for local photographers such as Mikhail and Aleksandr Mishon.

All these images have in common that they were taken in environments where actors, such as large industrial firms or respective states, were eager to capture and promote innovation through photography. The development of large-scale industries found its manifestation in photographic practices, which increasingly turned toward industrial motifs, with quantity and quality varying depending on the respective stage of a region's industrialization. For the Caucasus and

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- 13 See the Getty Museum's collection of the "Langenheim Brothers [Frederick and William Langenheim]," last modified August 12, 2022, <https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/group/103KC6>.
 - 14 Helen Ennis, *Photography and Australia* (London: Reaktion, 2007), 23.
 - 15 Eduardo Romero de Oliveira, "Railway Photography and Technology: analysis of the photographic record of Brazilian railway in the 19th century," *História (São Paulo)* 38 (2019): 12–13.
 - 16 John Hannavy, "John Cooke Bourne, Charles Blacker Vignoles and the Dneiper Suspension Bridge at Kyiv," *History of Photography* 28, no. 4 (2004): 334–347. Against the backdrop of the photographs of the Kyiv Bridge, the minutes of the first ordinary meeting of the Photographic Society in London refer to "the great services which the new Art would be likely to render to engineers and others having to superintend important works which they could only occasionally visit, or having to make intelligible to foreign employers speaking a different language, with whom they could interchange ideas only imperfectly in conversation, the details of blocks and ropes, and complicated constructions." Cited in *The Journal of the Photographic Society*, no. 1, March 3, 1853, 5.

its railway networks, this meant that photography entered a region with a still mainly agrarian economy, allowing it to accompany the initial phase of gradually industrializing the imperial borderlands from its very beginnings. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, this found manifestation in the construction of a north-south connection in the form of the Georgian Military Road across the Caucasus mountain range and between Vladikavkaz and Tbilisi¹⁷ as well as east-west railroad connections between Rostov-on-Don and Vladikavkaz, north of the mountain range, which was opened in 1875, and between the Black and Caspian Seas and the ports of Baku and Poti in 1883. The two lines were ultimately connected by the turn of the century, when the final tracks between Baku and Makhachkala were completed, integrating the Transcaucasus Railway into the broader Russian imperial rail network. By that time, the initially private railway company had already been nationalized (1889) and had become a major factor in the booming oil industry at the Caspian Sea.¹⁸

Railway tracks had yet to reach the Caucasus from the south, as both the Ottoman and Qajar empires either prioritized connections to other regions—such as the Hejaz—or, in the case of Iran, barely developed rail infrastructure at all. By the end of the nineteenth century, Iran's total railway network still measured less than one hundred kilometers, reflecting a lack of investment in bridging the infrastructural gap to the newly built Russian lines in the Caucasus.¹⁹ While the three states had different degrees of interest in connecting its

17 On the history of road constructions in general and the history of the Georgian Military Road in particular see Reinhard Nachtigal, *Verkehrswege in Kaukasien. Ein Integrationsproblem des Zarenreiches 1780–1870* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2016).

18 Furthermore, the railway in the empire's southern provinces was not only a profitable business for the local industries but it also made a significant contribution to the tourism sector, especially through its branches to the region's main resort towns such as along the line between Mineral'nye vody and Kislovodsk (see the figures on passenger development in Grigorii G. Moskvich, *Illustrirovannyi prakticheskiĭ putevoditel' po Kavkazu*. 20th ed. (St. Petersburg: Redaktsiia "putevoditelei," 1913), 14–16. On the history of the railway in the Russian Caucasus see for instance Aleksandr M. Argutinskii-Dolgorukov, *Istoriia sooruzheniia i ěkspluatatsii zakavkazskoi zhelěznoi dorogi za dvadtsat' piat' lět eia sushchestvovaniia 1871–1896 gg.* (Tiflis: Tipografiia A. S. Fedorova, 1896); Aristakes T. Sagratian, *Istoriia zheleznykh dorog Zakavkaz'ia, 1856–1921* (Yerevan: Atastan, 1970); John N. Westwood, "The Vladikavkaz Railway: A Case of Enterprising Private Enterprise," *Slavic Review* 25, no. 4 (1966): 669–675.

19 For an overview on the historical development of the Ottoman and Iranian railway sectors in the nineteenth century, see Elvan Cobb, "Railway Crossings: Encounters in Ottoman Lands" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2018), 14–48; Yaqub N. Karkar, *Railway Development in the Ottoman Empire, 1856–1914* (New York: Vantage Press, 1972); Mikiya Koyagi, *Iran in Motion. Mobility, Space, and the Trans-Iranian Railway* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2021), 18–39; Murat Özyüksel, *The Hejaz Railway and the Ottoman Empire. Modernity, Industrialisation and Ottoman Decline* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 8–41.

developing railway networks to the Caucasus and the respective adjacent empire's markets, their industrial sectors had in common that they were dependent on foreign knowledge and capital. Western European companies that engaged in railway construction abroad could rely on their government's support, since their involvement in railway lines allowed them to economically and politically influence other states. The Ottoman Empire and Qajar Iran were prime targets for the British Empire's imperialist agenda, and the German *Kaiserreich*, and later, also for the Russian Empire when constructing railway lines in northern Iran. As a result, a fair share of early photographs from the three neighboring Caucasus empires' railway sector was produced by foreign photographers who documented their fellow countrymen's engineering efforts²⁰—at least if they were able to obtain the respective state's official permission to photograph its industry.²¹

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- 20 The contracted—primarily German and British—engineers followed the logics of capitalist imperialism and exported decades of Western European railway construction know-how abroad and to whatever state their employing company had managed to win a contract. Therefore, engineers such as the British Henry Kemp ended up overseeing railway construction sites in both the Russian and the Ottoman empires (Kemp worked on the Smyrna-Cassaba (Izmir-Kasaba) Railway but also in Egypt and Sudan or in Hungary, Sardinia, and Spain; see "Obituary. Henry Kemp, 1839–1895," *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers* 120 (1895): 357–358. The photographic documentation of the extension of the Smyrna-Cassaba Railway to Alascheir (Alaşehir)—overseen by another British engineer, Samuel Bayliss—as kept in an album (ca. 1875) of thirty albumen prints by an unknown photographer at the Getty Research Institute (Nr. 89.R.24; https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8k360tv/entire_text/) is a good example for these processes of knowledge transfer and image production, as is the work of Swedish-born and Istanbul-based Guillaume (Pehr Vilhelm) Berggren (1835–1920) who got commissioned to take photos of the entirety of the Anatolian Railways (see Peter H. Christensen, *Germany and the Ottoman Railways. Art, Empire, and Infrastructure* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017], 72).
- 21 Industrial photography was (and is) a domain in which the involved states were particularly eager to have a say on what was allowed to be photographed and what was not. Across the Russian Empire travelers and photographers encountered obstacles and prohibitions when it came to taking photos of infrastructural projects. Writing about the Trans-Siberian Railway, the Italian journalist Luigi Barzini reports: "Obedient to the law, we had buried our photographic machine in the bottom of our box; we had been warned that it was strictly forbidden to take pictures of military buildings, of harbour constructions, of boats and bridges and railway works, and of other things which every one can easily see for himself if he goes there." Luigi Barzini, *Pekin to Paris. An account of Prince Borghese's journey across two continents in a motor-car* (London: E. Grant Richards, 1907), 386.

An early twentieth-century travel account on a journey on "two great military roads across the Caucasus" from the Russian Vladikavkaz to the Ottoman Trabzon, printed in an American evangelical periodical, paints a similar picture furthermore illustrates a conflict between aspiration and practicability in this balancing act between private entrepreneurship, well-established pattern of representation and the state's ambition to keep control over the circulation of images around its industries and the narrative of progress: "Our request for a

The Russian state built on foreign knowledge, imported industrial goods, and supported private initiatives that were considered beneficial to the development and integration of newly acquired provinces into the framework of all-imperial logistics. Hence, the first steps of industrialization were primarily concentrated at meeting the state's ambition to connect the commercial centers of the South Caucasus to its existing networks of transportation and communication and to strengthen the imperial borders against the adjacent Ottoman and Qajar empires. Military thinking, therefore, played a crucial role in industrializing the region, a role closely correlated with the development of local photographic practices in the broader southern Caucasus region, which were significantly influenced by the Russian army's presence in the area. As Heather S. Sonntag has pointed out, "Russians began to competently apply military photography towards modern engineering projects and be recognized by their European counterparts," which also led to foreign acknowledgment of the Russian General Staff as a frontrunner for government departments adopting photography for military purposes.²² The first region where photography was thereby systematically applied was the Caucasus, where, as of 1861, Russian army officers and topographers were formally trained, and an official photographers' corps was established the following year.²³ While for many early photographic works of the Caucasus, the responsible photographer's name has been lost to his anonymity within the army, most recorded names from the 1850s and 1860s were part of the Caucasus army's photographic division in the "military topographical department" (VTO).

As discussed in the previous chapter, the resulting works were often sent abroad to demonstrate the Russian state's strength through technological competency and industrial progress while the biographies of known military photographers reveal their integration into wider international networks. By the late 1850s, and especially after the euphemistically called "pacification" of the entire North Caucasus, showcasing the Russian military's triumph and integrating newly conquered provinces into the empire's logistics was also repeatedly on display within the framework of industrial expositions in St. Petersburg and Moscow. During this age of exhibitions, industrial achievement often took center stage—as reflected in the title of the first world fair in London 1851, officially called the Great Exhibition

permit to take photographs, however, he could not grant. Nevertheless, he advised us to carry our cameras. Later we learned that our gendarme was under verbal orders to let us do whatever we pleased and not notice it. Hence these illustrations." Frederick B. Wright, "Two Great Military Roads Across the Caucasus—Along the Black Sea," *Congregationalist and Christian World* 87, no. 36 (September 6, 1902): 334.

22 Sonntag, "The Role of Russian Military Photography," 90.

23 Ibid., 127.

of the Works of Industry of All Nations and while the first all-Russian exhibition in Moscow 1867 emphasized the empire's ethnographic composition through the use of photography, industrial exhibitions were quick to follow suit and make extensive use of photography. Joseph Bradley, for instance, argues that the 1872 Polytechnical Exposition in Moscow with its Caucasus pavilion, organized by the IOLEAË and visited by more than 750,000 million people, demonstrated how "sections of applied science familiarized the Russian public with a dizzying variety of new technologies used in photography, mining, armaments, steel production, and railroad building, to name but a few."²⁴ Other societies, such as the Russian Technical Society (Russkoe tekhnicheskoe obshchestvo, founded in 1866), also quickly picked up the craft, sponsored photographic exhibitions, and established a division of photography in 1878.²⁵ Photographs of industrial subjects had come to stay and shaped the common perception of all-imperial and regional steps towards industrialization until the final days of the empire, when industry became an omnipresent visual subject in the self-representation of the Soviet state.²⁶

Images of Industrial Modernity: A *vision ferroviare* for the Caucasus

For visually representing the early decades of the Caucasus's industrialization, a range of themes became central to the iconography of the region during the industrial age: the construction of the first railway lines, construction and maintenance of major transport routes across the mountains, appearance of modern lines of communication, electrification of the region, and the establishment of modern factories—all of these deserve an in-depth analysis of their inherent visual language and significance within the narrative of a modernizing empire. From a quantitative perspective, however, the most prominent motif is the construction of the region's first railway lines, which began in the Black Sea port of Poti in 1865, connected Tbilisi by 1872, and eventually extended to the Caspian Sea in Baku in 1883. Considering infrastructural projects, including such major railway lines as the empire's essential tools, has a long tradition in historical

24 Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia*, 156.

25 *Ibid.*, 331.

26 See Fehrenbach, *Bildfabriken*, 369–394; Rosalinde Sartori, *Pressefotografie und Industrialisierung in der Sowjetunion. Die Pravda 1925–1933* (Berlin and Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981).

research²⁷ but more recent studies have led to a shift from functionalist interpretations to more complex cultural histories of infrastructure and empire.²⁸ As two standout products of the industrial age, the train and the camera thereby have an important place in such histories, and as powerful agents of spatialization, photography and the railway had a decisive influence on the contemporary perceptions of landscape, urban space, and imperial cohesion. As the ultimate metonym²⁹ or symbol for modernity,³⁰ the railway represented both political and social change. At the same time, the ambition to connect formerly peripheral and

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- 27 See, for instance, John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review* 6, no. 1 (1953): 1–15; Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire. Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).
- 28 Jeremy Foster, "Capturing and Losing the 'Lie of the Land': Railway Photography and Colonial Nationalism in Early Twentieth-Century South Africa," in *Picturing Place. Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, ed. Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 141–161; Ben Marsden and Crosbie Smith, *Engineering Empires. A Cultural History of Technology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005; Corey Ross, *Ecology and Power in the Age of Empire. Europe and the Transformation of the Tropical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
- 29 Marian Aguiar, *Tracking Modernity. India's Railway and the Culture of Mobility* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 157.
- 30 On the quality of the railway as a symbol of modernity in the context of the Russian Empire, see Roland Cvetkovski, *Modernisierung durch Beschleunigung. Raum und Mobilität im Zarenreich* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2006); Schenk, *Russlands Fahrt in die Moderne*; Walter Sperling, *Der Aufbruch der Provinz. Die Eisenbahn und die Neuordnung der Räume im Zarenreich* (Frankfurt/Main and New York: Campus, 2011). Aside the railway's dominant quality as a symbol of modernity one could also make a case for roads as representations of progress and development (see for instance Dobrinka Parusheva, "Cities along the Route: Plovdiv becoming "Modern" at the End of the Nineteenth Century," in *The Balkan Route. Historical Transformations from Via Militaris to Autoput*, ed. Florian Riedler and Nenad Stefanov (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 121–138. This is particularly true for the Russian representation of the integration of the Caucasus provinces into the all-imperial logistics where the construction of roads such as the Georgian Military Road across the mountain passes became an epitome of Russian conquest in the south. The rich visual corpus of the Georgian Military Road however stems not only from the years of the road's initial construction, subsequent extension, and ongoing improvement throughout the nineteenth century as collected for instance by the American traveler George Kennan (1845–1924) during his journey across the Caucasus in 1870/71 where he was able to obtain many photographs of the Georgian Military Road from Dmitrii I. Ermakov (see Kennan's compiled album with collected photographs from the Caucasus and today kept by the NYPL: "The Caucasus: An Album of Photographs," The New York Public Library, accessed July 18, 2023, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/the-caucasus-an-album-of-photographs>). Much rather, it remained a prominent theme for many decades to come. One of the many examples is the Russian Ministry of Transportation commissioning the then Piatigorsk-based photographer Grigorii I. Raev with large-scale prints of the progress on the construction of the Sukhumi Military Road for the 16th all-Russian industrial and art exhibition in Nizhnii Novgorod 1896 (see Boglachëv, *Pervye fotografy Kavkaza*, 153).

newly conquered provinces to the empire's main communication lines and trade routes was closely tied to an understanding of photography as a form of neutral documentation. This belief allowed state and private actors to present their respective claims to modernity in ways that ultimately inscribed long-lasting narratives into how particular landscapes were perceived. Benjamin Schenk has described how the Russian state utilized the visualization of emerging railway networks as an imperial-colonial tool to shape its imperial self-representation. He has shown how both Russian and Western European commentators celebrated the Transcaucasian Railway "as an expression of a successful *mission civilisatrice* of the West in Asia,"³¹ how maps of the Russian railway networks presented the tracks as the skeleton, which kept the empire together as "a united, indivisible Whole (*odno edinoe nerazdel'noe* [*ts*]eloe),"³² and how the railways were supposed to contribute to an "image of the Tsarist Empire as a homogenous, national space, in which political and cultural internal frontiers played no more role."³³

The arrival of the Transcaucasian Railway on the maps of the Caucasus region signified the arrival of the industrial age to lands that had so far been either associated with Pushkin's new Parnass or been described as "an unhealthy place [...] which is not surprising considering that the town is built on wooden piles sunk in a swamp, where troops of black-spotted swine revel in the black mud and water surrounding the log huts, and innumerable frogs make night anything but a quiet time"³⁴ or

31 Schenk, *Russlands Fahrt in die Moderne*, 88–89. This transregional symbolic capital of the new railway line also made Russian photographers based in the spa towns of the North Caucasus travel across the Caspian Sea and produce albums with shots of the railway tracks in the steppes of Central Asia (see for instance the co-produced album *Zakaspiskaia voennaia zheleznaia doroga* (1884) by Aleksandr K. Engel' and Grigorii I. Raev).

32 *Ibid.*, 154–156. The railway tracks were also visualized as networks of veins running through the empire and not only in Russian publications but also abroad such as in the *Illustrated London News* (July 19, 1913, XXXII, Supplement), which opened a report on the latest railway line in the Southern Caucasus by writing that "[v]ery much as arteries are to a man, railways are to a country" and added a description of "a vital line [...] opening up Kakhétia by railway" to such a map, while a contemporary German-language railway encyclopedia shows all Russian state lines in red color on its map of railways in the Russian empire (see Oscar Mertens, "Russische Eisenbahnen," in *Enzyklopädie des Eisenbahnwesens*, vol. 8, 2nd ed., ed. Victor von Röhl (Berlin: Urban & Schwarzenberg, 1917), 256–278, plate 8).

33 Schenk, *Russlands Fahrt in die Moderne*, 81.

34 George R. Fitz-Roy Cole, "Transcaucasia," *Fraser's Magazine* 16, no. 96 (1877): 784. The author describes the port town of Poti, which became the terminus of the newly build railway and therefore enjoyed a sudden rise to importance for trade and commerce but like many cities at the eastern Black Sea coast was struggling with frequent malaria outbreaks. Once the Russian Empire gained control of Batumi in the framework of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877/1878, it however made sure to extend its railway network to the Adjarian port which would with the subsequent construction of the Branobel Oil Terminal and the Baku-Batumi kerosene pipeline become a trading base of global relevance.

“vast swamplands without any traces of culture”³⁵ by travelers or diplomats arriving from Western Europe and reporting on the progress of the railway constructions between Poti and Tbilisi. The Caucasus region’s increasing importance for its resources, its geostrategic location, and as a transit hub, however, allowed early twentieth-century observers to compare the Transcaucasus Railway as equally significant to the contemporary flagship projects of the Trans-Siberian, Baghdad, Hejaz, and Cape-to-Cairo railways.³⁶ Across the world, the railway reduced distances and became a metaphor for overcoming the vastness, inaccessibility, and (natural) wilderness of particular landscapes, which were common attributes for the Caucasus, but also other provinces such as Siberia, in the Russian Empire.

Since the Russian state was particularly interested in utilizing photography to create and consolidate a favorable representation of its territorial acquisitions and integration into the empire as one coherent space, the photographic production of an early industrial image of the Caucasus often occurred against the backdrop of actors relying on educational or financial backgrounds provided by the state. The graduates of the VTO, for instance, were instructed to document the lives and customs of the regional native population and capture the landscapes changing through industrialization.³⁷ An album with twenty-seven photographs by Vladimir V. Barkanov (1872, *Poti-Tiflisskaia zheleznaia doroga*) documents how the railway tracks reached Tbilisi, the region’s cultural and economic center, and thereby represents the recurring motif of industrial progress in early Caucasus photography. In 1872, Barkanov was running a photo studio in Kutaisi and was well-connected within and beyond the empire’s photographic networks. The prestigious Société Française de Photographie had accepted Barkanov’s application to join its ranks in May 1870³⁸ while he was contributing his works to the 1872 Polytechnical Exhibition in Moscow and the 1873 World’s Fair in Vienna—all of which he gladly advertised on the reverse side of his cabinet cards. In Kutaisi, he joined Viktor S. Voiutskii (c. 1835–c. 1880), who had moved to the Caucasus from Kyiv and became a well-known photographer in Vladikavkaz,³⁹ before eventually open a studio in Tbilisi at the behest

35 Guido von Call, “Eisenbahnen im Kaukasus,” *Oesterreichische Monatsschrift für den Orient*, no. 3 (1877): 38.

36 Max Blanckenhorn, “Die Hedschäzbahn,” *Geographische Zeitschrift* 18, no. 1 (1912): 29.

37 Gorshenina and Sonntag, “Early Photography as Cultural Transfer,” 331–333; Lika Mamatsashvili, “Early Photography in Georgia,” 19–21.

38 See *Bulletin de la Société Française de Photographie*, vol. 16 (1870): 113.

39 Akoeff, *Fotografy i fotograficheskie atel’e*, 22–24.

of the capital. While several details of Barkanov's biography remain unclear,⁴⁰ we can conclude from his surviving works that he embraced a broad variety of themes as a businessman and artist. As with many photographers of his time, he strongly relied on portrait photography to earn a living whereas the sitters in his portraits demonstrate his connections to metropolitan and provincial elites among all ethnic groups, and foreign travelers and diplomats looking for studios in the city center.⁴¹ He sold photographic copies of the Bavarian painter Theodor Horschelt's scenes from the Caucasus War in his joint studio with Voiutskii,⁴² and later, in the 1880s, compiled an album on "types" from the Near East.⁴³ For the 1872 exhibition in Moscow, he contributed a convolute of 163 images depicting industrial constructions and construction sites in Georgia as well as photographic copies of medieval gospels from the Gelati Monastery.⁴⁴ His contribution to the 1873 World's Fair included both his 1872 railway photographs and a series of "Caucasus types."⁴⁵ The state relied once again on Barkanov's services during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, when he extensively documented the Caucasus front as a war correspondent before returning to his every-day job in his atelier in Tbilisi.⁴⁶ It remains unclear what exactly brought

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- 40 He is for instance included in Vahan Kochar's book on Armenian photographers (*Hay lusankarich'ner*, 23) but as Vigen Galstyan ("Barkanov, V.," *Lusadaran. Armenian Photography Foundation*, 2014, <http://lusadaran.org/artists/barkanov-vladimir/>) points out, there is no factual evidence for the claims of Barkanov being of Armenian descent.
- 41 See for instance portraits of French diplomat François de Ripert-Monclar (Mane, Musée de Salagon, no. 1996.9.26, accessed September 21, 2023, <https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/joconde/08590980348>), Georgian publicist Levan (Leonti) Dadešk'eliani (National Parliamentary Library of Georgia, no. 61764, accessed September 21, 2023, <https://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/handle/1234/61764>), and composer Pëtr I. Chaikovskii (1890, together with his brother's pupil Nikolai G. Konradi and the young diplomat Vladimir N. Argutinskii-Dolgorukov, Wikimedia Commons, accessed September 21, 2023, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Վարդան_Սրղոյթյան-Երկայնաբազուկ1.gif).
- 42 Mikhail N. Vladykin, *Putevoditel' i sobesednik v puteshestvii po Kavkazu* (Moscow: Tipografia I. Rodzevicha i V. Islen'eva, 1874), 424.
- 43 See the album "Tipazhi narodov Blizhnego Vostoka" at RGAKFD (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Kinofotodokumentov), album no. A-619.
- 44 Giorgi Gersamia, "Vladimir Barkanov," The Georgian Museum of Photography, accessed September 21, 2023, http://www.photomuseum.org.ge/barkanov/index_en.htm.
- 45 "Die Kartographie der kaukasischen Abtheilung," *Allgemeine Illustrirte Weltausstellungs-Zeitung* 4, no. 11, August 10, 1873, 165.
- 46 The key role of the military in developing early photography in the Caucasus region and the importance of visuals in war propaganda (see, for instance, Stephen M. Norris, *A War of Images. Russian Popular Prints, Wartime Culture, and National Identity 1812–1945* [DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006], especially 80–106) came together during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877/1878 in what became the first major war in which the VTO made sure to produce albums with views of Russian units preparing for combat and of battlefields (but not battle scenes). Barkanov's *Al'bom snimkov iz Russko-turetskoï kampanii 1877 goda* (RGAKFD, A-107) is one of the results of the Russian army's intent to learn from

Barkanov to Iran in the 1890s, but when the photographer passed away in 1892, he was buried in the courtyard of an Armenian church in Tehran.⁴⁷

Barkanov's 1872 album on the construction of the Poti-Tbilisi Railway connects the photographic education background within the ranks of the Russian military and the state's interest in industrial documentation. It thereby also set the pace for the iconography of railways in the imperial Caucasus for the following half-century, as subsequent observations reflect an in-depth analysis of the photographs in my corpus that were directly related to the construction of railway tracks across the wider Caucasus in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Five types are dominant in the contemporary image production:

Firstly, Barkanov and his fellow photographers connected their works to the traditional imagery of the empire's southern borderlands, which is representative of the often-present circular reciprocity in the relationship between traditions of painting and early photography. The Caucasus, as represented in the tradition of Russian painting, had until then been a prominent theme in Romanticist depictions, where lofty peaks towered over lush scenes⁴⁸ for which the railway track lines are repeatedly shown as complementing natural landmarks rather than radically breaking with the composition's settings. The album includes several views of tracks naturally following the course of a river and across the snow-covered fields on the Surami Pass. The spectacular scenery of this pass, in combination with the seemingly symbiotic embrace of industrial modernity's arrival, eventually also entered Russian painting and the Tret'iakov Gallery, in the form of Aleksandr A. Kisel'ev's "Staryi Suramskii pereval" (1891), for instance, where the artist composed a smooth transition of the locomotive's steam into the misty mountains of central Georgia. In most railway photographs from the region—not only in Barkanov's album but in similar compositions by contemporary photographers from the Caucasus—the railway tracks are portrayed as turning smoothly within a compact landscape and disappearing into a long bend (fig. 4.1). The photographs are almost exclusively taken from an elevated position and uphold the narrative of railway construction, complementing the terrain with controlled appropriation

the Crimean War where the visual production had been entirely left to the opponents (see Sonntag, *Genesis of the Turkestan Album*, 25–32 for “making a case for the Crimean War as catalyst to military photographic reform).

47 Lado Agniašvili, *Sparsel'i da ik'auri k'art'velebi (mgzavris cerilebi)* (Tbilisi: Tipografiia Gruzinskogo Izdatel'stva Tovarishchestva, 1896), 56–57.

48 Among the many, see for instance Ivan K. Aivazovskii's "View of the Caucasus with Mt. Kazbek in the distance" (Vid na Kavkaz s goroi Kazbek v otdalenii, 1868), Aleksandr A. Kisel'ev's "A Forest in the Mountains" (Les v gorakh, ca. 1890), Lev F. Lagorio's landscape paintings from the Caucasus, e.g. "A Caucasus Gorge" (Kavkazskoe ushchel'e, 1893), Arsenii I. Meshcherskii's "Caucasus" (Kavkaz, 1873), and Vasilii V. Vereshchagin's "Kazbek" (1897–1898).

and transformation, instead of suggesting a radical, destructive shake-up of the region. The composition of receding tracks is connected to many works throughout the nineteenth century and around the world, which Anne Lyden⁴⁹ describes as “the lure of railroad vision, with its tempting images of large, open landscapes and awe-inspiring vistas—of escape.” This imagery stands in stark contrast to a second compositional tradition in comparable settings,⁵⁰ where railway tracks often disappear into the very center of the photograph’s distant horizon. This theme of the railway as a straight line, one of the most striking themes according to Michael Freeman,⁵¹ is, however, the exception in the works of photographers in service of the Russian imperial state where the imagery of the southern borderlands emanated rule and control rather than (individual) escape and opportunity.



Figure 4.1. Vladimir V. Barkanov. “The Poti-Tiflis Railway.” Piatigorsk Regional Museum.

49 Lyden, *Railroad Vision*, 85.

50 See, for instance, the images of low-angle, straight-line railway tracks of the Smyrna-Cassaba Railway to Alaşehir (Getty Research Institute, Nr. 89.R.24, especially print no. 23) which in their visual construction were informed by what Cobb (“Railway Crossings,” 196) refers to a “compartmentalization of western Anatolia into three identifiable categories” (ancient, oriental, and modern) that made visitors conceive “the train as a sign of modern progress endowed to the region by the ‘west.’”

51 Michael Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 221.

Secondly, however, the photographers were equally interested in capturing the sensation of industrial progress by contrasting it with a bleak landscape, which, in the case of the Caucasus, is particularly noteworthy, as it changed how local landscapes were represented. The composition of landscape scenes is therefore not consistent, as several of Barkanov's images juxtapose the described pictorial continuity and the constructional character of the Poti-Tbilisi Railway by emphasizing gravel and dirt in the images' center. The transformational dimension of the railway construction is thereby transported to the viewers through the discourse of landscape rather than through a social component. The workforce laying tracks is therefore not at all portrayed in Barkanov's album, which is not necessarily representative for local or global modes of representing railway construction work in late imperial times. Both work force and working conditions were picked up as central subjects for state-promoting and -critical narratives, for instance, in the Ottoman Empire where the visual account of the Hejaz Railway construction was marketed as a national project and heavily centered on the use of railway troops composed of soldiers by which the government overcame the shortage of skilled workers,⁵² whereas social criticism underscored the work of American photographer Lewis E. Hine, who documented child labor in early twentieth-century factories despite stiff resistance from factory owners. Lenka Fehrenbach,⁵³ however, points out that Hine's work has no equivalent in the Russian Empire and, with the state defining change through controlled landscapes rather than social questions, Barkanov's omission of workers corresponds with the vast majority of railway photographs from the imperial Caucasus.⁵⁴ Photo series, which include workers as key actors in railway construction processes such as in an album documenting the extension of the railway line from Tbilisi toward Julfa,⁵⁵ remain the exception in pre-Soviet photography.

52 Christensen, *Germany and the Ottoman Railways*, 34–35; Özyüksel, *The Hejaz Railway*, 135–139.

53 Fehrenbach, *Bildfabriken*, 24.

54 I am thankful to Martina Baleva for having pointed out to me how this omission correlates to what Linda Nochlin ("The Imaginary Orient," *Art in America* 71, no. 5 [1983], 123) has written on "the absence of scenes of work and industry" in Orientalist art, providing a negative image of a "vice of idleness" of non-Western cultures that allowed an allegedly progressive West to inscribe its narratives of progress and civilization into pictorial representations of the respective "Other."

55 *Al'bom Vidov i sooruzhenii zheleznoi dorogi ot Tiflisa do Persidskoï granicy, Dzhul'fy s vet'iami k gor. Karsu i Èrivani. 1895–1907*. Tiflis: Ministerstvo putei soobshcheniia, 1909. Dmitriï I. Ermakov produced similar shots at the construction site of the Jajur tunnel in northern Armenia (e.g. Ermakov no. 11017–11035).

How much the construction of the railway was—here at the example of the railway toward Kars but also elsewhere—widely perceived as a profound transformation and the ultimate sign of modernization processes arriving in the periphery is reflected in the short story "The

Thirdly, the image production relied on symbols of human-made industrial progress, which extended beyond the railway itself, through locomotives and tracks, to newly built tunnels and bridges that reflected the latest achievements in the architectural sector. Across different visual media outlets worldwide, these symbols came to dominate the representation of both urban scenes and peripheral landscapes. Post offices not only became key actors in the global dissemination of visual materials once they became hubs for shipping picture postcards but they also became central motifs for photographers seeking to capture an objectified new era of communication. A similar icon for this era was the telegraph post, which were often built and portrayed alongside railway tracks. Some of the earliest known railway photographs from Iran were taken by the German telegraphist Ernst Höltzer, who had arrived in the Qajar Empire in the 1860s.⁵⁶ From the early 1870s, once he had purchased photographic equipment, and until 1897 when he left Iran to move back to Europe, he produced a comprehensive chronicle of late nineteenth-century Iran and recorded the work on telegraph lines and the development of Iran's industrial sector. These included the country's first railway projects, which was a complicated matter due to Russian interests and global politics.⁵⁷ Höltzer's motivation to expose over three thousand negatives was fueled by his firm belief that he was witnessing a radical transformation of the country. His notes include comments on Iran being "on the verge of a cultural transformation" and on "foreign agents with European mores" who had been coming to Iran for several years now—an arrival which would go hand in hand with a change toward oblivion of old buildings, customs,

Construction of the Railway" ("Yerkat'ughu shinut'yunë," 1897–1908) by the Armenian writer Hovhannes Tumanyan (1869–1923) in which the inevitable arrival of the train marks the beginning of a new era overshadowing old debates (see Hovhannes T'umanyan, *Patmvašk'ner* (Yerevan: Edit Print, 2010), 48–51). In all its briefness, Tumanyan's story points at the equally important other side of the coin of railway imperialism, namely the upright local, subaltern agency and ever-changing strategies of response to colonial policies. Peter Christensen (*Germany and the Ottoman Railways*, 18–19) shows by analyzing a title page of the Azerbaijani satirical periodical *Molla Nəsrəddin* how this narrative of the railway as progress was also put in visual juxtaposition to a reactionary (Muslim) clergy.

- 56 Jennifer M. Scarce, *Isfahan in Camera. 19th Century Persia through the Photographs of Ernst Hoeltzer* (London: AARP, 1976); Dirk Schaal, *Lebenswege. Ernst Höltzer* (Munich: Siemens Historical Institute, 2015), 48–50; Stein, "Early Photography in Iran," 264–268.
- 57 Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia. Imperial Ambitions in Qajar Iran*, 2nd ed. (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 105–148; Koyagi, *Iran in Motion*, 22–36; Ceren Uçan, "A tale of two railways and the Reuter family," *Middle Eastern Studies* 55, no. 1 (2019): 22–32. On the other hand, the Russian interest in Northern Iran also led to the construction of nearly 800 kilometers of roads and in the 1910s to the establishment of the first long-distance line in the country, built by the Russian military between Julfa and Tabriz where the first train arrived in 1916.

and mores.⁵⁸ Indeed, the incoming engineers primarily translated the interests of their home empires into infrastructure that aimed to connect Iran to the neighboring regional markets and subsequently to the global economy, rather than to strengthen the Qajar state's economy—a logic that eventually also facilitated a transregional export of images from Iran into the world.

North of Iran, the symbol of choice for the advent of the industrial age in the Caucasus's countryside was, however, the (railway) bridge. Barkanov's series includes seven photographs of bridges along the railway line, meaning that almost one in three cases draws the viewer's attention to the bridge in the center of the image (fig. 4.2). These photographs, however, also prominently feature the surrounding scenery. Through these photographs, Barkanov demonstrates his skills as a panorama photographer by combining the bridge—a symbol of industrialization—with the discussed discourses of landscapes into single frames. The photographic documentation of the Tbilisi-Julfa railway line construction displays a similar concentration on bridges (forty-two out of 111 photographs), while the portfolios of popular photographers such as Dmitrii I. Ermakov and various series of collectible picture postcards such as those printed with Scherer, Nabholz & Co (*Kavkaz—Caucase*) also include substantial series of railway bridge photographs. In a global perspective, the demand for railway photography and the consequent comparatively high number of albums and photo series from various railway line construction processes let some photographers earn the reputation as a “railway photographer”⁵⁹ while others even became known for specific sub-genres such as railway bridge photography.⁶⁰ On

58 Mohammad Assemi, ed. *Ernst Höltzer. Persien vor 113 Jahren. Text und Bilder*, part 1, *Teil: Esfahan* (Tehran: Ministry of Culture and Arts, 1975), preface respectively introduction. “Seit einigen Jahren kommen viele fremde Agenten mit europäischen Sitten in dieses Land. [...] Persiens [sic!] und auch Ispahan steht auf der Schwelle der Kulturumwandlung, und man beginnt bereits seit einigen Jahren, viel fremden, meist europäischen Stil und Luxus dort einzuführen und einzurichten. Die alten Gebäude, Sitten und Gebräuche (Selbst die Kleidung) verschwinden allmählich, so daß in wenigen Jahren vieles von Chardin und Tavernier Beschriebene gar nicht mehr aufzufinden möglich sein wird.”

59 Louise Guay, “Alexander Henderson, photographer,” *History of Photography* 13, no. 1 (1989): 85. Similar attributions can be found for Édouard Baldus and Auguste Hippolyte Collard, who are responsible for many of the most renowned photographs of mid-nineteenth-century engineering projects in France. The established reputation of the Rudnev brothers photo studio in Vladikavkaz as one of the region leading businesses also builds on a photo album (*Vidy stroitel'stva Rostovo-Vladikavkazskoi zheleznoi dorogi*) showing the construction of the railway between Rostov-on-Don and Vladikavkaz in 1872–1875. See Akoeff, *Fotografy i fotograficheskie atel'e*, 16, 205–207.

60 Dainius Junevičius, “Anton Rohrbach: Rediscovering a mid-19th Century Photographer of Railway Bridges,” in *Jubilee—30 years ESHPh. Congress of Photography in Vienna*, ed. Anna Auer and Uwe Schögl (Salzburg: Fotohof, 2008), 110–125. The history of the album “Grand

a local level, one of the most persistent metaphors attributed to the Caucasus as a crossroad could furthermore explain the outstanding prominence of bridges as motifs. Either way, railway tracks, tunnels, and bridges became global icons for processes of industrialization and were omnipresent at exhibitions, in albums, newspapers, and on postcards.⁶¹



Figure 4.2. Vladimir V. Barkanov. “The Poti-Tiflis Railway.” Piatigorsk Regional Museum.

Russian Railway. View of the Largest Iron Bridges on the St. Petersburg-Warsaw Line” with Anton Rohrbach’s photographs is a curious example of nineteenth-century exchange of knowledge through circulating photographs. The album eventually ended up in the Spanish National Library as the design firm Ernest Gouin et Cie, which had not only overseen the construction of the bridges on the St. Petersburg-Warsaw Line but had also commissioned the album, could thereby refer to its previous work in the Russian Empire in order to land an order to build a railway line across the Pyrenees (see *ibid.*, 120–121).

61 See *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, no. 334, May 24, 1875, 416–417 for a couple of reproductions based on Barkanov’s photographs from the Poti-Tiflis-Railway series. The circulation of photographs of Russian railway constructions was not limited to Russian illustrated newspapers as a double page with eleven images on the Armavir-Tuapse-Railway in the *Illustrated London News* (July 19, 1913, supplement, xxxiv–xxxv) shows.

Fourthly, the photographs support the narrative of industrial modernity's arrival in the region, particularly in its urban centers. Barkanov's Poti-Tiflis-Railway-Album opens with a panorama of the railway tracks at the newly built station in the capital of the Caucasus Viceroyalty and transports the viewer to the port city at the coast of the Black Sea. The opening image from Tbilisi (fig. 4.3) is a static and surprisingly empty frame with construction workers sitting on either the tracks that had already been laid or on the track parts that still needed to be laid. The 1872 frame suggests that the railway holds promise for the future and underscores its symbolic value over its functionalist meaning for the city. For smaller towns such as Gori, the settlement is shown in the far distance of the image, whereas the center of the image is taken in by an approaching locomotive captured from behind. In Barkanov's album and in comparable works by fellow nineteenth-century photographers, the series of images from countryside stations—Ermakov was particularly productive in this respect—contributes to a mental reduction of space and the feeling of intraregional connectivity and accessibility. The subsequent decades additionally brought dynamism into this popular motif as, for instance, photographs by Ermakov from the station in the Imeretian village of Marelisi or by the Kislovodsk-based Iosif F. Aleksandrovich, who opens his 1904 album "Views of the Caucasus" with a panorama scene of the railway station in Kislovodsk, show the locomotives in full steam right before departure. The orderliness in the arrangement, however, remains in place, as chaos was not intended to represent industrial modernity. Railway stations as "city gates of modernity"⁶² were thereby the epitome of the visual signal that the industrial era had come to town, and as they were often some of the most representative buildings in the city, almost any photographer compiling urban scenes from the region had such images in his or her portfolio. These photographs were sometimes taken from elevated positions by which they underscored the symbiosis of industrial modernity and traditional landscapes in the background whereas in other compositions, the images are taken from floor level by which the representational character of the building is emphasized as nothing of its grandeur is taken away by the landscape in the back while the tracks appear larger-than-life in the foreground—both compositional strategies are equally common. Both, however, present the railway station with a strong focus on the building itself rather than on their function as hubs of human interaction, especially when compared to the contemporary tradition of British paintings, where

62 Frithjof Benjamin Schenk, "Bahnhöfe. Stadttore der Moderne," in *Sankt Petersburg. Schauplätze einer Stadtgeschichte*, ed. Karl Schlögel, Frithjof Benjamin Schenk, and Markus Ackeret (Frankfurt/Main: Campus Verlag, 2007), 141–157.

also evident in compositions around the city of Mtskheta. Ermakov (no. 12935) and Aleksandr K. Èngel' (1848–1918), for instance, both took a position alongside the railway tracks south of Georgia's medieval capital and produced photographs of striking similarity by showing the tracks parallel to the Mtkvari River in the lower foreground while centering the image on the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral with the mountains surrounding the city's lowland rising in the background.⁶⁴ The Russian Ministry of Railway's publication on the extension of its southernmost line toward the Iranian border furthermore includes seemingly out-of-context photographs of unspecified "ruins of a medieval church" at the Pambak River⁶⁵ which—positioned between construction plans and photos of newly built bridges—support a complementing representation of modernity and antiquity through railway photography. Once again, the railway contributed to the shrinking of space and a perceived proximity and accessibility of architectural grandeur from the past.

The iconography of the railway as a symbol of exploration, expansion, and industrial progress was a global phenomenon, but it always remained intrinsically connected to locally rooted discourses on the respective landscapes cut by the railway tracks. In the Russian Empire, railway photography at the turn of the century often built upon the flagship project of the Trans-Siberian Railway, as well as railway lines across the newly incorporated provinces in the Caucasus and Central Asia. All three regions have had long histories of cultural representation in Russian discourses for which the image production of the industrial penetration towards the south and the east attracted an audience who could connect their reception of these photographs to the pictorial traditions it was

64 For the image by Ermakov see the photograph collection of the Department of Art History at University of Vienna (DiFaB, 318/14399, accessed August 28, 2025, <https://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:189639>). The photographs of Aleksandr K. Èngel' are generally kept by the National Archives of Georgia but this particular image is also available through the British Library's "Endangered Archives Programme" (accessed September 21, 2023, <http://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP057-1-6>). Èngel's photographic work on the Transcaspian Railway however lacks this dimension. His album *Zakaspïiskaia voennaia zheleznaia doroga* (undated but probably produced in the late 1880s) does not include any symbiotic compositions of medieval past and industrial present while the geographical scope of his survey between the Caspian port of Uzun-Ada via Merv to the Amu Darya River would have certainly allowed him to do so. It is more likely that the diverging mental maps of the Caucasus Viceroyalty on the one hand and its newly acquired Transcaspian oblast' (which would only in 1898 become an administrative part of Russian Turkestan) on the other allowed a cultural appropriation of the former through references to historical glory and the latter to be thought of as a colonial outpost. This does not necessarily apply to the other provinces of Russian Turkestan given the structure of the monumental *Turkestanskii al'bom* with its "archeological part."

65 *Al'bom Vidov i sooruzhenii zheleznoi dorogi*, n.p.

already familiar with. Similar to North America, where railway photography functioned as “the ‘opening up’ and settling of the American West”⁶⁶ or “subtly undermine[d] the mythology of untouched nature”⁶⁷ in Canada’s “wildercentric” national identity, the photographic production of railways in the Caucasus was, on the one hand, based on an already existing iconography of landscape which it was, on the other hand, about to change. The *vision ferroviare* in the Caucasus, therefore, did not need to uncover previously unimagined landscapes, but it could connect a distinctive iconography of modernity to established tropes of dramatic landscapes and archaeological grandeur.

Images of Industrial Modernity: Photography and Baku’s Oil Boom Years

By 1883, the railway finally connected the Black and Caspian Seas and sixteen years later, the port of Baku was linked to the Russian Empire’s overland routes through Vladikavkaz. These connections were overdue for the region’s economic development, as the rise of Russia’s oil industry and the exploitation of the Baku oil fields gave the southern provinces an unprecedented global economic significance. By the end of the nineteenth century, half of the world’s oil production originated in the Absheron peninsula’s oil fields.⁶⁸ The oil boom thereby fostered several technological advancements in developing the city and the entire region, not just the arrival of the railway. Telegraph lines connected Baku to Tbilisi (and thereby to Vladikavkaz and Moscow) and to Krasnovodsk (today’s Türkmenbaşy) between the late 1860s and 1870s, a modern telephone network was set up from the mid-1880s, and, by 1914, the electrification of Baku was

66 Lyden, *Railroad Vision*, 37.

67 Siobhan Angus, “El Dorado in the White Pines. Representations of Wilderness on an Industrial Frontier,” *Radical History Review* 132 (2018): 62; John O’Brian, “Wild Art History,” in *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art*, ed. John O’Brian and Peter White (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 21.

68 On the history of Baku’s oil industry as one of Azerbaijan’s most researched historical episodes see Eve Blau and Ivan Rupnik, *Baku. Oil and Urbanism* (Zürich: Park Books, 2018); Rebecca Lindsay Hastings, “Oil Capital: Industry and Society in Baku, Azerbaijan, 1870-Present” (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2020); John P. McKay, “Baku Oil and Transcaucasian Pipelines, 1883–1891: A Study in Tsarist Economic Policy,” *Slavic Review* 43, no. 4 (1984): 604–623; Mir-Iusif F. Mir-Babaev, *Kratkaia istoriia azerbaïdzhanskoï nefti*, 2nd ed. (Baku: Azerneshr, 2009); Nat Moser, *Oil and the Economy of Russia. From the Late-Tsarist to the Post-Soviet Period* (London: Routledge, 2018).

in full swing.⁶⁹ What had been a small town of approximately twelve thousand inhabitants in 1859⁷⁰ had become a transregional center of commerce and technological innovation with 86,611 inhabitants by the year 1891,⁷¹ or as Audrey Altstadt put it: “Baku was the first Muslim city to industrialise on a large scale with the use of foreign capital and capitalists, and European technology, technocrats, managers, and advisers.”⁷² Companies such as the German “Siemens & Halske,” the Swedish Nobel Brothers Petroleum Company “Branobel,” or the French Rothschild branch’s “Caspian and Black Sea Petroleum Company” recognized the vast potential revenues in the Russian Empire’s industrial sector whereas the latter two particularly embraced the liberalization of its oil industry in the 1870s. The result was an influx of foreign expertise and investment that sparked innovation, such as the world’s first tanker to ship oil from Baku to Astrakhan’ and pipelines to carry oil from the wells to the refineries. Eventually, the transport from Baku to the port of Batumi also resulted in an increasing internationalization of the Russian state’s trading networks.⁷³

The impact of the city’s fast industrialization and modernization, however, went deeper. The new opportunities for local workers, inner-imperial migrants, and personnel from abroad transformed Baku into a vibrant and international city, with less than half of its population born there by 1913. Meanwhile, industrialization gradually stimulated social change and the emergence of a native industrial working class, comprising oil and refinery workers.⁷⁴ The relative distribution of the three major ethnic groups in the city was thereby changing. While in 1891, Baku’s population was made up by 43 percent “Tatars,”—the state’s official designation for Turkic-speaking groups or primarily Azerbaijanis in the case of Baku—28 percent Armenians, and 25 percent Russians,⁷⁵ the first (and only) census conducted by the Russian Empire indicated that the city had already more than 110,000 inhabitants of which Russians made up 36 percent,

69 Eva-Maria Auch, *Muslim—Untertan—Bürger. Identitätswandel in gesellschaftlichen Transformationsprozessen der muslimischen Ostprovinzen Südkaukasiens (Ende 18.–Anfang 20. Jh.)* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004), 213–216. Mirroring the concentration of manufacturing in the Russian Empire, Baku was one of its three centers of industrial electrification aside Moscow and St. Petersburg; see Jonathan Coopersmith, *The Electrification of Russia, 1880–1926* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 70.

70 Auch, *Muslim—Untertan—Bürger*, 230.

71 *Kavkazskii Kalendar' na 1896 god*, otd. 5:62–63.

72 Audrey Altstadt-Mirhadi, “The Azerbaijani Turkish Community of Baku before World War I” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1983), 3.

73 Moser, *Oil and the Economy of Russia*, 30–31.

74 Audrey L. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks. Power and Identity under Russian Rule* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), 27–29; Hastings, “Oil Capital,” 51–58.

75 *Kavkazskii Kalendar' na 1896 god*, otd. 5:62–63.

Azerbaijanis 21 percent and Armenians 19 percent.⁷⁶ According to Audrey Altstadt, “Baku was not a melting pot and each community struggled for its own benefit,”⁷⁷ but access to the oil industry and other commercial sectors was not necessarily confined to one particular ethnic group.

While Russian investors and Western European entrepreneurs, such as the Nobels and Rothschilds, led the field, there was still room for local oil magnates to make a fortune and exert influence on the city’s development and its population. Azerbaijani oil barons, who made up almost a third of the city’s oil industrialists by the turn of the century, such as Zeynalabdin Taghiyev (Zeynalabdin Tağiyev), Musa Naghiyev (Musa Nağıyev), and Shamsi Asadullayev (Şəmsi Əsədullayev) built up major companies and reinvested their profits in philanthropic work by building schools, hospitals, and theaters. An important effect of these developments was that Azerbaijani women got increasingly involved in social and public life, defying opposition from the clergy and other conservative voices, and, as Farideh Heyat argues, that Baku’s “cosmopolitan population and the oil-related industrialization of the region had already led to significant changes in important areas of material culture, consumption, dress code and the education of women.”⁷⁸ At the same time, Armenian industrialists such as Aleksandr Mantashyants (Aleksandr Mantashev) and Hovhannes Mirzoyan (Ivan Mirzoev), who is thought to have drilled the first oil well in Baku, were important figures in the growth of the Caspian oil industry while Armenians owned another third of Baku’s oil companies by the turn of the century.⁷⁹ This integration into the oil industry facilitated a strong Armenian influence also in other spheres of Baku’s city life such as the cultural scene which saw the establishment of twenty-four Armenian-language periodicals in the 1900s and 1910s.⁸⁰

In this climate, the city was also ready for a visual revolution and a large-scale arrival of photography which the city of Baku now belatedly experienced—belatedly, because until the oil boom had set in in Baku, it was Tbilisi that served the entire region as its political, economic, and cultural center with a higher influx of foreign travelers and knowledge, meaning that a concentration of regional

76 Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 32; Nikolai A. Troinitskii, ed., *Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis' naseleniia Rossiiskoi imperii 1897 g. Vypusk 2. Naselenie gorodov po perepisi 28-go ianvaria 1897 goda* (St. Petersburg: Tsentral'nyi statisticheskii komitet ministerstva vnutrennikh del, 1897), 27.

77 Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 28.

78 Farideh Heyat, *Azeri women in transition. Women in Soviet and post-Soviet Azerbaijan* (London: Routledge, 2002), 58.

79 Moser, *Oil and the Economy of Russia*, 32.

80 Liladhar Pendse, “The Armenian Periodical Press of Baku 1877–1920: A Survey,” *Slavic & East European Information Resources* 20, no. 1–2 (2019): 50–73.

photographic production—albeit as an elite product rather than a commodity—had set in earlier in the Caucasus Viceroyalty's capital. The city thereby served as a hub for the production and dissemination of knowledge also across the borders of the Russian Empire such as in the case of the first photo studio established in the Ottoman Armenian provinces (Kharpert/Harpur, 1874) that had been established by migrants who had learnt the trade in Tbilisi.⁸¹ Furthermore, other than in small, mid-nineteenth-century Baku, Tbilisi's population was predominantly Christian, of which the majority was Armenian. Whereas it was easier for the inhabitants of the city at the Mtkvari River to connect their traditional visual practices to the photographic image, Baku's Muslim population was forced to overcome a liturgically rooted pictorial skepticism.⁸² It is for these reasons that the first photographs known to depict Baku were taken only around 1860. They are yet another example of the Russian military's pioneering role in Caucasus photography as they were taken by Captain-Lieutenant Aleksandr F. Ul'skiĭ (1836–1868) during expeditions tasked with studying the geology of the Absheron Peninsula.⁸³ The panoramic views of Baku's old walled city and its skyline taken from the shore were a private endeavor as his scientific studies do not build on photography as a method of documentation⁸⁴ but they indicate that with the state's increasing interest in the resources of the Caspian seabed, the introduction of other technological innovations was initiated.

Once the oil boom was in full swing, it was not only the Russian military personnel and engineers from other parts of the empire who arrived in Baku. Western European travelers no longer ended their visits to the Caucasus region in Tbilisi but continued to the Caspian Sea, especially since the railway's connection to Baku had been completed. The city's big companies were interested in promoting their businesses by commissioning photographers to create albums of their newly built infrastructural sites,⁸⁵ whereas in the 1890s, in particular, a

81 Low, "Photography and the Empty Landscape," 20.

82 Kaser, *Andere Blicke*, 153–159.

83 Igor S. Zonn et al., eds. *The Caspian Sea Encyclopedia* (Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer, 2010), 417. For an overview of Ul'skiĭ's Baku images, see Oksana Bulanova, "Aleksandr Fedorovich Ul'skiĭ i ego snimki Baku serediny XIX veka," *Olaylar*, February 26, 2018, <https://olaylar.az/news/blog-oksana/262613>.

84 See, for instance, Aleksandr F. Ul'skiĭ, "Predvaritel'nyia izsledovaniia rel'efa dna Kaspiiskago moria," *Morskoĭ sbornik* 66, no. 5 (1863): 243–273.

85 See the 1888 album *Vyer ofver anläggningar tillhörande naftaproduktions bolaget Bröderna Nobel* (Branobel Digital Archives, Nikolas Oleinikoff Collection, no. F1:9), which was compiled by Anders Hjalmar Sjögren (1856–1922), a Swedish professor of mineralogy and geology and then staff geologist at Branobel. At least five, and likely more, of the album's twenty included photographs were taken by Mishon. The leading personnel of Branobel was particularly interested in visual documentation of their time in Baku with the company's chairman

series of French traveler-photographers produced a significant visual corpus of Baku. What could not be missed by any traveler-photographer coming to Baku were the oil fields that constituted the backbone of the city's modernization and therefore presented themselves as the perfect motif for foreigners visiting the town. The French amateur photographer and soldier Paul Lancrenon (1857–1922) came to Baku within a six-month journey across the Russian Empire in 1891. His photographs of his Baku stopover mostly show the arrival of the “Zang” in the port of Baku, but his images also reveal that immediately upon his arrival, he visited the city's commercial elite. Lancrenon took photos of oil magnate Taghiyev and at his refineries with the oil derricks in the center of the viewers' attention, soon becoming the standard motif to represent Baku for almost anybody bringing a camera to the shores of the Caspian Sea.⁸⁶

Even before Lancrenon, one of the first foreign photographers to experience Baku during the oil boom was Paul Nadar (Tournachon, 1856–1939), who arrived in 1890 with a Kodak camera in his belongings.⁸⁷ Baku was a convenient stop for Nadar en route to Central Asia, as he planned to visit the 1890 Tashkent Exhibition, where the imperial administration was keen on presenting Russian Turkestan's agriculture and industry, telling a story of colonial glory.⁸⁸ With the

Karl Wilhelm (Vasil'evich) Hagelin (1860–1955) compiling two comprehensive albums of the entire region and the chemist and amateur photographer Albert Werner Cronquist (1846–1910) taking matters into his own hands. These photos are kept at the Swedish National Museum of Science and Technology in Stockholm. Commissioned albums were furthermore not Western European specificity—see for instance the album *Vidy nefiyanikh promyslov torg. doma Benkendorf i Ko Balakhany 1896* (National Museum of History of Azerbaijan, Fund of Documentary Sources, no. 242/1) with six large scale prints by Mishon for the Russian oil company Benkendorf.

- 86 See, for instance, Paul Lancrenon, “Monsieur Taïev, Mesdemoiselles Saintmarc posant dans le désert” / “Raffinerie de pétrole, peut-être à Bakou,” 1891, *Médiathèque du patrimoine et de la photographie*, APLCR02705 / APLCR02706, accessed September 21, 2023, <https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/memoire/APLCR02705> and <https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/memoire/APLCR02706>.
- 87 “Paul Nadar au Turkestan (1890),” *Médiathèque du patrimoine et de la photographie*, accessed September 21, 2023, <https://mediatheque-patrimoine.culture.gouv.fr/collection/objet/paul-nadar-au-turkestan-1890>.
- 88 Daniel Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire* (London: Routledge, 2003), 84–85. The Russian state made ample use of its expansion into Central Asia to present itself as a great power driven by a civilizing mission—see Ulrich Hofmeister, *Die Bürde des Weißen Zaren. Russische Vorstellungen einer imperialen Zivilisierungsmission in Zentralasien* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2019)—which, as discussed in the introduction led to some of the most prominent visual projects of Russian colonialism. This approach resonated well with Western European imperialists who thought it was “obvious that every nation is bound to make its annexations pay,” to use the words of a British observer on the 1890 Tashkent Exhibition (Arthur C. Yate, “The Tashkent Exhibition, 1890,” *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 13, no. 1 (1891): 21.

Trans-Caspian Railway in place across the shores of the Caspian Sea, Baku was thereby not only an endpoint of travels through the Russian Empire but also a gateway to the General-Governorate of Turkestan. Nadar's 1890 scenes of today's Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan⁸⁹ are part of a photographic production of more than 1,200 negatives, which are on display in museums to this day.⁹⁰ The new practicability of his Kodak camera, however, allowed him also to produce a new quality of everyday life scenes from Baku, for which some of the first portraits of women and children in the streets were made by the Frenchman. Beyond these spontaneous shots, he was also attracted to the story of Baku's industrialization and brought back photographs of Baku's railway station or its horsecar tramway to France.⁹¹

The photographic oeuvre of the French archaeologist Joseph de Baye (1853–1931) is of comparable size. The author of several publications on the Caucasus and Georgia in particular was an enthusiastic photographer, who produced more than six hundred shots in Georgia alone.⁹² In 1900 and 1901, when de Baye travelled to Baku, he made sure to bring his camera with him and from his photographs, it becomes clear that, like Nadar before him, he was able to rely on the new generation of handheld cameras which allowed him to quickly capture street scenes including veiled women passing by or doing laundry in the port, and street vendors carrying their goods. The same is the case with the photographic production of Hugues Krafft, another French traveler and photographer, whose knowledge of the Caucasus region was primarily informed by his friendship with de Baye. When the latter visited Moscow to witness the coronation of Nikolai II in 1896, he met his compatriot Hugues Krafft (1853–1935), who had also developed an interest in traveling across the Russian Empire's provinces in

89 See, for instance, "Paul Nadar photograph album of Turkestan, 1890," Getty Research Institute, no. 2022.R.1, accessed September 21, 2023, <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/2022r1>.

90 Inessa Kouteinikova, "Tashkent in St. Petersburg," 154–155; Anne Lacoste, "Paul Nadar's Travels," *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, accessed September 21, 2023, <http://expositions.bnf.fr/les-nadar/en/innovation/paul-nadars-travels.html>.

91 See, for instance, Paul Nadar, "Façade principale. Terminus du Transcaucasien," 1890, Médiathèque du patrimoine et de la photographie, APNDR06993P, accessed September 21, 2023, <https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/memoire/APNDR06993P>.

92 Ana Cheishvili and Carine Peltier-Caroff, "baroni de bai da sak'art'velo, p'ranghi mogzauris p'otokolek'c'ia," *Proceedings of the Institute of Georgian History (Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University)* 13 (2018): 312–313. For an exemplary insight into his ambition to bring his (and some exchanged) images from the region into printed circulation, see the forty-six photographs on fifty-seven pages in Joseph de Baye, *Au Sud de la Chaîne du Caucase* (Paris: Librairie Nilsson, 1899).

the Caucasus and Central Asia.⁹³ His travelogue *A Travers le Turkestan Russe*, in which Krafft wrote impressions from his visit to Central Asia in 1899, is better known than his journey through the Caucasus. Still, he brought more than five hundred photographs from the southern borderlands back to France.⁹⁴ Industrial sites remained the prime motif for photographers coming to or settling in Baku, but the technological progress of the camera itself added a new dimension to the visual representation of the city. Krafft's reports for the *Bulletin du Photo-Club de Paris* summarize the photographers' ambition to utilize their lighter and smaller cameras in a setting marked by religiously informed skepticism towards photography. He not only described his equipment, but also praised it for allowing him to take quick shots of bazaar scenes, moving crowds, and popular festivities while avoiding attracting any attention from the Muslim or other public.⁹⁵

The parallel between the region's industrial sector and its photography scene lay in the co-existence of incoming capital, goods, and technical expertise on the one hand and a vibrant local scene on the other. The existence of the latter in the region's urban centers also exemplifies how photographic practices were subject to negotiation processes rather than linear transfer, as photography was not an exclusively imported innovation but was also taken up by parts of the local population, who were then integrated into far-reaching networks of transregional exchange. Photo studios like Ermakov's renowned Tbilisi business became an important platform of exchange where travelers such as Krafft printed their photos on the road,⁹⁶ future master-photographers such as Antoin Sevruguin (c. 1845–1933) went in and out the doors as students,⁹⁷ and both foreign and local customers were able to choose from his enormous work portfolio⁹⁸ which aimed to chronicle the entire region and exhibited a curiosity of industrialization in the Caucasus. As another graduate of the imperial Military Topography School, Ermakov was connected to fellow photographers with a similar background

93 Ana Cheishvili, *A la découverte de Bakou. Voyages de Hugues Krafft dans le Caucase / Discovering Baku. Hugues Krafft's journeys to the Caucasus* (Baku: TEAS Press, 2017), 21–23.

94 *Ibid.*, 29–32.

95 Krafft, "En Transcaucasie et en Asie Centrale," 260.

96 Cheishvili, *A la découverte de Bakou*, 29.

97 Staci G. Scheiwiller, "Relocating Sevruguin: Contextualizing the Political Climate of the Iranian Photographer Antoin Sevruguin (c. 1851–1933)," in *The Indigenous Lens? Early Photography in the Near and Middle East*, ed. Markus Ritter and Staci G. Scheiwiller (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 150–151.

98 In 1896 he published his first systematic catalogue of more than 18,000 images whereas today's collection of the Georgian National Museum includes more than 25,000 photos. See Dmitrii I. Ermakov, *Katalog fotograficheskikh vidov i tipov Kavkaza, Persii, Evropeiskoi i Aziatskoi Turtsii* (Tiflis: Tipografiia Shtaba Kavkazskago voennago okruga, 1896); Mamatsashvili, "Early Photography," 29.

and, as a member of the French Photographic Society, he and Barkanov took part in the society's 10th exhibition in Paris (1874) where the latter displayed a series titled "Views and Types of the Caucasus" and Ermakov presented seventeen photos of "Asian Turkey."⁹⁹ It was this international exchange that also shaped the development of the visual legacy of imperial Baku where Ermakov, who produced his scenes of the city with large plates of up to 28 x 38 cm in size rather than with handheld cameras,¹⁰⁰ and others were mainly preoccupied with supplying the demand in images of the oil fields and factories (see Fig. 4.4).

Such images were also in demand for the many travelogues on Baku that were published around 1900. While some authors neglected to mention the photographers who sold them the photographs of oil derricks, which they sent to their publishers to illustrate the oil boom,¹⁰¹ others, like the German industrialist Max Albrecht,¹⁰² were more forthcoming. He noted that he had acquired the images in the shops of two Tbilisi-based photographers (Aleksandr K. Èngel'¹⁰³ and Grigorii Ia. Babalov), as well as from Aleksandr M. Mishon, one of Baku's most influential figures in the pre-war photography (and film)¹⁰⁴ scene. When he finally left the city again in 1908 for Izium, he was running one of fourteen officially registered businesses in town, while at least forty-five photographers and/or studios are known to have operated in pre-revolutionary Baku.¹⁰⁵ Like

99 *Catalogue de la Dixième Exposition de la Société Française de Photographie* (Paris: Gauthier-Villars, 1874), 5–9.

100 Ermakov, *Katalog fotograficheskikh vidov*, 26–28.

101 See for instance Charles Marvin, *The Region of the Eternal Fire. An Account of a Journey to the Petroleum Region of the Caspian in 1883* (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1891), 211. This popular edition published in 1891 includes a preface that both gives an insight into the British traveller's motivation to visit Baku in the first place and provides an explanation for why the book kept being reissued by stating in the introduction to his book that it was the "interest excited by the development of Russia's power in the Black Sea and Caspian, and the progress of the petroleum industry at Baku."

102 Max Albrecht, *Russisch Centralasien. Reisebilder aus Transkaspien, Buchara und Turkestan* (Hamburg: Verlagsanstalt und Druckerei A. G., 1896).

103 Èngel', whose work has already been discussed throughout this chapter, eventually settled in Tbilisi to run his photo studio but throughout the 1880s he was involved in a series of businesses between the North Caucasus (Piatigorsk, Kislovodsk, Mineral'nye vody, Baku, Vladikavkaz) and Central Asia (Aşgabat, Samarkand), albeit little is yet known about his pre-Tbilisi ateliers. See Akoëff, *Fotografy i fotograficheskie atel'e*, 28; Boglachëv, *Pervye fotografy Kavkaza*, 56–65.

104 Aydin Kazimzade, "Celebrating 100 years in Film, not 80. Cinema in Azerbaijan: The Pre-Soviet Era," *Azerbaijan International* 5, no. 3 (1997): 30–35; "Kinematograf," *Kaspïi*, no. 164, August 1, 1898, 1; "V Balakhanakh," *Kaspïi*, no. 168, August 6, 1898, 1.

105 Khil'kovskii et al., *Aleksandr Mishon*, 30; "Fotoatel'e dorevoliutsionnye. Baku," Nash Baku, accessed September 21, 2023, https://www.ourbaku.com/index.php/Фотоателье_дореволюционные_Баку. Many of those forty-five photographers and/or studios were in

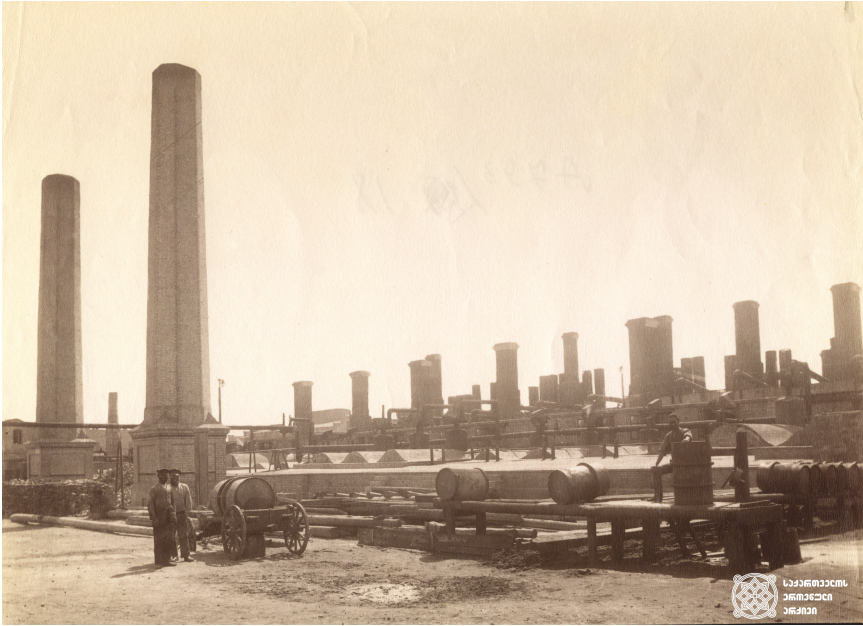


Figure 4.4. Dmitrii I. Ermakov. “The Nobel Factory in Baku.” National Archives of Georgia.

Ermakov’s studio in Tbilisi, Mishon’s Baku premises were a hub for photographic activities within and beyond the city’s own communities. Tourists, whether from France or China,¹⁰⁶ were able to buy his “views of the Caucasus, the Transcaucasus Region and other localities,” while Mishon offered lectures on photographic theory and practice, and engaged in establishing the “Baku circle of amateur photographers.”¹⁰⁷ Photographic journals such as *Fotograf-Liubitel’* and *Ruskiĭ Fotograficheskiĭ Zhurnal* covered these developments and played an important part in integrating Baku’s scene into a transregional exchange. Mishon was also a key figure in this field. He was already the interim editor of *Ezhegodnik g. Baku*, when he decided to establish his own journal *Kavkaz i Sredniaia Aziia v fotografiakh i opisaniakh*. The first issue was published in November 1899 and advertised across the region, for instance, through the Tbilisi-based Armenian language newspaper *Mshak*.¹⁰⁸ Mishon continued to oversee this “monthly,

fact from the Baku’s Armenian community, who had a significant influence on the development of local photographic practices in an environment where pictorial scepticism coined the first decades of the public’s encounter with camera and mechanically reproduced images.

106 “Kitaicy,” *Kaspiĭ*, no. 141, July 5, 1888, 1.

107 Khil’kovskii et al., *Aleksandr Mishon*, 32–46.

108 “Kavkaz i Sredniaia Aziia,” *Mshak*, no. 221, November 26, 1899, 4.

illustrated journal” until his return to the Kharkiv Governorate in 1908. Over this decade, the rather sporadically published journal with one or two issues per year brought together a broad variety of regional (Central Asia and the Caucasus) and thematic emphasis but the latter eventually underscores the dynamics and multiplicity of the visual representation of the Caucasus in the early twentieth century. Already, the first issue mirrors two central elements as it includes five full-page images based on photographs taken by Mishon himself. On the one hand, the chosen images demonstrate the “national antiquities” (see Chapter 7) of the Caucasus through the town and cathedral of Mtskheta and the ancient cave town of Uplistsikhe in Georgia, as well as through St. Gregory Church in Darachichag, now located in Tsaghkadzor, Armenia. On the other hand, Baku’s oil industry took center stage—just as it did in most issues of Mishon’s new journal—with the opening story “on the kingdom of oil”¹⁰⁹ and the other couple of full-page images depicting the Caspian oil production (fig. 4.5).

Conclusions

When Mishon left Baku in 1908, the city had changed as much as the entire region, which had experienced decades of transformation. Railway tracks ran across the Caucasus, connecting the so-called periphery of the Russian Empire to a globalizing economy. At the same time, specific technological innovations, such as oil pipelines and tankers, were tried out here for the first time. Simultaneously—and very much intertwined with one another—industrialization and photography benefited from these connections, as many actors had an interest in producing and disseminating visual representations of the region. The Russian state played a particularly significant part in these processes, as it was eager to promote the story of its peripheral provinces’ successful integration through the visualization of a new, industrializing Caucasus. A freshly developed “railroad vision” went hand in hand with other recurring industrial motifs such as oil derricks, road construction work, and steel bridges. Overall, the resulting abundance of industrial imagery expressed photography’s central role in reconfiguring the spatial imaginations of the Caucasus, new lines of communication and transportation, along with cameras, contributed to a new quality of accessibility and experience of a formerly distant region.

109 N. Kaplia, “Po neftianomu tsarstvu,” *Kavkaz i Sredniaia Aziia v fotografiakh i opisaniakh* 1 (1899): 1–9.

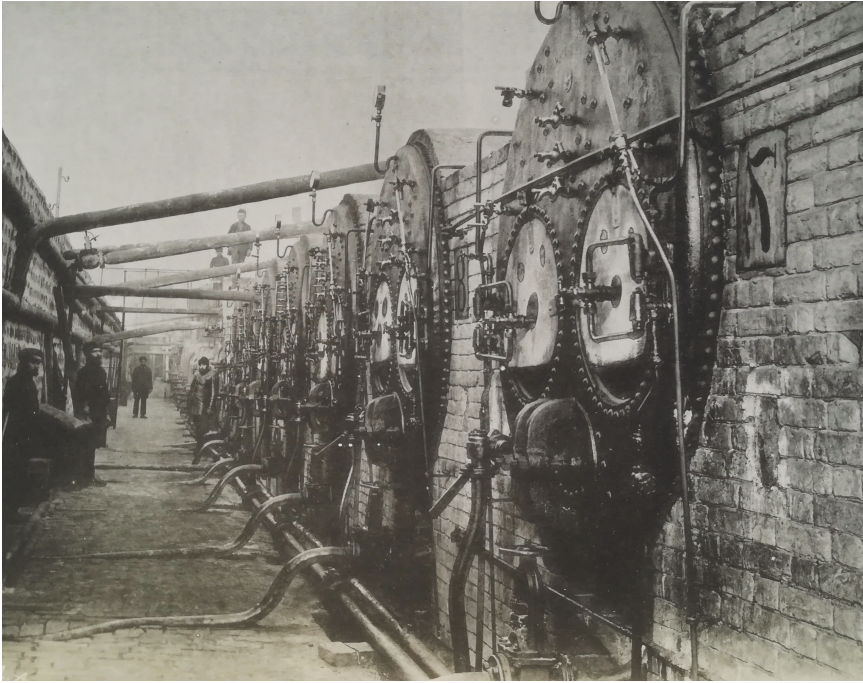


Figure 4.5. Aleksandr M. Mishon. “Stokeholds in the oil fields.” *Kavkaz i Sredniaia Aziia v fotografiakh i opisaniikh* 1899, no. 1, unpaginated.

In combination, these images had the potential to support the state’s vision of transforming the formerly underdeveloped southern borderlands into the empire’s malleable and productive province. However, the creation of industrial scenes did not happen in a pictorial void but depended on photographic production’s ability to build upon, break with, or fully re-create the traditional imagery of the surrounding landscape. For the Caucasus, this meant that the display of some parts of the region were immediately connected to what had been a prominent subject of cultural production in Russian Romanticism whereas other parts were yet a comparably blank canvas. Thus, on the one hand, the “railroad vision” in the Caucasus ultimately did not break with traditional images of the region, but rather connected the railway as a metonym for modernity with established local tropes of landscape representation. On the other hand, these nuanced backgrounds in the representation of infrastructure and progress made it possible to belatedly but then quickly imag(in)e Baku as a progressive and cosmopolitan city with a welcome orientalist juxtaposition, made possible also by a new generation of cameras.

The city at the Caspian Sea became a center of global economic activity almost overnight in the late nineteenth century, where the increasing internationalization gave the development of local photographic practices a decisive impetus. The different interests of the state—hoping to promote its regional policies and all-imperial integration—local photographers building a scene in a complex surrounding of visual traditions, travelers passing through and engaging in exchange, and international companies interested in promoting their facilities and their global agency all contributed to the co-construction of knowledge behind every photograph of industrial sites from the nineteenth-century Caucasus. These images suited a broad variety of media outlets and found their way into journals and newspapers as much as into picture postcards. Yet the vital dimension of self-representation in producing this genre made one medium particularly interesting: the photo album.

CHAPTER 5

Albumania at Court. Imperial Self-Representation from Cover to Cover

The Caucasus became a popular destination for the rulers of the Russian Empire after the wars with the Ottoman and Qajar empires ended in territorial stabilization over vast swaths of the Southern Caucasus during the first half of the nineteenth century. The first tsar to travel to the southernmost region of the empire was Nicholas I in 1837. His son and heir to the throne, Alexander II, accompanied him that year, and visited the Caucasus on his own in 1850, 1861, and 1871. Alexander III followed in 1888, marking the first time a tsar's journey across the South Caucasus extended as far east as Baku. The last ruler to travel to the Caucasus was Nicholas II, who visited the empire's troops at the Caucasus front during World War I in late 1914.¹ Comparable journeys to other parts of the empire had become established ways of defining "the center, by demonstrating the ruler and his entourage to the populace, by patronizing church institutions and distributing alms, by making contact with the local elite then being enlisted into local government and into the expanding army" since the sixteenth century, as Nancy S. Kollmann puts it.² These journeys were supposed to emanate the impression of consolidated rule in newly acquired territories and, as a "communicative event,"³ they sent complex messages of power, belonging, and identity

1 For a discussion of the tsars' visits to the Caucasus, see Hubertus Jahn, "Visits of tsars to the Caucasus as representations of empire," in *Identities and Representations in Georgia from the 19th Century to the Present*, ed. Hubertus Jahn (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021); Dmitrii N. Prasolov, "Zakavkazskii kraï v tsarskikh puteshestviiakh: Ot Aleksandra II do Nikolaia II," *Kavkazologiia*, no. 2 (2022): 69–86.

2 Nancy S. Kollmann, "Pilgrimage, Procession, and Symbolic Space in Sixteenth-Century Russian Politics," in *Medieval Russian Culture*, vol. 2, ed. Michael S. Flier and Daniel Rowland (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 176.

3 Jahn, "Visits of tsars," 171.

within and beyond the empire's borders. Catherine II's eight-month-long journey to Crimea in 1787 is thereby the most prominent example of a ruler of the Russian Empire orchestrating travel across her lands to send a message to Western Europe, presenting "Russia as a Western imperial power by emphasizing the classical heritage of the Black Sea area."⁴

The tsars' visits to the Caucasus were therefore loaded with symbolism, as these journeys offered manifold opportunities for self-representation for the traveling party and the visited locations. Nicholas I managed to convey a political message in 1837 during his visit to Yerevan, when he met the only six-year-old Nasr-ed-Din, the then-heir to the Qajar throne. He reportedly lifted Nasr-ed-Din up and put him on his knees, thereby underscoring his claim to leadership in foreign relations with Iran.⁵ In what were otherwise strongly ritualized events, these protocols in many ways also later followed the example set by Nicholas I but had a reciprocal potential for the self-representation of the involved actors. At the many meetings with (leading) representatives of religious, ethnic, and social groups, as well as with local authorities that constituted cornerstones for any visit of the tsar to the imperial provinces, it was customary to greet the visiting ruler with bread and salt. In Russia, this tradition dates to at least the sixteenth century and was at times strongly regulated to convey the intended message. Nicholas I, for instance, had specifically decreed that the goods had to be presented on white faience dishes, rather than on silver plates or golden vessels, as this choice was supposed to reflect the tsar's rule as modest and simple.⁶

These dishes, however, allowed the gift-giving side to inscribe their own self-representation into their version of the ruler's visit and, furthermore, demonstrate how traditions were subject to change. In his capacity as mayor of the city of Tbilisi, Alexander Stepanyan Matinyants (1843–1909), for instance, handed Alexander III bread and salt on a silver plate that not only depicted the city's coat of arms but also the medieval Armenian capital of Ani, a testament to the region's contemporary national symbolism⁷ and the prominent role of Armenians in the history of Tbilisi.⁸ The city of Yerevan pledged allegiance to

4 Sara Dickinson, "Russia's First "Orient": Characterizing the Crimea in 1787," *Kritika* 3, no. 1 (2002): 23–24.

5 Jahn, "Visits of tsars," 172.

6 *Ibid.*, 178.

7 For the importance of Ani for the imagination of an Armenian national identity in the late nineteenth century and its visualization, see the seventh chapter on "national antiquities" and archaeological photography in the Caucasus.

8 N. N., "Prebyvanie na Kavkaz v 1888 g.," *Prilozheniia k Kavkazskomu kalendaru* (na 1889 god; no. 44), 33. In 1887, Armenians made up 47 percent of Tbilisi's population, with Georgians and Russians making up 28 percent and 21 percent respectively. See Oliver Reisner 2004,

the tsarist family with a plate that featured reproduced photographic portraits of Nicholas I, Alexander II, and Alexander III, alongside an image of the Russian capture of the city and representations of the introduction of city status, the judicial system, and general conscription.⁹ In Baku, on the other hand, Alexander III received another silver plate, which depicted a factory in combination with the imperial coat of arms and the tsar's monogram, alongside an additional six medallions featuring various objects crucial to the city's oil industry.¹⁰

Beyond this heavily ritualized gift, the ruler was also presented with other things that tell a story of self-representation, which by Alexander III's 1888 trip, included photo albums. During the tsar's choreographed route through the visited cities, for instance, in Vladikavkaz—visiting churches, schools, hospitals, and charitable institutions—he or members of his family entourage received an album with views of Cossack military settlements (*stanitsy*) and scenes of Cossack life.¹¹ In Tbilisi, they were gifted two albums with different regional views and an album with impressions from local sericulture.¹² In Baku, the imperial album collection fittingly received additions from the representatives of the local oil industry who, among other gifts, handed the tsar an album with thirty views of the city's oil fields.¹³

Locally rooted actors had embraced the medium of the photo album as a welcome channel through which they could convey their messages to the most honorable guests. It is, therefore, interesting to note that, despite photography becoming a central element of self-representation in the second half of the nineteenth century, the photographic production surrounding the tsars' visits to the Caucasus was neither abundant nor dominated by the state. While Alexander II's last visit in 1871 may have come a little early for rich photographic documentation of travels across the Russian Empire, one might assume that a photo album would have provided a welcome platform for visualizing the narratives that framed the individual journeys of his successors in 1888 and 1914, respectively. As Nicholas II visited the southern borderlands during times of war, the

Die Schule der georgischen Nation. Eine sozialhistorische Untersuchung der nationalen Bewegung in Georgien am Beispiel der „Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung der Lese- und Schreibkunde unter den Georgiern“ (1850–1917) (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004), 61. For a detailed contemporary description of Alexander III's visit, see Vasilii A. Potto, *Tsarskaia sem'ia na Kavkazě, 18 sentiabria—14 oktiabria 1888 goda* (Tiflis: Tipografiia Okruzhnago Shtaba Kavkazskago voennago okruga, 1889).

9 N. N., "Prebyvanie na Kavkaz v 1888 g.," 42.

10 Ibid., 68.

11 Ibid., 10.

12 Ibid., 44.

13 Ibid., 64; Potto, *Tsarskaia sem'ia*, 204–206.

photographs taken during his visit emphasize his involvement and support for the empire's army at the Caucasus front.¹⁴

The more festive visit of Alexander III in 1888 did not, however, lead to a coherent story that encompassed the entire Caucasus but instead to a mosaic of locally rooted episodes. His thirty-two-hour stopover in Baku was the first time a ruler of the Russian Empire had officially visited the city, paying testament to its rapid development since the beginning of the oil boom. This visit offered local businesses the opportunity to bask in the fame of the highest guest. While Lenka Fehrenbach has pointed out that the industrial sector was hardly a representational platform for Russian tsars before World War I,¹⁵ it is only logical that Alexander III's brief stint in Baku was not part of an officially planned and produced photographic survey, but rather picked up by local actors. The Swedish company Branobel commissioned the production of an album with views of their factory, which includes a rare photograph of the tsar's visit to the Caucasus. Its composition, however, fittingly emphasizes the factory itself rather than the prominent visitor and underscores the outstanding agency of Baku's industrial sector in the development of the city's photographic sector.¹⁶ Another album that was produced either for the tsar's visit or to commemorate it came from Baku and a local photo studio by the name Zhorzh.¹⁷ The album's programmatic title "God Save the Tsar. Baku's Factory Owners" brings together one of the highest imperial insignia, the anthem of the Russian Empire, with the tsar's visit to the oil industry at the Caspian Sea and the local display of capital. The dominant

14 For a series of Nicolas II meeting with the military command of the imperial troops at Sarikamiş, produced by the studio K. E. von Gan & Co, i.e. court photographer Aleksandr K. Iagel'skiĭ (ca. 1861–1916), see the album "Poseshchenie imperatorom Nikolaem II Karsa, Sarykamysha, Medzhingerta" at RGAKFD (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Kinofotodokumentov), album no. A-570. Fostering the propagandistic effect of these photographs, the Russian court made sure to have them published within a detailed report on the tsar's visit to the troops at the frontline. See Dmitriĭ N. Dubenskii, *Ego Imperatorskoe Velichestvo Gosudar' Imperator Nikolai Aleksandrovich v deistvuiushchei armii, Noiabr'-Dekabr' 1914 g.* (Petrograd: Ministerstvo Imperatorskago dvora, 1915–1916).

15 Fehrenbach, *Bildfabriken*, 347–348.

16 For the album *Vyer ofver anläggningar tillhörande naftaproduktions bolaget Bröderna Nobel* (1888), see Branobel Digital Archives, Nikolas Oleinikoff Collection, F1:9. The image in question was likely taken by Aleksandr Mishon and is subtitled "Tovarishchestvo Br. Nobel. Kerosinovyĭ zavod pri poseshchenii ego GOSUDAREM IMPERATOROM ALEKSANDROM III 9 Oktiabria 1888 goda." For a brief description of Alexander III's visit to Branobel see Marta Nobel-Oleinikoff, *Ludvig Nobel och Hans Verk. En släkts och en storindustris historia* (Stockholm: Frenckellska Tryckeri Aktiebolaget, 1952), 351–352; and N. N., "Prebyvanie na Kavkaz," 68–70.

17 *Bozhe, tsaria khрани. Bakinskĭe zavodchiki* (1888). See Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Muzei, IA 1281/50.

visual story about the tsar's trip to the Caucasus, however, came unplanned. After Alexander III had already left the region, his train was derailed on the way back north in what would become known as the Borki (Birky) train disaster. The tale of a tsar (and his family) that climbed out of a train wreck unscathed was prime material for newspapers and illustrative magazines, which printed *lubki* (popular prints) of the incident as an "invocation of miracle" in large numbers.¹⁸

Despite the ongoing machinery of imperial self-representation during the respective rulers' travels across their lands and a global embrace of photo albums as an esteemed medium to portray every corner of the empires that were busy dividing the world among them, the Caucasus had by then not yet become envisioned within a large-scale and state-funded album project that would allow the problematization of an officially sanctioned spatial vision of the Russian Empire's southern provinces. The present chapter, therefore, expands the "global era of album mania"¹⁹ of the 1850s–1880s into the early twentieth century and discusses the album as a poly-medial object of imperial self-representation and cultural power. It examines the implications of the visual representation of a region by analyzing the place of the wider Caucasus in state-sponsored projects across the long nineteenth century, and asks about the integration and omissions of (parts of) the region into the broader picture of imperial imaginations of space and place. It touches upon questions of Russian Orientalism, Ottoman depictions of Armenian heritage in eastern Anatolia, and the sociology of pioneering photographers in the multiethnic provinces in the west of the Ottoman Empire and the northwest of Qajar Iran by discussing the networks of court photographers against the backdrop of an exploration of religious dogmata and photography.

18 The visual production of the Borki train disaster went beyond the omnipresent *lubki* and covered all media channels with painter Pëtr P. Sokolov (1821–1899) banning it on canvas (1888) and Kharkiv-based photographer Aleksei M. Ivanitskii (1854–1920) taking care of eternalizing the crash with his camera and ten photographs of the site. Ivanitskii would later also produce an album with selected platinotypes of the crash and the subsequent consecration of a church at the site as a gift to the returning royal family. See Jahn, "Visits of tsars," 183; Andrii F. Paramonov, "Ivanitskii Aleksei Mikhailovich (1854–1920). Khar'kovskii fotograf-khudozhnik kontsa XIX–nachala XX vv.," *Otkuda rodom*, accessed June 28, 2023, <https://www.otkudarodom.ua/ru/ivanickiy-aleksey-mihaylovich>; Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power. Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 310–312.

19 Sonntag, *Genesis of the Turkestan Album*, 7–8.

Albumania in the Age of Empires

There is a scholarly consensus that the photo album is a complicated medium that appears in a broad variety of forms and has so far received fairly little attention.²⁰ In a programmatic opening contribution to a 2021 special issue of the journal *Fotogeschichte* that addresses this desideratum, Bernd Stiegler suggests not only to consider the album as a medium that is multifaceted and multifunctional but also as aesthetically, epistemically, and praxeologically restless.²¹ Stephen Bann's approach toward the photo album is based on an understanding of it as a "cultural accumulator" which is "much more than the sum of their parts," where "the close kinship in medium and format [. . .] elicits a more intense experience from the viewer."²²

A key characteristic of the (photo) album under scrutiny in the present chapter is that it connects practices of selecting and collecting (visual) media. The narratology of the medium operates through decisions on inclusion and exclusion, as the production and assemblage of any photo album are centered on the question of what is considered essential and what is omitted from the bigger picture its compiler wants to convey. An album, thereby, may or may not include only photographs but also other items of interest meant to complement the pursued narrative of the specific object.²³ This narrative furthermore may or may not be underscored and elaborated upon through captions—which can range from a systematic application throughout the entire album to handwritten scribbles, comparable to notes on the back of an individual photograph—that have been part of the initial production or added later to clarify or add

20 Vida Bakondy and Eva Tropper, "Fotoalben beforschen. Voraussetzungen, Impulse, Methoden eines interdisziplinären Forschungsfeldes," *Zeitgeschichte* 49, no. 2 (2022): 137–154; Johanna Bose, "Fotos auch anderen zeigen. Das Fotoalbum im Archiv und Museum. Eine Recherche," *Fotogeschichte* 161 (2021): 57–63; Ellen Maas, *Die goldenen Jahre der Fotoalben. Fundgrube und Spiegel von gestern* (Cologne: DuMont, 1977); Bernd Stiegler, "Was ist ein Fotoalbum?," *Fotogeschichte* 161 (2021): 5–14; Andrew L. Walker and Rosalind Kimball Moulton, "Photo Albums: Images of Time and Reflections of Self," *Qualitative Sociology* 12, no. 2 (1989): 155–182.

21 Stiegler, "Was ist ein Fotoalbum?," 6.

22 Stephen Bann, "The Photographic Album as a Cultural Accumulator," in *Art and the Early Photographic Album*, ed. Stephen Bann (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2011), 9, 27.

23 On the album as a "mixed-media-artefact," see Kathrin Yacavone, "Intermediale Inszenierungsformen. Victor Hugo und das Album 'Allix,'" *Fotogeschichte* 161 (2021): 16–18; and also Mira Xenia Schwerda's work (e.g. "Iranian Photography," 94–99) on the Ali Khan Vali Album, a massive 440-pages album made by the longtime governor of the province of Azerbaijan in the northwest of the Qajar empire.

contemporary perceptions of the captioned images. The achieved polymediality through individualized assemblages and labeling of visual objects furthermore contributes to an aura of uniqueness as an album's feature in contrast to reproducible photo books. Hence, the analysis of any album cannot center solely on the expressiveness of individual frames, nor is it merely the sum of all included images' pictorial language; it is also the arrangement—and often the accompanying written commentary—that enables the viewer to grasp the visual histories embedded in the album under scrutiny.

Actors across the globe, and especially in the mid-nineteenth-century empires were quick to capitalize on the potential of photo albums to present their visions of the world, or at least the parts of the world they had conquered. The agency within such album projects was thereby distributed across a broad variety of actors, including scientific and learned societies, authorities at federal, regional, and municipal levels, photographic societies, religious communities, and especially missionaries, as well as the military, individual travelers, and colonial and local (vernacular) photographers. The power to frame the resulting album, however, remained with state authorities, who sought to visually represent rule, monarchy, territory, and empire. The album seemed to be the ideal outlet to use photography as an affirmative medium of state-imperial self-conceptions. It also did not emerge out of nowhere, but instead built upon traditions of pre-photographic albums, which were richly illustrated with engravings and/or lithographs, conveying an idea of empire and rule, as seen, for instance, in imperial Russian coronation albums.²⁴ The last such album, for Nicholas II's coronation in 1896, eventually brought together this tradition of visualizing the mental order of the Russian monarchy and photography. The (self-)representation of empire through photo albums, however, reached far beyond the confines of what was perceived as national space and often sought to explore the respective empire's direct and indirect colonial spheres. Early examples of photo albums therefore, include, in an all but exhaustive overview of some of the most renowned and widely received works, outlets of French and British colonialism, such as Maxime du Camp's *Égypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie* (1852), Félix-Jacques Moulin's *L'Algérie photographiée. Province d'Alger* (1856–57), William Johnson and William Henderson's *The Oriental Races and Tribes, Residents and Visitors of Bombay* (1863–66), as well as John Forbes Watson and John William Kaye's eight-volume *The People of India* (1868–75), and John Thomson's *Antiquities of*

24 Richard Wortman and Edward Kasinec, "The Mythology of Empire: Imperial Russian Coronation Albums," in *Visual Texts, Ceremonial Texts, Texts of Exploration*, ed. Richard Wortman (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2014), 3–26.

Cambodia (1867) and *Illustrations of China and its People* (1873–74). Outside of Europe, photographers were also busy developing comparable album projects alongside a visual language that extended American colonialism to (south-) eastern Asia²⁵ where it was met with a colonial gaze emanating from Australia.²⁶

Russia's colonialism translated into similar projects. Albums with views from all across the empire sought to make regional surveys visually accessible between two covers and include titles such as, to name a few, Mikhail B. Tulinov's (1823–1889) *Al'bom tipov i kostiumov Voronezhskoi gubernii* (Types and costumes of the Voronezh governorate, 1857), the ethnographer-photographer Aleksandr V. Adrianov's (1854–1920) *Vidy i tipy severo-zapadnoi Mongolii* (Views and types of northwestern Mongolia, 1879), and the all-imperial *Al'bom kostiumov Rossii* (Costumes of Russia, 1878) which was commissioned by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and included 532 photographs of male folk costumes and male portraits from all over the empire. The 1870s saw Siberia prominently envisioned in albums such as the bilingually (Russian-English) captioned, five-volume *Amur, Vostochnaia Sibir', Zapadnaia Sibir' i Ural* (Amur, Eastern Siberia, Western Siberia, and Ural, 1870) with 371 images by different photographers, Vladivostok-based Vladimir V. Lanin's (ca. 1826–after 1888) *Al'bom Amura i Ussuriiskogo kraia* (Amur and the Ussuri province, 1871), and Lidiia K. Poltoratskaia's *Al'bom tipov i vidov Zapadnoi Sibiri* (Types and views of Western Siberia, 1879).²⁷

Particularly productive was the output of Russian colonial photography in Central Asia, where the Orenburg branch of the VTO was responsible for the first album projects with photographer-lieutenant Anton S. Murenko (1837–1875) producing twenty-seven images for *Ot Orenburga cherez Khivu do Bukhary* (From Orenburg across Khiva to Bukhara, 1858) and fellow VTO-engineer Mikhail K. Priorov (1842–after 1916) taking thirty-nine photographs

25 David Brody, *Visualizing American Empire. Orientalism and Imperialism in the Philippines* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010). See especially the first chapter on Charles Longfellow's photographs of Filipinos "prefigure[ing] many of the same strategies of representation that propelled and sustained American empire at the turn of the century" (p. 28) and on one of his albums with collected photos of Ainu that "manifest fantasies about other parts of the world that were becoming more widespread" [in the early 1870s] (pp. 12–14).

26 See for instance the German-Australian photographer John William [Johannes Wilhelm] Lindt's takes in album form on *Australian Aborigines* (1873–74) and *Picturesque New Guinea* (1887).

27 Barkhatova, *Russkaia svetopis'*, 162–164; Edward Kasinec, "Baron von Brandis's *The Countries of the Amur, Eastern Siberia, Western Siberia and the Urals, 1860–1866*," *Sibirica* 9, no. 1 (2010): 35–52. For a detailed, contemporary overview over Russian album production see Vladimir V. Stasov, *Fotograficheskaia i fototipicheskaia kollektsii imperatorskoi publichnoi biblioteki* (St. Petersburg: V. S. Balashev, 1885).

for the 1867 *Iz Srednei Azii* (Out of Central Asia).²⁸ The standout endeavor became known as the *Turkestanskii Al'bom* (Turkestan Album, 1871–72), which has attracted by far the most scholarship on any album in Russian imperial history.²⁹ Commissioned by Governor-General of Russian Turkestan Konstantin P. von Kaufman(n) (1818–1882), it contains about 1,200 photos spread over six books with four sections that sought to capture archaeology, ethnography, industrial crafts and trades, and recent military history of and in Central Asia. Most importantly, however, it is a testament to the entanglement of the development of photography in the empire's provinces and a Russian colonial gaze against the backdrop of the contemporary modes of representing the "Other." The Turkestan Album was thereby not an isolated large-scaled attempt to essentialize Central Asia but was quickly followed by a similar project in an eighty-five-page volume by the title *Tipy narodnosti Srednei Azii* (Types of nationalities of Central Asia) that was filled with photographs of local inhabitants of the cities and towns in Central Asia and was presented by the organizing Russian colonial scientists at the Third International Congress of Orientalists in St. Petersburg in 1876.³⁰

In this era of the photo album, the early visual survey of the Caucasus was largely controlled by the local VTO, which was responsible for the *Al'bom Zakavkazskogo kraia* (1870s), featuring photographs from Baku before the oil boom, as well as rural villages such as the Dagestani Tlokh. The military's role in the early album production also led to related projects such as Dmitrii A. Nikitin's *Voina v Maloi Azii* (The War in Asia Minor, 1877–78).³¹ A boom in a Caucasus album production would, therefore, set in only toward the end of the global era of album mania, which correlated with the stabilization of Russian rule in the region after the end of the Caucasus War and the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78. This brought an increasing sense of security for travelers coming from abroad, as well as the onset of the empire's local industrialization and

28 Gorshenina and Sonntag, "Early Photography as Cultural Transfer," 334–338.

29 In an all but exhaustive list, see especially Dikovitskaya, "Central Asia in Early Photographs;" Svetlana Gorshenina, "Krupneishie proekty kolonial'nykh arkhivov Rossii: Utopichnost' total'noi Turkestaniki general-gubernatora Konstantina Petrovicha fon Kaufmana," *Ab Imperio* 3 (2007): 291–354; Inessa Kouteinikova, *Photographing, Exploring and Exhibiting Russian Turkestan. Central Asia on Display* (New York: Routledge, 2022) 49–77; Brenda Parker, "Turkestanskii Al'bom": Portrait of a Faraway Place and Another Time," *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 40, no. 4 (1983): 284–341; Sonntag, *Genesis of the Turkestan Album*.

30 Dikovitskaya, "Central Asia in Early Photographs," 104–108.

31 An interested public was able to buy albums with Nikitin's photographs from "the war in Asian Turkey" in the shop of fellow photographer Edward Westley. See *Kavkaz* 33, no. 22, January 27, 1878, 4.

modernization projects. These albums are part of what Stiegler has identified as four areas of tension that are key for the exploration of photo albums in the nineteenth century.³²

Firstly, he touches upon the zone between norm and form in which photo albums oscillate between preproduced standards and a personalized design. Albums for *carte de visite*, for instance, offered collectors punched-out slots for each card, which meant that the collective items had to be produced in identical formats. Matthias Gründig³³ has demonstrated that, against the backdrop of Carl Haussknecht's (1838–1903) collection, the *carte de visite*'s normativization was often complemented by individualized commentaries that the collecting actor scribbled onto the reverse. More than a quarter of the German botanist's collection is cards with so-called "type photographs" that provide insight into the contemporary norms of photographic stereotypization and local business strategies catering to Europeans craving exoticism but they also allowed space for a transcript of the collector's reading of the images. Other album formats did not rely on punched-out slots, but instead offered blank plates for photographs and also other objects to be glued in. Therefore, the images might have been cut, collaged, and captioned individually to create a unique form within the norm of the pre-produced album. Both formats, albeit to a different extent, also provided space for images to be arranged individually, through which a story could be told along a travel itinerary or through a grouping of otherwise seemingly unrelated photographs.

Secondly, photo albums in the nineteenth century navigate a field between individuality and sociality.³⁴ Haussknecht's collection not only illuminates the tensions between a normatized product and his personal commentary, but also raises questions about a fluid zone between his personal motivation and societal predispositions when buying ethnographic-anthropological photographs from the Caucasus region. The social legibility of an album reveals what was considered significant for both the collector's own culture and the "Other," which in Western Europe found manifestation in a high number of travel albums along the Grand Tour, and begs similar questions about what constituted central sites to Caucasus visitors. The similarity in the composition of the Caucasus sections of American explorer George Kennan's (1845–1924) album compilation from

32 Stiegler, "Was ist ein Fotoalbum?," 6–13.

33 Gründig, *Der Schah in der Schachtel*, 185–190.

34 Stiegler, "Was ist ein Fotoalbum?," 10–11.

the 1870s,³⁵ Swedish geographer Sven Hedin's *Vyer från Ryssland Kaukasien och Turkiet* (Views from Russia, the Caucasus and Turkey, 1886), and the images that the English traveler J. Guthrie Watson (ca. 1850–1913) acquired during his *Journey across Russia* (1889)—with a focus on the infrastructural development between Baku's oil wells and the Georgian Military Road, and ethnographic-anthropological photographs—is striking, because nearly all travelers to the region purchased their images from the same local studios. This gave Dmitrii I. Ermakov, in particular, a global circulation for his works, as he understood precisely how to cater to the expectations of his international customers. The underlying narrative of a region between Russian modernization and oriental exoticisms conveyed in these albums offers insight into a broader Western European perception of the Caucasus that extended beyond the individual interests of self-proclaimed explorers at the end of the nineteenth century.

Stiegler's third area of tension addresses the relationship between single frames and their sequence.³⁶ By their nature, albums consist of a multiplicity of images put into a narrative order, which offers space for aforementioned personalization but also integration into the logics of a particular subgenre of an album. Travel albums, for instance, often follow the compiler's itinerary while albums documenting construction processes tell a story mostly along a temporal axis. Therefore, a photo that might have been produced within an artistic context of the particular image as a self-sufficient expression inevitably ends up in a presentational sequence and arrangement that follows its own particular narrative structure. Rather than planning a photographic series with a particular sequence in album form in the first place, photographers themselves often opted to offer catalogues of collectible photos to interested customers, who would then integrate them into their own albums. Selling single images rather than entire albums was also more lucrative. For example, the Scottish-Russian photographer William A. Carrick (1827–1878) sold his photographs individually due to financial hardship.³⁷ These photos would, however, later appear in the photo albums of private collectors around the world.³⁸

35 The album with 271 mounted photographs and the devised title *The Caucasus. An Album of Photographs collected by George Kennan* was presented to the New York Public Library in 1927 which has since then digitized it, see "The Caucasus: An Album of Photographs," The New York Public Library, accessed July 18, 2023, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/the-caucasus-an-album-of-photographs>.

36 Stiegler, "Was ist ein Fotoalbum?," 11–13. On "the logic of multiple images" and "the presentational logic of photo albums," see also Walker and Moulton, "Photo albums," 158–160.

37 Barkhatova, "The Russian Fate of the Scotchman William Carrick," 58.

38 See for instance the cartes de visite albums *Les Types Russes. Photographie de Carrick* (Russian Types. Photography by Carrick) in the collections of the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los

Finally, albums entangle private and public space.³⁹ Unlike a painting or also an individual framed photograph, albums are usually not continuously on display but hide their contents once the book cover is closed or they are stored away entirely. This intrinsically private nature of the album gives its owner a certain power through granted or denied access, which may then dictate not only the viewing audience but also the circumstances under which the object is put on display—a context that the album’s maker may have had in mind throughout its production. Albums, therefore, reflect a social practice where the lines between the private and public sphere are blurry insofar as some albums were produced for private use only, while the significance of others was based on collaborative efforts in production and shared experiences in viewing. As a convenient medium of self-representation, albums were thereby conceptualized for the attention of the receiving end. The Nobel’s album, featuring a photograph of Alexander III’s visit to their Baku factory, was part of a transnational visual strategy by the industrial sector to demonstrate governmental support through photo albums,⁴⁰ whereas aforementioned photo albums—produced through the integration of visual surveying into a colonialist framework—were meant for both internal and external audiences, as the supporting authorities sought to consolidate their intended perception of the theme on display.

Supported by the Tsar: The Colorful Caucasus of Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii

The most prominent photographic archive, in the form of photo albums, was the collection of color images of the Russian Empire taken by Sergeĭ M. Prokudin-Gorskii (1863–1944) between 1904 and 1915. Born into a noble family in the Vladimir governorate, Prokudin-Gorskii received training in the capital, where he studied to become a chemist.⁴¹ The close ties between chemistry and

Angeles (Nr. 84.XO.758.22) and *Russian Types* in the collections of London’s Victoria and Albert Museum (Nr. E.26-2009).

39 Stiegler, “Was ist ein Fotoalbum?,” 13; Walker and Moulton, “Photo albums,” 160.

40 Fehrenbach, *Bildfabriken*, 350.

41 For more information on Prokudin-Gorskii’s life, see the many publications by Svetlana P. Garanina (e.g. “Delo kantseliarii sojeta ministrov o priobretenii v kaznu kolleksiĭ fotograficheskikh snimkov dostoprimechatel’nostei Rossii S. M. Prokudina-Gorskogo, 1910–1912 gg.,” in *Rossiiskii arkhiv: Istoriia Otechestva v svidetel’stvakh i dokumentakh XVIII–XX vv.*, vol. 9, ed. A. N. Doroshenko et al. (Moscow: Rossiiskii fond kul’tury, 1999), 466–492; *ibid.*, “Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorsky,” *The World of 1900–1917 in Color / Mir 1900–1917 v tsvete*, 2003, <http://www.prokudin-gorsky.ru/download/Prokudin-Gorsky%20Biography.pdf>);

photography awakened his interest in the latter, and, soon, he became a member of the photography division at the Imperial Russian Technical Society (Imperatorskoe russkoe tekhnicheskoe obshchestvo, IRTO), travelled abroad to take part in international conferences and exhibitions, and published his first treatises on photography.⁴² His prominent legacy in the field of Russian photography builds on his pioneering role in the advancement of color photography, which became his main area of expertise after he joined the German professor Adolf Miethe in Berlin to study the technology he had developed. In 1906, Prokudin-Gorskii took over the post as editor of the magazine *Fotograf-Liubitel'* (Amateur Photographer), which gave him the platform to promote his own photographic process. In his opening year as the magazine's editor-in-chief and, aside lengthy editorial addresses on the first pages of each issue, he wrote a continuing article in twelve parts on "Photography in Natural Colors" by which he described what set him apart from most contemporary photographers and sought to overcome what he thought of as "monotonous and unsatisfying" toward "something closer to nature" in photography.⁴³

Beyond his role as editor and his related prominence within photographic circles, the screenings of his early color photographs, which featured views from the Caucasus, Finland, and Central Asia, made him a well-known public figure among St. Petersburg's upper class. However, it was his widely circulated portrait of writer Lev N. Tolstoi on his eightieth birthday in 1908 and the ensuing circulation of the photograph as a picture postcard into many contemporaries' homes that paved the way to widespread acclaim and success.⁴⁴ This acquired fame opened the doors to the court, where the avid amateur photographer

and Nadezhda A. Stanulevich (e.g. "Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii i ego vklad v razvitiie metodov tsvetnoi fotografii" (PhD diss., Russian Academy of Sciences, IHST St. Petersburg, 2019), as well as the current dissertation project of Henning Lautenschläger at University of Basel ("Imperium der Bilder—Die Farbphotografien Sergej Prokudin-Gorskij's vom späten Zarenreich bis zur Emigration (ca. 1900–1948)").

42 Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii, *O fotografirovanii momental'nymi ruchnymi kamerami (Ukazaniia dlia liubiteli)* (St. Petersburg: Tipografia E. Evdokimova, 1897); *ibid.*, *Izo-khromaticheskaiia s'emka momental'nymi ruchnymi kamerami* (St. Petersburg: Samokat, 1903).

43 "Kak by prevoskhodno ne byla vypolnena fotografiia, no odnoobraznyi, monotonnyi kolorit eia ne mozhet vpolne udovletvorit' cheloveka. Mertvoe litso nel'zia sravnit' s litsom zhivogo cheloveka. Posmotrite na samyi skuchnyi peizazh v prirode, i vse-taki goluboe nebo, oblachka, nemnogo zeleni—vse èto daet emu zhizn'. Vot otkuda interes publikii i eia vostorg kogda ona uvidala nechtò blizkoe k prirode." Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii, "Fotografiia v natural'nykh tsvetakh," *Fotograf-Liubitel'* 17, no. 1 (1906): 10.

44 Garanina, "Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorsky," 10–11; Reischl, *Photographic Literacy*, 48–49. The image of Tolstoi was reprinted in the August 1908 issue of *Zapiski IRTO* and in the September 1908 issue of *Fotograf-Liubitel'* which allowed an easy access and circulation of his most renowned photograph. By then, it had already been available for purchase in the

Nicholas II had an open eye and ear for what Prokudin-Gorskii had to present and suggest, namely the systematic documentation of the Russian Empire in color photographs. The idea of capturing the distant provinces of the empire on glass had grown in Prokudin-Gorskii over the years. He was thereby receptive to international developments in the photographic documentation of cultural heritage and envied his French and especially German colleagues for their systematic surveying in works such as *Die Kunstdenkmäler der Rheinprovinz* (Monuments of Art in the Rhine Province, first volume published in 1891).⁴⁵ In 1909, when Prokudin-Gorskii had the opportunity to present his work and vision at the imperial court, it resonated with Tsar Nicholas II, and the photographer gained the highest support. By imperial order, he was equipped with vehicles to travel across the empire by way of railway, roads, and rivers, and given documents that granted him access to all the locations he wished to capture with his camera. Working under a broad variety of conditions, he made copies from glass plate negatives while on the road and put them in albums as photographic reference to his journeys. Prokudin-Gorskii repeatedly returned to St. Petersburg to showcase his latest photographic series, not only to the tsar but also to a commission established to support his work. This commission aimed to integrate his oeuvre into the imperial education system towards an institutionalization of “homeland” or area studies (*rodinovedenie*)—not least through the planned production of around two thousand albums, each containing one hundred images, intended for distribution among various educational institutions.⁴⁶ These plans never came to fruition, a shortcoming that Svetlana Garanina also attributes to the assassination of Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs Pëtr A. Stolypin, which may have been the reason why the Russian state eventually failed to acquire the collection for its use.⁴⁷

Prokudin-Gorskii’s photos were, however, an integral part of state representation throughout the last years of the empire, especially evident in the celebrations of the Romanovs’ tercentenary in 1913. After the revolutions of 1917, Prokudin-Gorskii first settled in under Soviet rule and seemed to

form of framed photographs for the price of two rubles as the book publisher “Solntse” let the readers of the magazine know in a half-page advertisement in the same issue.

45 “Vo Frantsii i v osobennosti v Germanii ochen’ deiatel’no rabotaiut’ nad fotograficheskimi arkhivami, v kotorykh staraiutsia sobrat’ fotograficheskie snimki so vsekh arkhologicheskikh, istoricheskikh i khudozhestvennykh dostoprimechatel’nostei dannoi strany: eia starykh zamkov, tserkvei, kartin, statui i t. p.” Sergeĭ Prokudin-Gorskii, “Obzor inostrannoĭ literatury. Fotograficheskie arkhivy,” *Fotograf-Liubitel’* 17, no. 8 (1906): 240.

46 Garanina, “Delo kantseliarii,” 484; *ibid.*, “Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorsky,” 17–22.

47 *Ibid.*, 21.

have professionally accommodated himself to the new educational structures. However, given his close ties to the imperial family and state, he likely sensed danger of repression on the horizon. After he left St. Petersburg in 1918, Prokudin-Gorskii moved to Norway and then England before eventually joining the large Russian émigré communities in Nice and Paris, where he lived until he died in 1944.⁴⁸ The substantial, yet incomplete, remains of Prokudin-Gorskii's funds, which were planned to constitute approximately 10,000 images,⁴⁹ were posthumously purchased in 1948 by the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. Today, the Library holds a total of 1,902 glass negatives (24 × 9 cm) and 705 sepia-tone prints (8 × 8 cm) for which no glass negatives exist, reproduced from Prokudin-Gorskii's albums, of which the Library owns twelve, bound in fourteen volumes.⁵⁰ These albums represent each of his journeys and were created during 1909 and 1915, with some of the images dating back to as early as 1905. These albums usually have six prints and Russian-language captions on each page, thereby spanning the empire from the Mariinskaia Canal System (Volga-Baltic Waterway) to Central Asia, from Karelia to Central Asia, from the Oka and Volga rivers to the Ural and Siberia, and from the Murmansk Railway to the Caucasus and the Black Sea Region, at a time of sociopolitical and technological change in the Russian Empire's last decade.⁵¹

The Library of Congress's digitization of the photographs⁵² and its website's open accessibility have led to a profusion of coffee table books, making Prokudin-Gorskii's works the most well-known and widely distributed nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century photographs from the

48 For a reconstruction of Prokudin-Gorskii's life in exile after the revolutions of 1917 and his eventual development of nostalgia for imperial Russia, see Henning Lautenschläger, "Too Busy for Nostalgia? Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii's Professional Life and Autobiographical Publications after the Revolution (1917–44)," in *Personal Trajectories in Russia's Great War and Revolutions, 1914–22*, ed. Korine Amacher and Frithjof Benjamin Schenk (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2021), 47–72.

49 Garanina, "Delo kantseliarii," 472.

50 "Prokudin-Gorskii Collection," Library of Congress, accessed July 18, 2023, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/prokudin-gorskii/about-this-collection/>.

51 For more background on his travels, see, for example, Véronique Koehler, *Voyage dans l'ancienne Russie. Les photographes en couleurs de Sergueï Mikhaïlovitch Procoudine-Gorsky* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2013).

52 See Jeremy Adamson and Helena Zinkham, "The Prokudin-Gorskii Legacy: Color Photographs of the Russian Empire, 1905–1915," *Comma, International Journal on Archives*, no. 3/4 (2002): 107–144; Harold M. Leich, "The Prokudin-Gorskii Collection of Early 20th Century Color Photographs of Russia at the Library of Congress: Unexpected Consequences of the Digitization of the Collection, 2000–2017," *Slavic & East European Information Resources* 18, no. 3–4 (2017): 223–230.

Russian Empire. However, most titles that engage with the photographer's work emphasize the photographs' aesthetic dimension and high-resolution reproduction,⁵³ whereas a systematic in-depth analysis of the vast majority of the 1,900 glass-plate negatives and fourteen albums with identifications of images, which had survived the post-1918 journey into Parisian exile, has yet to be conducted. Furthermore, the images from the Caucasus often appear of peripheral interest within the photographer's corpus.⁵⁴ Grouping the 255 single images of Prokudin-Gorskii's album *Views in the Caucasus and Black Sea Area*⁵⁵ (for two more images only captions but no photographs are preserved, while a photograph of a small oil manufacturing building is reproduced twice in the album) into recurring motifs and subsequently by types as the basis of an ensuing image type analysis suggests that the representation of the Caucasus was informed by an implicit imperial agenda and primarily served four purposes which, not coincidentally, correlate with contemporary discourses on imperial representation and modernity as discussed in other chapters of this book.

Firstly, and based on Vera Tolz's suggestion of a state-framed Russian policy aimed at nation building fostering a sense of community and unity rather than the imperial domination of minorities,⁵⁶ the album's selection of ethnographic photographs represents an inclusive imagery of a multiethnic empire, offering a collective identity not only to Russians but the empire's minorities. Seventeen of the album's photographs—four of which constitute one page of the album with the page title "Types of Dagestan" (fig. 5.1)—address the region's multiethnic composition. All are meticulously staged in the tradition of the nineteenth-century visual construction of Russianness and non-Russianness,⁵⁷ with national attire at the center of the viewer's attention. The portrayed clothes allowed certain groups to display the cultural traditions and national character of their respective imagined communities, especially the Georgians and the Armenians. The displayed clothing of these two groups also suggests their noble status. The caption "Georgian" is used exclusively

53 See, for example, Robert Klanten, *Nostalgia: The Russian Empire of Czar Nicholas II Captured in Color Photographs by Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii* (Berlin: Gestalten, 2012).

54 See, for example, Brumfield, *Journeys through the Russian Empire*.

55 "Views in the Caucasus and Black Sea Area, Russian Empire," Library of Congress, accessed July 18, 2023, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2001696385>. Title devised by the staff of the Library of Congress. The first page carries the simple handwritten title *Kavkaz* (Caucasus).

56 Vera Tolz, "Orientalism, Nationalism, and Ethnic Diversity in Late Imperial Russia," *The Historical Journal* 48, no. 1 (2005): 132–136.

57 Vishlenkova, "Strategies of the Visual Construction of Russianness and Non-Russianness."

for the former, contradicting earlier imperial policies that depicted the territory as ethnically heterogeneous by stressing its affiliation to Kartvelian tribal groups such as Svans, Mingrelians, and others in the 1897 census, for example.⁵⁸ For the latter, Prokudin-Gorskii chose to include Armenians from Artvin in the contested Russian-Ottoman borderlands rather than from the Erivan Governorate or the city of Tbilisi, where Armenians constituted the single largest group in the early twentieth century. Prokudin-Gorskii also chose to portray the Black Sea coast's significant Greek minority as tea pickers with the plantation's Chinese foreman Lau Džen-Džau, showing a Russian medal on his vest, probably awarded for his contribution to the successful cultivation of tea in the Russian Caucasus. The type photographs also indicate a strong integration into the empire, for the portrayed Lezgin is shown wearing a medal of honor on his chest with a bust of Tsar Alexander III.



Figure 5.1. Sergeĭ M. Prokudin-Gorskii. "Types of Dagestan." Library of Congress.

58 Juliette Cadiot, "Searching for Nationality: Statistics and National Categories at the End of the Russian Empire (1897-1917)," *The Russian Review* 64, no. 3 (2005): 449-450.

In the interest of the state, which funded Prokudin-Gorskii's work, the ethnographic photographs in the album created an image of visual cohesion supporting the empire's territorial integrity. This visual representation of imperial cohesion as portrayed in Prokudin-Gorskii's album on the Black Sea Region complicates generalizing statements across all his other albums. As Margaret Dikovitskaya concludes, his take on Central Asia constitutes a contribution to "a state-sponsored colonization and discrimination of indigenous population."⁵⁹ In this context, she argues, the photographer—who was not at last limited to static scenes and objects by his own photographic technology—"helped create an image of the savage who had to be delivered from the vices of 'medieval darkness' but whose capability to change and a readiness to embrace the civilized lifestyle had been severely impeded by the centuries of despotism and tyranny' and was therefore questioned by Russians,"⁶⁰ which is arguably in line with contemporary colonial discourses on Russian ideas of a *mission civilisatrice* in its Central Asian provinces.⁶¹ Therefore, Prokudin-Gorskii's development of a state-sponsored project of all-imperial image production still translated into varying degrees of colonial representation of the ethnic groups living within the empire's borders, depending on overarching discourses on the region in the focus of the photographer's camera.

Secondly, the "metaphor of a mountainous landscape as a space of diversity"⁶² strengthened the first aim to visualize the region as an ethnically diverse space, as seen, for example, on a page with the caption "In the Mountains of Dagestan." It is no coincidence that this is opposite the "Types of Dagestan" page but reflects the photographer's intention to express the interrelation between discourses on imperial cohesion and landscape through the sequence and arrangement of the album's pages. It is notable that despite the prominent caption "Caucasus" on the first page of the album, Prokudin-Gorskii took most of his images along the Black Sea coast and its direct hinterlands. The renowned views of the snow-capped peaks, such as Kazbegi, El'brus, and Ushba are therefore omitted, whereas the only views of rocky Caucasus peaks come from its western spur in Dagestan. Despite his prominent support by the

59 Dikovitskaya, "Central Asia in Early Photographs," 115.

60 Ibid.

61 Ulrich Hofmeister, *Die Bürde des Weißen Zaren. Russische Vorstellungen einer imperialen Zivilisierungsmission in Zentralasien* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2019).

62 Oksana Sarkisova, *Screening Soviet Nationalities: Kulturfilms from the Far North to Central Asia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017), 147.

Ministry of Railway Transport, it remains unknown whether he would have had access to the mountains.

The narrated collective identity through landscapes is furthermore underscored by the region's presentation as a source of idyll and inspiration—a remnant of Romanticism—that accompanied Prokudin-Gorskii's ambition to “arouse love for the motherland, interest in studying its beauties and inexhaustible riches”⁶³ with his photographs. Of particular importance is the visualization of the garden, an oft-stressed allegory of paradise across confessional boundaries.⁶⁴ More than a quarter of the photographs (71 out of 255) prominently emphasize a (botanical) garden, plantation, or (sub-)tropical plant. This emphasis supported the ongoing Russian ambitions to translate a vision of the South Caucasus as the empire's own tropical colony into practical projects, such as between olive tree nurseries in Artvin and the restoration or establishment of botanical gardens, like those in Batumi and Sukhumi, which Prokudin-Gorskii visited for his visual survey of the region.⁶⁵ Aforementioned photographs of tea plantation foremen and pickers are also part of Prokudin-Gorskii's intention to capture the empire's ambitions to introduce (sub-)tropical cultivars on glass, especially against the backdrop of the subtropical estate at Chakvi (fig. 5.2). Therefore, his photographic production of Caucasus landscapes with a particular focus on their (sub-)tropicality had its source in Russian colonial visions for the southern provinces but other than in Central Asia where it translated into “a representation of the ‘promised land’ calling for settlement,”⁶⁶ it picked up a different element of the *mission civilisatrice* toward progress in horticultural and agricultural development.

63 Garanina, “Delo kantseliarii,” 479. “Tak kak glavnuuiu tsel' moego nastoiashchego truda sostavliaet patrioticheskoe stremlenie—‘probudit' liubov' k Rodine, interes k izucheniiu ee krasot i neischerpaemykh bogatstv [. . .].” See also Dikovitskaya, “Central Asia in Early Photographs,” 112.

64 See Veronica della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred in Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 93–117; Dževad Karahasan, *Knjiga vrtova. O jeziku i strahu* (Zagreb: Antibarbarus, 2002).

65 For an insight into the Russian acquisition of Artvin and the attempt to establish its own traditions of olive (oil) production, see Oleksandr Polianichev, “Tsarist Extra Virgin: Imperial Russia's Quest for Domestic Olives,” *SICE Blog of the Austrian Academy of Sciences*, accessed July 18, 2023, <https://www.oew.ac.at/sice/sice-blog/tsarist-extra-virgin-imperial-russias-quest-for-domestic-olives>. For an in-depth exploration of the Russian Empire's invention of a quasi-tropical realm see the forthcoming results of his current project on “Tropics of Tsardom: Plants and Empire in the South Caucasus, 1880s–1917.”

66 Dikovitskaya, “Central Asia in Early Photographs,” 116.



Figure 5.2. Sergeĭ M. Prokudin-Gorskii. “Bamboo in Chakvi.” Library of Congress.

Thirdly, a traditional outlet for the visual representation of an imagined civilizing mission is the documentation of industrial infrastructure growth. In the example of his album on the Caucasus and Black Sea, Prokudin-Gorskii included views of drying ovens for tea, a glass factory in Borjomi on the railway tracks (fig. 5.3), and a steam room for the treatment of bamboo poles, which need to be understood against the backdrop of the narrative of Russia as a source of progress and innovation, despite its belated industrialization. These images build upon prominent series, such as the Baku oil wells, the construction of the Georgian Military Highway, and the laying of the Caucasus railway tracks, for example, as discussed in the previous chapter, by Aleksandr Mishon, Dmitriĭ Ermakov, and Vladimir Barkanov. Especially the railway constituted a recurring element in Prokudin-Gorskii’s take on the theme of imperial industrialization of the peripheries and while he could build on this established genre to complement his visual narration of the early twentieth-century Caucasus, it stood at the very center of attention in his representations of other provinces—for instance, in the photographic survey of the construction of the Murmansk railway⁶⁷ and his

67 “Views along the Murmansk Railway, Russian Empire,” Library of Congress, accessed July 18, 2023, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2001696383/>. Title devised by the staff of the Library of Congress. The first page carries the handwritten title *Murmanskaia zhel. Doroga* (Murmansk railway).

subsequent album-form take on the far northwest of the empire, which capped his last expedition. Through these images, Prokudin-Gorskii aimed to establish a visual contrast between periphery and progress—a contrast that the imperial policy, it is suggested, can bridge. For the southern provinces, Prokudin-Gorskii does not place the romanticized landscape in a contradictory juxtaposition with his industrial-technological photographs, but instead supports the narrative of the Caucasus transitioning into a malleable province through the latter. These two elements also converge in the conceptualization of the Caucasus landscape as a source of recreation, as evident in the prominent genre of spa town photography, as seen in Prokudin-Gorskii's photographs of the Borjomi Gorge. This relates to the narrative of the imperial state, enabling a re-conceptualization of wilderness as recreational space, for the image shows a gorge with roads, railway tracks, and telegraph poles instead of an untouched side valley.



Figure 5.3. Sergeĭ M. Prokudin-Gorskii. “A Glass Factory in Borjomi.” Library of Congress.

Fourthly, the album visually presents the historical past preserved in ancient monuments, which correlates to Austin Jersild’s analysis of nineteenth-century

scholars' obsession with antiquity, resulting in a vision of a "dormant and degraded land long after its fall from grace."⁶⁸ Driven by the idea that photography would be able to produce "exact" representations, archaeologists addressed their ambition to objectify the documentation of their research and thus make use of photography, which increasingly began to supplant other processes of reproduction. However, an image is no simple reproduction of a certain circumstance or matter but co-constructs knowledge by modifying, organizing, or even creating it.⁶⁹ At a time when photography was emerging as an increasingly important mode of data capture and transmission,⁷⁰ Prokudin-Gorskii was particularly outspoken about his opinion on color photography, especially his own developed technology, being the answer to how one could preserve antiquities for posterity. In January 1911, he spoke at the fourth congress of Russian architects in St. Petersburg and posited that "[w]ith the contemporary progress in the field of color photography and color printing, we hold a precious tool in our hands to save all decaying monuments of art from oblivion" and "to leave an accurate document for the future."⁷¹ This idea eventually translated into Prokudin-Gorskii's integration of views of archaeological and medieval sites into his albums, contextualizing his interest in photographing the remains of a Byzantine church or eleventh- to fourteenth-century monastic complexes, such as the Timotesubani Monastery (fig. 5.4). The album's thirteen such photographs reflect the attempt to connect with a premodern period of prosperity. According to the photographer's memoirs, it was exactly these photographs of antiquities and ancient monuments that prompted most attention from the tsar.⁷²

68 Austin Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845–1917* (Montreal: McGill-Queen University Press, 2012), 68.

69 Peter Geimer, "Einleitung," in *Ordnungen der Sichtbarkeit. Fotografie in Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technologie*, ed. Peter Geimer (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), 7.

70 Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology*, 21.

71 "No pri sovremennom progresse v oblasti tsvetnogo fotografirovaniia i tsvetnoi pechati my imeem v rukakh dragotsennoe sredstvo spasat' ot zabveniiia vse razrushaiushchiesia pamiatniki iskusstva. [. . .] vazhnaia tsel', kotoruiu presleduet tsvetnaia fotografiia, èto ostavit' tochnyi' document dlia budushchago." Sergeĭ Prokudin-Gorskii, "Pamiatniki stariny Mariinskoi' sistemy i verkhnego Povolzh'ia i neskol'ko slov o znachenii tsvetnoi' fotografii," in *Trudy IV s'ezda russkikh zodchikh*, ed. Viktor V. Eval'd (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1911), 591.

72 See Garanina, "Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorsky," 19.



Fig. 5.4. Sergei M. Prokudin-Gorskii. "Timotesubani Monastery." Library of Congress.

The official support of Prokudin-Gorskii's photography had foreseen the establishment of a public visual archive in response to a hegemonic project. The types represented in the *Views in the Caucasus and Black Sea Area* album correlate with the initial ambition of incorporating the entire collection of images into the curriculum and offering an imperial patriotism in response to any national, social, or political tensions of the early twentieth century. However, these plans were never enacted, and while some photographs were prominently integrated in the celebration of the Romanov Tercentenary in 1913, the outbreak of World War I ultimately brought the project to a close.⁷³ While Prokudin-Gorskii suggested presenting his audience with the "real Russia and its ancient monuments,"⁷⁴ his works offer an insight into a commissioned documentation with blanks of socio-political questions and economic shortcomings. The album, therefore, reveals

73 See, e.g., Henning Lautenschläger, "Prokudin-Gorskij," in *De Gruyter Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon. Die bildenden Künstler aller Zeiten und Völker*, vol. 97, ed. Andreas Beyer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 69.

74 Cited in Garanina, "Delo kantseliarii," 468.

more about the photographer's understanding of his role in the process and the Russian perception of its southern borderlands than about the region per se at the turn of the century. His take on color photography as the most accurate means of protocolary reproduction of its time⁷⁵ supported the ambition of reimagining the Russian Empire within a narrative of cohesion. Consequently, the entanglement with the state and the prominence of Prokudin-Gorskii's work complicated the late imperial image of the Caucasus, for it constituted a production and reframing of a once orientalized realm with high symbolic capital which could still be built into a constituent of the empire. *Views in the Caucasus and Black Sea Area* reflects this process of negotiating the image of the Caucasus, and the idea of state and empire in the periphery.

Subjects of Sultan and Shah: Armenians between Agency and Absences

Tsar Nicholas II was neither the only nor the first monarch to show interest in photographic surveys of their empire, not even among the rulers of the three empires that laid claim to parts of the Caucasus region. On the contrary, his pendant Abdülhamid II, who was the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 1876 to 1909, ordered the largest Ottoman photographic project, comprising fifty-one albums intended to portray the modernization of his state, which became known under his name. The Qajar rulers of Iran, on the other hand, beginning with Nasr-ed-Din, who was the shah for almost half a century (1848–1896), had enthusiastically embraced photography upon its introduction and integrated it as a modern means of communication and representation into their modernizing agendas.⁷⁶ The parallelism of the advent of photography at the courts in Istanbul and Tehran doesn't end with the respective rulers' interest in the technology, but also manifests in a striking similarity and correlation between the demographic and photographic histories of these two empires. Both the Ottoman and Qajar empires were the home of significant Armenian minority populations, which contributed a far above average share of central figures in the

75 Prokudin-Gorskii, "Pamiatniki stariny Mariiinskoi sistemy," 593.

76 Ali Behdad, in his "The Powerful Art of Qajar Photography: Orientalism and (Self-) Orientalizing in Nineteenth-Century Iran," *Iranian Studies* 34, nos. 1–4 (2001): 151, has addressed the ambivalence between foreign representation and the ambition to keep control over the resulting image by positing that "the early Qajar photograph was both an Orientalist tool, which helped visually inscribe Iran in colonial relations of power, and an efficient vehicle for the indigenous monarch to empower himself within Iran."

development of local photographic scenes. On either state level, however, the significant Armenian contribution to Ottoman and Iranian photography, on the other hand, translated into an active agency behind the cameras rather than into a prominent representation of Armenians in the images themselves.

The Caucasus remained a zone of active confrontation until the end of the age of empires. In 1877–1878, the Russian and Ottoman empires went to war in eastern Anatolia for the last time in a long series of bilateral wars dating back into the sixteenth century. The wars were particularly devastating for the Armenians living in the region, who had been shaping it for centuries already and, after the borders were redrawn by the treaties of San Stefano (Yeşilköy) and Berlin, ultimately became subjects of Tsar Alexander II rather than of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Armenian life in the Ottoman Empire, especially in the six vilayets (*Vilâyat-ı Sitte*) with a significant Armenian population (Van, Erzurum, Harput/Mamuret-ul-Aziz, Bitlis, Diyarbakır and Sivas), thereafter navigated waters between centuries of traditions in education, cultural production, trades, and commerce, as well as increasing repression and persecution that culminated in the Hamidian massacres of the mid-1890s and the Armenian genocide.⁷⁷ It was, however, not only conflicts between the Ottoman and Russian empires that led the Armenians living on either side of the repeatedly redrawn borders to face destruction, famines, and displacement. The empires' equally fierce antagonism with Iran over the region's sovereignty involved a third state with a large population of Armenians—one that had to defend its established cultural traditions amid another century-long, geopolitical rivalry, while also becoming an active participant in modernization processes throughout the nineteenth century across all three empires. The transimperial agency of Armenians in various fields, such as trade⁷⁸ and revolutions,⁷⁹ has been the subject of a number of recent explorations whereas the long traditions of Armenian life in the Ottoman Empire, as well as Safavid, and Qajar Iran remain largely underrepresented in historiography, and photography in particular.

77 Representative for the rich literature on the Armenian genocide, see Ronald Grigor Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else.* *A History of the Armenian Genocide* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

78 Edmund M. Herzig, "The Armenian Merchants of New Julfa, Isfahan: A Study in Pre-Modern Asian Trade" (PhD diss., St. Antony's College, 1991); Stefan Troebst, "Isfahan—Moskau—Amsterdam. Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des moskauischen Transitprivilegs für die Armenische Handelskompanie in Persien (1666–1676)," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 41, no. 2 (1993): 180–209.

79 Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries*.

Addressing Turkish, Armenian, and “Western” historians alike, Ronald Grigor Suny in 1993 criticized contemporary analyses’ tendencies to examine “their respective people from rather ethnocentric points of view, largely ignoring the multinational context in which Armenians, Kurds, and Turks lived in Anatolia”⁸⁰ which at least for the field of photo history resonates with scholars picking up the problem of the absence of Armenians from Ottoman art history three decades later.⁸¹ The history of photography in the Ottoman- or Qajar-ruled states, however, cannot be written without a central emphasis on the many Armenian photographers who were responsible for its development from its introduction until the end of these empires. A closer look at the Ottoman Empire, for instance, shows how Armenians pioneered photography across the empire, from Istanbul to Ayntab/Gaziantep and via Jerusalem to Cairo.⁸² Exactly why Armenians, among other Christian practitioners, were overrepresented among nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photographers is not universally accepted.⁸³ However, Karl Kaser’s integration into a broader

80 Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat. Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 95.

81 Vazken Khatchig Davidian, “Out of Sight, Out of Mind: In Search of the Missing Armenians of Turkish/Ottoman Art Historiography with a Decolonizing Eye,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 54 (2022): 576–582; David Low, “Photography and the Empty Landscape;” *ibid.*, *Picturing the Ottoman Armenian World*.

82 Hashem Abushama, “Politics of Portraiture. The Studio of the Krikorians,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 81 (2020): 140–152; Badr al-Hajj, “Khalil Raad—Jerusalem Photographer,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 11–12 (2001): 36–37; Ibrahim Ghandar, “Egyptian Photography Trends from 1875 to 1900 through some of Armenian Photographers and their Works,” *Egyptian Journal of Archaeological and Restoration Studies* 5, no. 1 (2015): 6–9; Mona Khazindar and Dhamila Chakour, eds., *L’Orient des photographes Arméniens* (Paris: Institut du monde arabe, 2007); Joseph E. Malikian, *The Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. An Anthology and a Photo History* (Antelias: Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, 2011); Mihran Minassian, “Ayntab—Photographers,” *Houshamadyan*, last modified March 27, 2020, <https://www.houshamadyan.org/mapottomanempire/vilayetaleppo/ayntab/economy/tradesphotographers.html>; Perez, *Focus East*, 191.

For an idea about the transimperial agency of Armenian photographers, see also the collection of reproduced reverse sides of cartes de visite or cabinet cards in K’och’ar, *Hay lusankarich’ner*, 7–49.

83 Ruth Victor-Hummel (“Culture and Image: Christians and the Beginnings of Local Photography in 19th Century Ottoman Palestine,” in *The Christian Heritage in the Holy Land*, ed. Anthony O’Mahony, Göran Gunner, and Kevork Hintlian (London: Scorpion Cavendish, 1995), 183) has argued for a threefold reasoning, namely that Christians possessed the necessary skills, had easy access to the essential chemicals, and were encouraged by their community leaders to pursue a career in photography for cultural and economic reasons. In his groundbreaking work on Armenian photographic practices in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, David Low furthermore contests religion as the underlying reason and argues that “there is nothing to suggest a broader cultural rejection of the medium.” Low, *Picturing the Ottoman Armenian World*, 5.

discussion about religion and visual cultures is the most convincing to this day. According to him—and highly relevant to the introduction of photography—the encounter with a variety of pictorial traditions in the multiconfessional Caucasus region was met by an overwhelmingly positive response from the Orthodox community while Armenians, in particular, were able to embrace this innovation, as the image held no liturgical significance for them. The Muslim population, on the other hand, had difficulties in connecting its traditional visual practices to the photographic image, as skepticism prevailed among them throughout the explored time frame.⁸⁴

As a result, the first photo studio operated by a Muslim photographer in the Ottoman capital opened only in 1910.⁸⁵ Until then, the thriving photographic scene had been dominated by foreigners who had moved to Istanbul and photographers stemming from the city's Christian population, that is, Greeks and especially Armenians. Similar preconditions put Armenians at the center of the development of local photographic scenes also in other multiethnic environments, such as in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire⁸⁶ but also in Thessaloniki⁸⁷ and Baku. Amidst the industrialization of the latter and an accompanying emergence of a photographic scene at the Caspian Sea (as explored in the previous chapter), many photographers came from the city's Armenian community. One of the first to open a business in Baku was Gevorg Shamkharyan (Georgii Shamkharov) who opened the studio "Zhorzh" (Georges) in 1883.⁸⁸ In what became one of the most productive and long-lasting establishments in the city, clients flocked to it looking for both portraits and an array of "local and Transcaspian views and types."⁸⁹ Competition on the market was fierce and, among others, included the studios Rembrandt of P. Babayan and the brothers'

84 Kaser, *Andere Blicke*, 153–161.

85 Engin Özendes, *Türkiye'de Fotoğraf / Photography in Turkey* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1999), 23.

86 See Low, *Picturing the Ottoman Armenian World*.

87 On Paul (Poghos) Zepdji for instance see Spiros Alevropoulos, *Paul Zepdji. Apó to stoúntio tou stis kart postál* (Thessaloniki: Self-published in two vols., 2016–2017). For a glimpse into Zepdji's photographic survey of railway constructions in Northern Greece, see the illustrations in Basil C. Gounaris, *Steam over Macedonia, 1870–1912. Socio-Economic Change and the Railway Factor* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1993).

88 Vigen Galstyan, "Shamkharov (Shamharyan), Georgiy (Studio Georges)," *Lusadaran. Armenian Photography Foundation*, 2015, <http://lusadaran.org/artists/shamkharov-shamharyan-georgiy/>.

89 "Zhorzh," *Kaspîi*, no. 138, July 1, 1888, 4. Locals, visitors, and representatives of the foreign companies that had set roots in Baku relied on the services of this studio for which its works circulated widely and into many collections abroad. See, for instance, images of oil derricks by the studio Zhorzh in the funds of the Swedish National Museum of Science and Technology, TEKA0104613.

Vasiliï and David Rostomyan's *Svet i teni* (Light and shadows), who proudly advertised their services by referencing their status as the Qajar shah's court photographers. Houri Berberian and Talinn Grigor have furthermore demonstrated how Armenian women embraced the medium's potential for self-expression and visibility at the end of the nineteenth century, thereby beginning to negate the traditional male gaze in patriarchal photo culture through their nonerotic and formal approach to portrait composition.⁹⁰ With Ashkhen Aristakesyan (Aristakova), Baku's Armenian community also contributed one of the very few women to pioneer photography in the region. Other than a handful of surviving photos, including their reverse and the brief information in the local press that she had opened her studio in 1898, little is, however, recorded and known about the further fate of her business.⁹¹ The clientele of these photographers was however not confined to Baku's Armenian community but consisted of the urban middle and upper classes that sought to secure portraits of themselves and their families—images that would end up in individual frames or integrated into family albums in Baku households across the many ethnic and religious groups in the city.

Any pictorial skepticism among the Muslim population, however, did not necessarily extend to the Ottoman sultans and Persian shahs, who already showed interest in the earliest developments of photography. The lack of Muslim photographers, with the exception of a handful that were mostly recruited from a military background or had the highest political positions and had the opportunity to travel abroad for training,⁹² resulted in a pool of predominantly Christian pioneering photographers in the Ottoman and Qajar Empires. The most famous and monumental photographic project from the Ottoman Empire, or what is known as the Abdülhamid II albums, is the reflection of a network that extends beyond an individual actor's agency but is fueled by the logics of late nineteenth-century imperialism, commerce, and diplomacy. Erin Hyde Nolan⁹³ has argued that the Sultan's impact on photographs was indirect and mediated, as Abdülhamid II was not directly involved with his court photographers, thereby

90 Houri Berberian and Talinn Grigor, "Pictorial Modernity and the Armenian Women of Iran," *Iranian Studies* 55 (2022): 469–470.

91 Vigen Galstyan, "Ashkhen Ivani Aristakova (Aristakesyan)," *Lusarvest—Database of Armenian Photo-Media Practitioners*, 2016, <http://www.lusarvest.org/practitioners/aristakova-ashkhen-ivani>.

92 See Afshar, "Some Remarks," 267–272; Kaser, *Andere Blicke*, 165–166; Pérez González, *Local Portraiture*, 171–177.

93 Erin Hyde Nolan, "The Gift of the Abdülhamid II Albums: The Consequences of Photographic Circulation," *Trans Asia Photography* 9, no. 2 (2019), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0009.207>.

following established court protocols regarding who from his court members would interact with artists and producers on his behalf and adding one more dimension of mediation in a collaborative effort that included also printers, sitters, binders, editors, and commissioners. Much has been written⁹⁴ about the fifty-one large-format albums and their 1,819 photos that the Ottoman court sent in two almost identical sets as diplomatic gifts to the United States and the United Kingdom in 1893 and a lot more could be written about the extensive Yıldız Palace archive that contains more than thirty-five thousand images that the Sultan amassed during his reign. What makes a brief discussion in the present context nonetheless interesting are two elements:

On the one hand, the albums share a similar objective to that of Prokudin-Gorskii, who focused on the Russian Empire. The albums' nature as a diplomatic gift⁹⁵ allowed the Ottoman state to establish and circulate a visual self-representation that countered contemporary orientaling images of the Ottoman Empire and instead emphasized the country's modernization. Nolan thereby describes Abdülhamid II's pictorial anthology as fourfold, with the involved themes addressing Ottoman landscape views, Byzantine and Turkish antiquities, military and industrial developments, and the ongoing educational reform.⁹⁶ These themes are not only strikingly similar to the contemporary image production in the Russian Empire and the Caucasus as laid out in the structure of the present book but they also correlate to what Prokudin-Gorskii rightfully thought would correlate with Tsar Nicholas II and his expectations on how his empire was supposed to be represented in an extensive visual survey. Different in their target audience, the two album projects aimed to construct and affirm categories of imperial belonging and identity in line with the state's own interest in self-representation, which was not at last, and especially in the Ottoman case, also a reaction to foreign, western European photographic imaginations of Ottoman lands.

94 Edhem Eldem ("The Search for an Ottoman Vernacular Photography," 30) has rightfully pointed out that "this collection has (too) often been studied and mentioned"—not at last and similar to Prokudin-Gorskii's photographs due to the digitization of the albums by the Library of Congress (<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/ahii/>).

95 Just like in other states and empires in the late nineteenth century, both the Ottoman and Qajar rulers made extensive use of photo albums as a means of self-representation in bilateral diplomatic relations. For an insight into the exchange of photo albums between the courts in Tehran and Istanbul, see Jamshid Hatam, "19. yüzyılda Osmanlı-İran ilişkileri bağlamında 'II Abdülhamid, Nasreddin ve Muzafferredin Şâh' fotoğraf albümleri" (PhD diss., Hacettepe University, 2020).

96 Nolan, "The Gift of the Abdülhamid II Albums."

On the other hand, Abdülhamid II's albums are coined by a simultaneous omnipresence of Armenians behind the cameras and their absence in the end product. The eastern Anatolian provinces with their significant Armenian populations are widely and disproportionately underrepresented as William Allen has observed first.⁹⁷ He considers this to be of particular irony given that 1,292 photographs, that is, more than 70 percent of the entire project, spread over thirty-five albums were produced by the Abdullah Frères—a group of the three Armenian brothers Viçen (1820–1902), Hovsep (1830–1908), and Kevork (1839–1918) who ran one of the most prolific studios in Istanbul and rose to international fame, not at last based on their attribute of the official photographers of the Ottoman court which they had been proclaimed by Sultan Abdülaziz in 1863 and would decorate their business cards until the closure of their shop in 1899 when they sold the business to their competitor “Sébah & Joaillier.”⁹⁸ The latter had also contributed two albums with sixty photographs to Abdülhamid II's project and overall continued the legacy of Pascal Sébah (1823–1886) who is another example for an Ottoman photographer with a Christian (Syrian Armenian) background in the middle of the state's official photographic production. The prominence of the involved photographers is, however, not reflected in the choice of themes, that is, toward a potential portrayal of a multiethnic empire on the pages of the Abdülhamid II albums. Instead, the quantity of the visual compendium and the authority conveyed through the material dimension of massive, ornately bound leather albums bearing the Sultan's crest at the center of each volume's cover allowed the Ottoman state to inscribe its own visual self-portrait of a modernizing state into the global age of album mania. This self-portrait however denied the Armenian heritage in eastern Anatolia its place among the portrayed Byzantine and Turkish architectural monuments for which the vilayet of Van, for instance, is reduced to a mere four images of a military middle school that were part of a series highlighting the new educational facilities across the empire from Thessaloniki to Sana'a.⁹⁹

97 Allen, “The Abdul Hamid II Collection,” 126.

98 The history of both studios has been researched thoroughly. See, for instance, Engin Özendes, *Abdullah Frères. Ottoman Court Photographers* (Istanbul: YKY, 1998); *ibid.*, *From Sébah & Joaillier to Foto Sabah. Orientalism in Photography* (Istanbul: YKY, 1999).

99 See “Abdul Hamid II Collection,” Library of Congress, LOT 9527, no. 14–17. The representation but also the role of the military as an actor in image production and circulation is another parallel to photographic practices in the neighboring Russian Empire. It was not at last the military and the framework of the Abdülhamid II albums that integrated Muslims such as military photographer Ali Rıza Paşa (1860–1932; two albums of thirty photographs, Library of Congress, LOT 9515 and 9523) and the photographic unit of the Imperial School

The photographic production under the supervision of the Ottoman court was motivated by an intrinsic critique of orientalist representation of the Ottoman Empire, for which Sultan Abdülhamid II dictated to his private secretary: “Most of the photographs taken [by European photographers] for sale in Europe vilify and mock Our Well-Protected Domains. It is imperative that the photograph to be taken in this instance do not insult Islamic peoples by showing them in a vulgar and demeaning light.”¹⁰⁰ Contextualizing this contemporary critique of orientalist discourses, Wendy M. K. Shaw has argued that “in this new visual vocabulary being Ottoman was defined less through exoticism than through a universalism intended to show it as participating in a supposed global visual culture coded through European norms.”¹⁰¹ Albums such as the ones that constitute the backbone of Prokudin-Gorskii’s and Abdülhamid II’s collections replied to the same urgency of expressing a self-controlled image of state representation as in other settings that struggled with named European norms of visual representation,¹⁰² but translated into varying results when it came to the portrayal of peripheries and minorities as evident at hand of the imperial Russian and imperial Ottoman approaches to the wider Caucasus between cover and cover. The court in Tehran had realized sooner than others how photography was effectively a tool of discursive power and control which eventually resulted in the photographic archives of the Golestan Palace, which was built up throughout the long reign of Nasr-ed-Din Shah and became known as *Albumkhaneh* (House of Albums), housing more than one thousand photo albums.¹⁰³ Elahe Helbig has described how these largely unexplored albums were ordered mainly by the state’s central authorities and the shah himself, who aimed to explore geopolitically contested regions, such as Iran’s northern borderlands, to accumulate knowledge and also to assert power.¹⁰⁴

of Military Engineering (one album with fifty-five photographs, Library of Congress, LOT 11917) into the ranks of contributing photographers.

100 Cited in Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains. Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876–1909* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1999), 156.

101 Wendy M. K. Shaw, “The Ottoman in Ottoman Photography: Producing Identity through its Negation,” in *The Indigenous Lens? Early Photography in the Near and Middle East*, ed. Markus Ritter and Staci G. Scheiwiller (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2018), 181.

102 See, for instance, Estelle Sohler, *Le roi de rois et la photographie. Politique de l’image et pouvoir royal en Éthiopie sous le règne de Ménélik II* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2012).

103 Elahe Helbig, “Geographies Traced and Histories Told: Photographic Documentation of Land and People by ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar, 1880s–1890s,” in *The Indigenous Lens? Early Photography in the Near and Middle East*, ed. Markus Ritter and Staci G. Scheiwiller (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2018), 79.

104 Ibid.

Conclusions

By the second half of the nineteenth century, and what became known as the global era of album mania, different empires had adopted photography as a tool to create visual archives of a coherent state and to engage with both domestic and foreign audiences. Photo albums were thereby a particularly suitable outlet, as individualized arrangements within a standardized format, social legibility, presentational sequence as narrative order, and efforts toward shared viewing experiences allowed the acting states to present surveys of the empire that aimed at mentally appropriating its provinces within narratives of imperial cohesion and centralized power. The wider Caucasus region was thereby subject to such an imperial self-representation from cover to cover in vastly varying projects and results. On the one hand, for instance, the Russian state generously supported a photographic tour through the empire's provinces, which was supposed to underscore the state's intention of visually integrating the Other within and found expression in a series of albums that gave the wider visual compendium its intended order. The Western Armenian provinces in the Ottoman Empire were, on the other hand, however, mostly absent in Abdülhamid II's album project by which the Sultan wanted to address an international audience through a visual counter draft to the contemporary orientalist representation of his lands and peoples.

Within these contexts, the images became part of narratives that built on the respective ruling classes' awareness of photography as a tool of discursive power and control over the representation of empire. They mostly worked that way, only through the logic of the album as a medium whereas the individual images taken out of this context often blur the lines between the intended imperial self-portrait and the orientalist representations they were initially thought to undermine. The simultaneous interest of sultans, tsars, and shahs to present their states as modernizing entities and the continuing curiosity of a Western European audience in (South-)Eastern European or Middle Eastern exoticism let already the oeuvre of individual photo studios such as the Abdullah Frères, who continued to produce and sell exotic images to the lucrative tourist market, complicate the relationship between all-imperial visions and modes of self-orientalization.

This is just one of the many facets that barely scratches the surface of the vast potential of studies of photo albums that will hopefully continue to shed more light onto other aspects of this visual format, also for the Caucasus. This is especially promising for the decades following the global era of album mania and the state's primacy over complex and expensive photo album projects. By the turn of the century, when obtaining or even producing a photograph became easier

and especially more affordable, photo albums gradually permeated the sphere of everyday life, eventually becoming commodities and instruments for representing private and family life. At this time, the age of modernity also brought a new quality of mobility with it, where travelers sought to shrink time and space by relying on new modes of transportation and by exploring the last uncharted spots on their (mental) maps—efforts that they equally eagerly sought to capture and circulate via photographs. For the Caucasus, it was its highest altitudes that came into the spotlight of an international scene of alpinists that was attracted by the seemingly sublime summits of the region.

CHAPTER 6

Sublime Summits and Glorious Glaciers. The Global Production and Circulation of Mountain Photography

In 1886, Ohannes Kurkdjian (1851–1903) found a new home in Surabaya. Born in the Ottoman town of Kyurin/Gürün, the Armenian photographer's years of wandering from Tbilisi to Yerevan and onwards to Vienna eventually, and via Singapore, found an end in the east of Java.¹ It remains to be clarified why and how Kurkdjian moved to Indonesia, then known as the Dutch East Indies,² but it is no understatement to say that the Armenian played a significant role in the development of Java's photography sector and left a lasting imprint on the cultural memory of early Indonesian photography.³ He opened his photo studio,

- 1 On Kurkdjian in Surabaya see Vigen Galstyan, "Ohannes Kurkdjian's Duality," in *Garden of the East. Photography in Indonesia 1850s–1940s*, ed. Gael Newton (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2014), 70–73; Hedi Hinzler, "Onnes Kurkdjian: Viewmaker and Entrepreneur," in *Toward Independence: A Century of Indonesia Photographed*, ed. Jane Levy Reed (San Francisco, CA: Friends of Photography, 1991), 59–63.
- 2 Kurkdjian was not the first Armenian to move to Southeast Asia and establish a business. Armenians had come to Java and other parts of the region throughout the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries from both the Netherlands, especially from Amsterdam, and from Iran to successfully expand trade networks, found hotel chains, and establish communities through schools and churches for which even the Catholicos from Etchmiadzin came to visit Java in 1881. See Margaret Sarkissian, "Armenians in South-East Asia," *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 3, no. 2/3 (1987): 8–12; Nadia H. Wright, *Respected Citizens. The History of Armenians in Singapore and Malaysia* (Victoria: Amassia Publishing, 2003), 139–140.
- 3 Similar to the frequent appearance of the Moscow-born German artist Walter Spies (1895–1942) in non-Indonesian/Balinese literature about Bali, Kurkdjian is an occasional point of reference also in fiction on Java. See for instance Anuradha Roy, *All the lives we never lived* (London: MacLehose Press, 2019), 231.

the Atelier Kurkdjian, in 1890 and as Kodak's sole agent in the region, it quickly became a focal point of exchange and education for aspiring photographers,⁴ which it remained even after the photographer's death in 1903.

Kurkdjian's work exemplifies the transcultural negotiation within visual cultures, stemming from his own predisposition in the Russian Empire's Caucasus, training in Central Europe, commissioned work in a colonial setting, and the pictorial traditions of Southeastern Asia. Europeans visited the atelier to have their portraits taken in and around Surabaya, where the aesthetics of salon photography picked up exoticizing discourses on the "tropical Orient" while the studio was furthermore responsible for producing an album celebrating Queen Wilhelmina's enthronement in 1898.⁵ Kurkdjian thereby offered a range of popular compositions that were destined for global circulation through European customers. On the one hand, he portrayed the local Javanese population in an orientalist fashion that supported a Romantic vision of an exotic and prosperous colony, sparing the European viewer the harsh reality of Dutch colonial exploitation.⁶ On the other hand, Kurkdjian also made ample use of Javanese landscapes to connect to his primary audience's pictorial customs to the visual language of colonialism. His photographs of calm rainforest, sugar cane field, and palm tree views at the coast contributed to a perception of Java as an idyllic tropical paradise, whereas the series of photographs of the volcanoes Kelud, Semeru, and Bromo built upon the cultural capital of a nineteenth-century phenomenon: the alpine sublime. Vigen Galstyan has noted how Kurkdjian's style was influenced by his interest in asceticism and the sublime, as evident in his images of Java's

- 4 Thilly Weissenborn for instance, one of the first woman photographers in Indonesia, trained in the Atelier Kurkdjian before eventually opening her own studio. See Anne Maxwell, "Thilly Weissenborn: Photographer of the Netherlands East Indies," *History of Photography* 44, no. 2–3 (2020): 131.
- 5 *Souvenir aan de Inhuldigings Feesten van H.M. Koningin der Nederlanden gehouden te Soerabaja in September 1898 genomen door O. Kurkdjian*. Tropenmuseum Amsterdam, ALB-0433. This album is also interesting insofar as it brings together the arguments of chapters four and five on industrial photography and imperial albumania by putting an emphasis on what Susie Protschky calls "the association of electricity with the royal House of Orange" in the Dutch royal self-representation in its colonies in Asia. Cf. Susie Protschky, "The Empire Illuminated: Electricity, "ethical" colonialism and enlightened monarchy in photographs of Dutch royal celebrations, 1898–1948," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 13, no. 3 (2012): n.p.
- 6 Karen Strassler has furthermore pointed out that this aestheticizing gaze toward lower-class "natives" has helped bring together Dutch, Chinese Indonesian, and Javanese elites in a late colonial society where the camera had become a tool to transform both the island's people and topography into objects of aesthetic contemplation and value. See Karen Strassler, *Refracted Visions. Popular Photography and National Modernity in Java* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 38.

volcanoes.⁷ He describes these photographs as “barren and hyperreal,” inducing “a sense of anxiety that transcends the armchair Romanticism of nineteenth-century Orientalist landscape art.” Thereby, Kurkdjian not only produced an ambivalence within his own oeuvre of landscape photography, but he also partly broke with the traditional colonialist imagery of Java by emphasizing the sublime and the mythic in mountain photography, and positioned the Javanese peaks in the era’s iconography of mountains.

Growing up and working as a photographer in the Caucasus region, Kurkdjian was exposed to the cultural capital of the mountains all around him. Not only did Aleksandr Pushkin inscribe the Caucasus as “the new Parnass”⁸ into the Russian cultural horizon, but other summits such as Ararat, Damavand, El’brus, Kazbegi, and Ushba also held a special place in local mythologies, folklore, and religions for centuries.⁹ Just like the photographs of Indonesian volcanoes, images of Caucasus summits were built upon locally rooted symbolic qualities and capitalized on the interest of globally active nineteenth-century explorers seeking the sublime in formations of rock, ice, and snow at high altitudes.¹⁰ As

7 Galstyan, “Ohannes Kurkdjian’s Duality,” 72–73.

8 See the dedication in Aleksandr S. Pushkin’s *Kavkazskii plennik* (The Captive of the Caucasus, 1820–1821), “where the overcast Besht[a]u, the mighty hermit, / the five-headed ruler of auls and fields, / was for me a new Parnassus.” (Gde nasmurnyi Beshtu, pustynnik velichavyi, / Aulov i polei vlastitel’ piatiglavyi, / Byl novyi dlia menia Parnas.) Aleksandr S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v desiaty tomakh. Tom IV. Poemy—Skazki* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1977), 81–105, 81. Translation in Hokanson, *Writing at Russia’s Border*, 229–230. On the aesthetic vision of mountains in art and literature in Ancient Greece and Rome to which Pushkin thereby alludes, see Jason König, *The Folds of Olympus. Mountains in Ancient Greek and Roman Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022). On mountains in biblical and Byzantine tradition, see furthermore Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred*, 147–175.

9 The cultural history of Caucasus mountains is manifold and not only took roots in local mythologies but also found entrance into a global canon, for instance via Christianity (Ararat as the resting-place of Noah’s ark) and Greek antiquity (Prometheus being chained to Kazbegi). For a brief reference, see Irina S. Voziianova, “O zarozhdenii al’pinizma v Severnoi Osetii,” *Izvestiia Altaiskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* 60, no. 4/3 (2008): 40, whereas the cultural centrality of the high summits of the Caucasus is discussed by way of example of the mountain deity Dæl in Kevin Tuite, “The Meaning of Dæl. Symbolic and Spatial Associations of the South Caucasian Goddess of Game,” in *Language, Culture and the Individual. A Tribute to Paul Friedrich*, ed. Catherine O’Neil, Mary Scoggin, and Kevin Tuite (Munich: Lincom Europa, 2006), 165–188.

10 On the role of mountains in mythologies around the world, see Edwin Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains of the World*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), and Jon Mathieu, *Mount Sacred. Eine kurze Globalgeschichte der heiligen Berge seit 1500* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2023). For an exploration of mankind’s modern fascination with mountains, see Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind. Adventures in Reaching the Summit* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004).

the region's summits were not only the subject of Sergei Levitskii's 1843 series of landscapes in the North Caucasus but also quickly became prominent motifs in the portfolio of almost any incoming traveler or local photographer who left their studio in the cities to take photos of the wider region, the present chapter asks for the visual representation of the Caucasus mountains and the global circulation of these images against the backdrop of expeditionary photography in the late nineteenth century. It maps the networks that stand behind the work of Italian photographer Vittorio Sella (1859–1943) during his three visits to the Caucasus between 1889 and 1896, connecting his diaries and the production of his images to late nineteenth-century discourses on Alpinism, landscapes, surveys, and empire, and it investigates the circulation and afterlife of his photographs in and to the United States via an exhibition by the Appalachian Mountain Club in Boston in 1893 and the reception of his works thereafter. Through its quality as an agent of spatialization, photography had a profound influence on contemporary perceptions of landscape and space, a theme this chapter explores, and specifically, how Sella's dramatic compositions contributed to the conceptualization of the Caucasus as a realm of sublime wilderness. It thereby addresses global dimensions in the co-construction of knowledge and in the circulation of images, while investigating the relationship between mountaineers-photographers and colonial discourses on romanticized landscapes.

Romantic Reverence and the Alpine Sublime: The Visual Representation of Mountains

Mountains have not always been a projection surface for visually representing the sublime, inspiring a sense of awe, strangeness, and fear in the face of a realm of untamable nature beyond human control. Rather, the reconfiguration of their representation in Western European visual cultures is an excellent example of the cultural construction of spatial imagination and landscapes. In the seventeenth century, mountains were hardly considered a cradle of natural beauty. British poets described them as “unjust,” “deformities of the earth,” or as “warts or wens” while mountains were primarily used as symbols of warning to mankind not to aspire too high.¹¹ By the nineteenth century, hills and mountains had, however, gradually become an important source in the search for the picturesque landscape and had become a prime subject for contemporary travelers

11 Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory. The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 34–71.

and explorers seeking the sublime beyond romantic reverence.¹² The once supposedly hideous features of landscapes experienced a cultural transformation into a theme of awe, drama, and grandeur.

Two driving forces in this transformation were the appropriation of mountains in the Romanticist symbolism and the surge of alpinism making mountaineering a desirable recreational pursuit.¹³ After a first culmination with the Alps as a focal point of reference, both phenomena were widely exported and thereby adopted also into Russian culture from which they found their way into the Caucasus region. The Byronic tradition in Russian Romanticism has been the subject of numerous studies on the productive Caucasus genre of the 1820s and 1830s,¹⁴ while the history of alpinism in the Russian Empire remains a field with many unanswered questions.¹⁵ At the same time when painters such as Konstantin N. Filippov (1830–1878), Lev F. Lagorio (1827–1905), and Ivan K. Aivazovskii (Hovhannes Aivazian, 1817–1900) joined poets in the artistic appropriation of the summits in the south of the empire and captured them on canvas, the Caucasus also became increasingly looked at from outside the Russian Empire. Imperial logics suggested to consider mountains as frontiers of empire and, in the case of the Caucasus, of Europe that were to be conquered in the name of nation and empire—de facto or on mental maps.¹⁶

- 12 Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque. Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760–1800* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989); Ryan, *Photography and Exploration*, 91–101; Liz Wells, *Land Matters. Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 86–92.
- 13 Simon Bainbridge, *Mountaineering & British Romanticism. The Literary Cultures of Climbing 1770–1836* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). On Romanticism and its artistic appropriation of alpine landscapes as well as Sella's exposure to these ideas see Marina Miraglia, "Veduta, panorama, paesaggio. Vittorio Sella e la fotografia delle vette," in *Paesaggi Verticali. La fotografia di Vittorio Sella, 1879–1943*, ed. Lodovico Sella et al. (Torino: GAM, 2006), 17–20; Wendy M. Watson, "Picturing the Sublime: The Photographs of Vittorio Sella," in *Summit. Vittorio Sella. Mountaineer and Photographer. The Years 1879–1909*, ed. Phyllis Thompson Reid and Maureen Clarke (New York: Aperture, 1999), 127–129.
- 14 Lewis Bagby, *Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinsky and Russian Byronism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); Monika Greenleaf, "Pushkin's Byronic Apprenticeship: A Problem in Cultural Syncretism," *Russian Review* 53, no. 3 (1994): 382–398; Ram, *The Imperial Sublime*, 152–157; Viktor M. Zhirmunskii, *Bairon i Pushkin. Pushkin i zapadnye literatury* (Moscow: Kniga po trebovaniiu, 1978).
- 15 Eva Maurer, *Wege zum Pik Stalin. Sowjetische Alpinisten, 1928–1953* (Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 2010), 33–73.
- 16 Peter H. Hansen, "Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 34, no. 3 (1995): 300–324; *ibid.*, "Vertical Boundaries, National Identities: British Mountaineering on the Frontiers of Europe and the Empire, 1868–1914," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 24, no. 1 (1996): 48–71; Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, 47–61.

Visual representations of mountainous landscapes were therefore appreciated for their aesthetic appeal within contemporary reimaginings of natural beauty, but they also represented an imperial-colonial mindset that dominated the Eurocentric perception of formerly unknown parts of the world or empires. In a century when imperial and national belonging became central markers of identity, landscapes were imagined as imperial and, particularly, as national spaces.¹⁷ Thereby, peripheral regions increasingly received attention within these imaginations because they could be imagined as a spatial Other and an ideal backdrop of an official conception of imperial or national space. For Russia, Christopher Ely¹⁸ has shown how a pastoral aesthetic was central to “the vision of an unspectacular and desolate, yet proud and distinctive, national geography”¹⁹ where the scenic had a hard time to be imagined as significant for the national territory.

Mountains—a central element in many nationalized imaginative geographies from Switzerland to Japan²⁰—remained of lesser importance and were subjected to contested imaginations in the borderlands of the Russian Empire. Eva Maurer has demonstrated how the interplay between collective and individual conceptions of space has been influenced by Soviet alpinism in the Pamir mountains,²¹ but a comparable study for imperial Russia or the Caucasus has not yet been published. However, already in the 1860s, British visualizations of the western Himalaya served as “a means of surveying spaces and peoples from an imperial point of view”²² in a region of global strategic and symbolic relevance between Britain’s colonies in India, the Russian Empire’s ongoing colonial project in Central Asia, and China. At the same time, the lopsided developments in Western and Eastern European alpinism, the ambivalent ideas about where

- 17 Jens Jäger, “Picturing Nations: Landscape Photography and National Identity in Britain and Germany in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” in *Picturing Place. Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, ed. Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan (London: Routledge, 2020), 117–140. This argument builds on William J. T. Mitchell’s definition “of landscape, not as an object to be seen or a text to be read, but as a process by which social and subjective identities are formed.” See William J. T. Mitchell, “Introduction,” in *Landscape and Power*, ed. William J. T. Mitchell, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 1.
- 18 Christopher Ely, *This Meager Nature. Landscape and National Identity in Imperial Russia* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002).
- 19 Christopher Ely, “The Origins of Russian Scenery: Volga River Tourism and Russian Landscape Aesthetics,” *Slavic Review* 62, no. 4 (2003): 680.
- 20 Maurer, *Wege zum Pik Stalin*, 37–38.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 115–143.
- 22 Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, 54. Against the backdrop of the British engagement with the Himalaya, Lachlan Fleetwood has furthermore shown how mountains were fit into a contemporary global scientific and imperial order through a scientific, imaginative, and political remaking. See Lachlan Fleetwood, *Science on the Roof of the World. Empire and the Remaking of the Himalaya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

to locate Europe's borders, and the increasing international accessibility of the Caucasus—where Russia had declared its colonial conquest to be complete by the mid-1860s and now reinforced cartographic projects—contributed to the empire's southern borderlands becoming a playground for imaginative control in the name of nation and empire through mapping and its visualization.

Both the growing interest in visual representation of mountainous landscapes and in documenting heroic explorations received a particularly powerful ally in the invention and increasingly practicable application of outdoor photography. Alpinism and photography in their early stages shared that they were both utilized by society's elites and could hardly be considered a mass movement or a mass medium by the middle of the nineteenth century.²³ As much as climbers wanted to eternalize their pursuit of first (documented) ascents around the world, they were limited by weight and the lack of sensitivity of the time's photographic equipment. Hence, the very first mountaineer-photographers mostly had to settle for a comparably small number of static views from a distance, which were then in composition hardly different from the picturesque depictions of early to mid-century paintings. From the first daguerreotypes that put an emphasis on an individual mountain—such as in the images John Ruskin is purported to have taken of the Matterhorn (1849)—it took more than another decade for the earliest known examples of photographs of alpinism in action to come into being when the French brothers Louis-Auguste (1814–1876) and Auguste-Rosalie Bisson (1826–1900) took on Mont Blanc in 1861. The convergence of alpinism and scientific exploration furthermore affected international geographers, geologists, and representatives of other disciplines interested in mountains, who made ample use of the camera to produce what they considered “factual evidence.” For example, some of the earliest photographs of climbing were taken by or of academics, such as the geologist Clarence King (1842–1901), who worked in the American West.²⁴ Innovations in the camera and chemical sectors, including lighter equipment and processes for exposure and development, made a large team of porters dispensable, facilitating the chronicling of high-altitude scenes by the 1880s, most notably with the introduction of the handheld Kodak camera in 1888. This progress coincided with an upsurge in Caucasus alpinism and the arrival of several climbers from abroad who intended

23 On the development of mountaineering photography in the nineteenth century, see Joe Bensen, *Souvenirs from High Places* (Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers, 1998), 35–57.

24 *Ibid.*, 36–39. Bensen thereby contextualizes a photograph of King climbing on rock with a rope. The image was probably taken by Timothy H. O'Sullivan (1840–1882) in the late 1860s when they were both working on the “Geological Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel,” a geological survey conducted between 1867 and 1869, in the American West.

to showcase to the world how they had conquered the snow-capped peaks and traversed the glorious glaciers of the Caucasus.

Exploring the Caucasus: The Arrival of Alpinism in the Russian Empire

The international discovery of the Caucasus as a space of adventure and leisure began in the late 1860s, when most of the major peaks in the Alps had been reached and Western European alpinists were seeking new challenges.²⁵ The “age of exploration” was by then in full swing and travelers had embraced the photograph as a central tool in the construction of “the modern myth of the explorer—the heroic individual who pits their very being against a harsh environment in order to attain some ideal”²⁶—and in the construction of imaginative geographies.²⁷ The earliest modern mountaineers who came to the Caucasus, sporting the spirit of global explorers, were from Great Britain. This meant that their first encounter with the region was fueled by the imperialist logics that dominated public and publicized rhetoric in London about the Russian Empire. In 1874, Florence C. Grove (1838–1902), together with his fellow countrymen Horace Walker (1838–1908) and Frederick Gardiner (1850–1919), as well as with their Swiss and Balkar guides Peter Knubel (1833–1919) and Akhiia Sottaev (Akhyia Sottalany; unverified biographical data), were the first mountaineers to make a documented ascent to the taller western summit of Mount El’brus (5,642 meters). Upon his return to England, Grove not only published a book on his trip to the Caucasus, but also lost no time in reaching a wider audience

25 These new challenges did not necessarily need to be outside of Europe as much of the continent was yet virtually unknown to Western European tourists which were still predominantly looking at typical itineraries of the “Grand Tour.” How, for instance, the local “discovery” of the Carpathians started in the 1870s has been explored by Patrice M. Dabrowski, *The Carpathians. Discovering the Highlands of Poland and Ukraine* (Ithaca: Northern Illinois University Press, 2021), 19–53. For an overview over the many alpinists flocking to the Caucasus in the second half of the nineteenth century see Pavel S. Rototaev, *K vershinam. Khronika sovetskogo al’pinizma* (Moscow: Fizkul’tura i sport, 1977), 43–45; and a contemporary overview in the work of the Czech teacher and traveler Emanuel Fait, *Kavkaz, jeho přírodní krásy, poměry národohospodářské, národopis a místopis* (Prague: Matice česká, 1894), 4–19.

26 Ryan, *Photography and Exploration*, 8.

27 On the role of travel photographs as a new means of mid-nineteenth-century acquisition, ordering, and dissemination of geographical information, see Joan M. Schwartz, “The Geography Lesson: Photographs and the Construction of Imaginative Geographies,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 22, no. 1 (1996): 16–45.

through his letter in the *Times*, in which he describes the mountain “as being undoubtedly in Europe.”²⁸ This conception of the Caucasus watershed as the continental boundary supported the idea of a “Greater Europe” extending into the eastern Black Sea region and conveniently made him and his party the first to reach the top of Europe’s highest summit.

With more than ten summits higher than Mont Blanc (4,810 meters), the Caucasus and its reputation as being part of Europe attracted climbers who eventually also sought photographic visual evidence to support the stories they brought back home. Already six years before Grove and his colleagues conquered the western summit, another prominent British alpinist had stood both twenty-one meters in altitude lower and on the eastern summit of El’brus and on Kazbegi (5,047 meters), the prominent summit towering above the Georgian Military Road, thereby marking the starting point of the international appropriation of the peaks in the Caucasus mountain range. Douglas W. Freshfield (1845–1934),²⁹ and his party including Adolphus W. Moore (1841–1887) and Charles C. Tucker (1843–1922), had relied on the services of Sottaev, the same Balkar guide Grove hired later in 1874, and the French mountain guide François Devouassoud (1831–1905) to get to the top. In his first book on the region, Freshfield noted that the reader “may more justly complain of the absence of ethnological details concerning the tribes of the Caucasus,”³⁰ which signified Western Europe’s lack of information on the region at the time. It also helped inscribe it into the mental map of a growing audience. Freshfield returned to the region twice before the end of the century, thereby perpetuating a contemporary representation of romanticized Caucasus mountains:

All was distinct as a mapman’s model, yet wonderful and beautiful
as a poet’s dream—as the landscapes of Shelley’s ‘Prometheus.’
The splendour of nature on this day of days seemed not out of

28 Florence Crauford Grove, *The Frosty Caucasus’. An Account of a Walk through Part of the Range and of an Ascent of Elbruz in the Summer of 1874* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1875), 34.

29 Douglas W. Freshfield is a key figure in both the development of British alpinism and the “discovery” of the Caucasus as a space of exploration and leisure. As a keen mountaineer, who coordinated some of the first expeditions to the Caucasus and ascents, a productive writer, and a central administrative figure in organizations such as the Alpine Club and Royal Geographical Society, he quickly became an important node of knowledge exchange when it came to the latest information about how to hike up the mountains in the south of the Russian Empire.

30 Douglas W. Freshfield, *Travels in the Central Caucasus and Bashan* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1869), vi.

harmony with the sadness of our personal errand. It affected the mind as a solemn and sympathetic music. While I gazed, four white butterflies fluttered about the little monument, and again fluttered off into immeasurable space. A Greek would have read a symbol in the incident.³¹

Another British mountaineer and photographer, who brought awareness and developed alpinism's and landscape photography's potential in the Caucasus was William Frederick Donkin (1845–1888), the former honorary secretary of the Alpine Club and the Photographic Society of London. He had gone missing on a trip to the chain of Koshtan-Tau³² with his colleague Henry (Harry) Fox (1856–1888), a former rugby player and experienced climber, and two guides from Switzerland, Kaspar Streich and Johann Fischer, but as an authority on contemporary travel and mountain photography,³³ Donkin's photographs from a previous trip to the region in 1886 had become popular in a way that “no lover of mountains, no teacher of physical science” could escape. However, the British-Swiss party's disappearance also put the “special perils of the Caucasus”³⁴ on the map.

The establishment of a mountaineering culture as a recreational activity was, however, not a one-way street of cultural transfer but occurred gradually and in exchange between alpinist circles in Western Europe and a rather heterogenous group from the Russian Empire that travelled westwards. This group, composed of wealthy aristocrats, who could afford to go to Western Europe as tourists,

- 31 Douglas W. Freshfield, “Search and Travel in the Caucasus,” *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 12, no. 5 (1890): 278.
- 32 Contemporary sources often refer to the peak as Dykh-Tau (see for instance N. N., “Royal Geographical Society,” *Times*, February 11, 1890, 7) which Freshfield (*The Exploration of the Caucasus*, vol. 1 [London: Edward Arnold, 1896], 26) explains with the names of the mountains being reversed. Indeed, today's designation of the slightly higher Dykh-Tau (5,205m) to the west of Koshtan-Tau (5,152m) can be found the other way around on contemporary maps by the Russian military (see, for instance, *Voenno-topograficheskaja karta Kavkazskogo kraia 1877g.*). The German alpinist Gottfried Merzbacher (1843–1926) discarded this so-called Five-Verst-Map as often erroneous for areas above the snow line and as completely incorrect for the glaciers of the region—a cartographic shortcoming he would aim to address himself by producing his own map (“Merzbacher's map”) in what became a prime example for the significant contribution of foreign alpinists to cartography in the Russian Empire. See Gottfried Merzbacher, *Aus den Hochregionen des Kaukasus. Wanderungen, Erlebnisse, Beobachtungen* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1901), 225–226.
- 33 William F. Donkin, “Photography,” in *Hints to Travellers. Scientific and General*, 5th ed., ed. Henry H. Godwin-Austen, John Knox Laughton, and Douglas W. Freshfield (London: Royal Geographical Society, 1883), 244–250.
- 34 Douglas W. Freshfield, “Obituary: Mr. W. F. Donkin, and Mr. H. Fox,” *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 10, no. 11 (1888): 715–717.

social democrats and revolutionaries in exile in Switzerland, and also students, learned about the alpine world and mountaineering, bringing new perspectives on landscape and leisure time back east.³⁵ Before this input also led to the establishment of mountain clubs and the construction of railway lines across both the northern and southern Caucasus, the Russian military was—similar to its role in the establishment of photography in the region—an important factor in the development of local alpinist traditions. While alpinism was not yet a central element of Russian imperialism or locally rooted nationalism,³⁶ knowledge production within the Russian military's tasks in the southern borderlands ranged from the exploration of the mountain plateaus (including the unconfirmed because undocumented first ascent to El'brus in 1829)³⁷ to topographer Andrei V. Pastukhov's (1860–1899) extensive work and list of conquered summits by in the 1880s and 1890s.³⁸ This diverse group of actors, which included local and central European mountain guides, the Russian military, and especially European adventurers seeking new challenges, gravitated toward the mountains for different reasons, but collectively contributed to the emergence of a new iconography of the Caucasus: the persistence of the sublime.³⁹

From Piedmont to Svaneti: Vittorio Sella's Images of the Caucasus

In 1889, a climber and photographer came all the way from Biella, Italy to the Caucasus. Vittorio Sella would return to the region twice and photograph the population, landscapes in the valleys of Svaneti, and the mountain range's

35 Maurer, *Wege zum Pik Stalin*, 53–54. For a visual example of the development of Russian alpinism abroad, see the images by the pathologist Aleksei I. Abrikosov (1875–1955) during his trip to Switzerland in ca. 1911: “Swiss Alps: Its Glaciers and Panoramic Views, ca. 1910–1911,” Zolotarev Archives, accessed December 15, 2023, <https://www.zolotarevarchives.com/swiss-alps>.

36 See Benjamin Bamberger, “Mountains of Discontent: Georgian Alpinism and the Limits of Soviet Equality, 1923–1955” (PhD-thesis: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2019), 41–47 on Georgian “claims on mountainous space” fueled by sentiments of national pride as the background of expeditions in the 1920s.

37 On such claims, see Rototaev, *K vershinam*, 53–55.

38 On life and work of Pastukhov (1860–1899) see Sergei V. Sergeev and Evgenii I. Dolgov, *Voennye topografy russkoï armii* (Moscow: SiDiPress, 2001), 425–426.

39 On the “persistence of the sublime,” see Ann C. Colley, *Victorians in the Mountains. Sinking the Sublime* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 217–228; and also Irina Kantarbaeva-Bill, “Victorian Exploration of Human and Nonhuman on the Pamir Mountains,” *Caliban* 59 (2018): 291–305.

highest summits, which received then-unrivalled attention and circulation. Sella had been exposed to both alpinism and photography since childhood, since his uncle, Quintino Sella, was a passionate mountaineer and founder of the “Club Alpino Italiano,” and his father, Giuseppe Venanzio Sella, wrote the first Italian treatise on photography.⁴⁰ Vittorio was raised in an—to use Freshfield’s words—“old and honored Italian family”⁴¹ in which the passion for the mountains was passed on. Fittingly, it was Vittorio’s brother Gaudenzio and three of his cousins, Alessandro, Alfonso, and Corradino, who were among the first to ascend Dent du Géant, the then last unclimbed four-thousand-meter peak in the Alps, and thereby contributed to bringing the golden (or its subsequent silver) age of alpinism to an end in 1882.⁴²

Vittorio Sella, however, heralded the start of a golden age of mountain photography; even his early works in the 1880s and 1890s, despite the challenges posed by bulky and heavy equipment, rank among the finest images of alpine scenes ever produced. With his first photos taken of the Alps, he travelled to the Caucasus in 1889, 1890, and 1896 and continued to take his camera around the world by going to Alaska’s Mount Saint Elias (1897), the Ugandan Congolese Ruwenzori (1906), and eventually to the Karakoram and the Himalaya (1909). His images of the Caucasus were particularly important to the development of mountain photography because they constituted the first larger convolute of photographs that were taken in high altitudes in an exoticized surrounding while still relying on large plates despite the handheld Kodak camera having been introduced to the market already the year before Sella’s first trip to the Russian Empire.⁴³ The Italian’s work also constituted a major step in a new tradition of

40 Giuseppe Venanzio Sella, *Plico del fotografo, ovvero l'arte pratica e teorica di disegnare uomini e cose su vetro, carta, metallo, ecc. col mezzo della luce* (Turin: Paravia and Co, 1856).

41 Freshfield, *The Exploration of the Caucasus*, 1:xiv.

42 Paul Kallmes, “The Alps, 1879–1895,” in *Summit. Vittorio Sella. Mountaineer and Photographer. The Years 1879–1909*, ed. Phyllis Thompson Reid and Maureen Clarke (New York: Aperture, 1999), 17.

43 In 1889/1890, Vittorio Sella was still working with 30 × 40 cm (gelatin-bromide silver) plates of different brands for the Dallmeyer-Kinnear camera he had ordered in London in 1882. He considered the 24 × 30 format as aesthetically too square for his alpine views and therefore stuck to his Dallmeyer equipment (with a 18 × 16” rapid rectilinear and a No. 6 lens) until 1892 (see Vittorio Sella, “Note biografiche personali,” in *Vittorio Sella. Fotografie e Montagna nell’Ottocento*, ed. Aldo Audisio and Gherardo Priuli (Torino: Museo Nazionale della Montagna “Duca degli Abruzzi,” 1983), 19). Photographers who wanted to take such an equipment to higher altitudes were therefore dependent on the assistance of several porters. The Bisson brothers for instance relied on twenty-five porters and guides when taking their photographs of Mont Blanc in 1861 (See Bensen, *Souvenirs from High Places*, 43). In Sella’s case, his almost 20 kg camera and the 120 glass plates he brought along amounted to a total of 120 kg he had to take across the mountains.

the visual representation of the region because it fostered a new perspective on a sublime Caucasus, while the produced images received global acclaim and circulation, no images from the region had experienced before.

In his 1889 diary and in more detail in a published report,⁴⁴ Sella describes, which networks of information and practical assistance he could rely on to get to the Caucasus and around the region. While Vittorio's brother, Erminio, took the team of guides and porters, among which was also the Aostan Daniele Maquignaz, who had already taken the Sellas up the Dent du Géant, took the southern route via Constantinople and through Georgia, Vittorio himself took the more direct northern route via Vienna, Kraków, L'viv and Odesa. In the Black Sea port city, he relied on the services of the Italian consul to get his photographic equipment without issue through Russian customs and to meet with Mór Déchy (1851–1917) to gather the latest, firsthand information on mountaineering in the Caucasus. Déchy, a Hungarian geographer and alpinist, had previously been among the first to tackle altitudes above four thousand meters in the southern Russian Empire and was also passionate about photography. A pioneer in Caucasus mountain photography himself, Déchy was therefore the ideal contact for Sella before his first visit to the region.⁴⁵ From an alpinist's point of view, the meetings at Sella's next stop—the Hôtel de France in

44 Vittorio Sella, *Note di viaggio al Caucaso 1889*, unpublished diary, Fondazione Sella, Mazzo 3, Fasciolo 1. Based on his diary, Sella would also publish a report ("Nel Caucaso Centrale. Note di escursioni colla camera oscura") in the *Bollettino del Club Alpino Italiano per l'anno 1889* (23, no. 56 [1890]: 243–318). The information given in diary and report are predominantly overlapping while the private nature of the former let Sella be more outspoken about his feelings toward people he thought were not overly likeable or trustworthy—comments that he dismissed when submitting his report to the *Bollettino*. Sella furthermore published shorter reports abroad, for instance upon invitation by the president of the Austrian Alpine-Club in Vittorio Sella, "Mittheilungen über meine Reise im centralen Kaukasus," *Oesterr. Alpen-Zeitung* 12, no. 297, May 30, 1890, 121–124.

45 Déchy was not the first Hungarian to visit the region but his expeditions stood in the nineteenth-century idea to search for a Hungarian "national homeland" in the Caucasus (see Péter Pál Kránitz, *Magyarok a Kaukázusban. A magyar őshaza kutatása Örményországban és a Kaukázusban (Hungarians in the Caucasus. In search of the Hungarian homeland in Armenia and the Caucasus)* (Budapest: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, 2016). Déchy's reports and especially his early photos was however the most widely circulating international Caucasus information on both the region itself as well as on high altitude alpinism in the mid-1880s and therefore informing for anybody coming to the region's mountains then. Déchy's work furthermore seems to have challenged his colleagues at the British Alpine Club for Donkin recognized the Hungarian's "large amount of most valuable work, exploring, photographing, and mapping several quite unknown regions" but at the same time complained that "such work should surely not be left entirely in the hands of one of our foreign members, nor will it be, if, as is sincerely to be hoped, the English parties [...] can go to the Caucasus next season." W. F. Donkin, "Mountaineering in the Caucasus," *The Alpine Journal*, no. 96 (May 1887): 243.

Vladikavkaz—was comparably important. There, he met up with a British party consisting of Freshfield, Clinton T. Dent (1850–1912), who had been to the region in 1886 with Donkin,⁴⁶ and Charles H. Powell (1857–1943), an army captain whose fluency in Russian proved valuable for the organization of their mission to the Caucasus. The group had traveled from St. Petersburg as members of the search committee for the climbers Donkin and Fox, who had disappeared in the mountains a year earlier.⁴⁷ Sella met Hermann Woolley (1846–1920) hereafter, a keen amateur mountaineer-photographer who had just returned from Kazbegi and was able to provide Sella with the latest news on conditions in higher altitudes.

Sella was, however, not only informed by his fellow alpinists from Western and Central Europe, but he could also refer to the latest writings of scholars in the service of the Russian Imperial Society and had a network of Russian contacts in the region. With letters from the local governor in his pocket, and actively seeking an exchange of knowledge with Vasilii I. Dolbezhev (1842–1911), an archaeologist and teacher at Vladikavkaz gymnasium, and with Evgenii A. Zhdanov (1839–1892), a geodesist and cartographer based in Tbilisi, Sella was well-received and supported by the Russian administration. As the primary sources of information about the region came through Russian mediation, the Italian's vantage point on history and present had a strong bias toward Russian imperial narratives.⁴⁸ Sella writes of Russia's achievement to "pacify" the region by 1877,⁴⁹ and his report is rich in orientalist remarks about the region's native population. Sella had also read the latest studies on the Caucasus by Ernest Chantre (1843–1924) or Gustav Radde (1831–1903)⁵⁰ and while he was at the

46 Dent's report about his Caucasus experiences sums up his and his fellow alpinists' fascination with exploring high altitudes off the beaten path: "If you love the mountains for their own sakes; if you like to stand face to face with Nature where she mixes sublimity of grandeur and delicacy of beauty in perfect harmony; if these sights fill and satisfy you of themselves—go there! [...] If you wish to be far from the madding crowd, far from the noise, bustle, and vulgarity of the buzzing, clustering swarms of tourists—go there." Clinton Dent, "The Ascent of Tetnuld Tau," *Alpine Journal*, no. 96 (May 1887): 242.

47 See Freshfield, "Search and Travel in the Caucasus."

48 Sella is no exception to Western European travelers perpetuating Russian imperial narratives on the Caucasus in their late nineteenth-century accounts. See Dominik Gutmeyr, "Institutionalising Knowledge and Circulating Imagery: 19th-century Britain's Encounter with the Russian Empire's Borderlands," in *Institution Building and Research under Foreign Domination. Europe and the Black Sea Region (Early 19th–Early 20th Centuries)*, ed. Iakovos Michailidis and Giorgos Antoniou (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2019), 23–55.

49 Sella, "Nel Caucaso Centrale," 247.

50 *Ibid.*, 303–304. Overall, the latest reports from the Caucasus by Russian scholars were easily accessible to Western European readers as they were reprinted and/or discussed in contemporary journals. For the mid-1880s, see for instance *Petermanns Mitteilungen* (1884, vol. 30)

same time well aware of the lack of knowledge about the region, his point of departure is on the one hand the then topical question of where to locate El'brus between Europe and Asia and the mythological Caucasus of Prometheus and the Argonauts.⁵¹ He explicitly addresses his own imagination of Svaneti being “a myth of wild beauty, of ferocious freedom” and understands the promise of his imagination kept upon arrival.⁵²

The arriving party was attracted by this imagination and was seeking its embodiment in the landscape, which, according to Sella, offered more grandeur than the Alps.⁵³ Sella's diary gives the reader an insight into his and his colleagues' understanding of photography and its role during the expedition when noting that Freshfield, whom he would accompany during their last trip to the Caucasus seven years later, tells him that the Italian would be able to “reveal the true character of the Caucasus” by taking photos also in the picturesque valleys of Svaneti and not only in high altitudes.⁵⁴ The picturesque of the landscape in the form of delightful gardens and beautiful flowers in thousands of shapes and colors is contrasted with an immense amphitheater of cliffs and glaciers⁵⁵ but both Sella and Freshfield were convinced that they could bridge the two elements through photography, which would help them select, specify, and even idealize the elements that make up a beautiful alpine scene.⁵⁶

Despite embracing the contemporary understanding of photography “recording and repeating the absolute truth”⁵⁷ when describing the ethnographic type photographs he took in Svaneti and despite the aspiration to use photography as an impartial tool of exploration and mapping, Sella also acknowledged the

with Nikolai Ia. Dinnik's “Die Gebirge und Schluchten des Terek-Gebietes” (Mountains and Gorges of the Terek region) and Aleksei A. Il'in's “Der Berg U'shba” (Mount Ushba)—two contributions Freshfield would refer to as “instructive” in *The Exploration of the Caucasus*, 1:23.

51 Sella, “Nel Caucaso Centrale,” 243, 292.

52 Ibid., 292. “La Soanezia manteneva la promessa dell'immaginazione nostra. Da quanto avevamo letto e udito, il nome di questa valle segregata era per noi un mito di selvaggia bellezza, di libertà feroce.”

53 Ibid., 260.

54 Sella, *Note di viaggio al Caucaso 1889*, 4. “Mi dice [Freshfield, DGS] che dovrei fotografare in modo rivelare il carattere vero del Caucaso non solo quello della regione più alta, molto simile alle Alte-Alpi poiché la parte più pittoresca trovansi a Jibiani ed Adish nella Soanezia.”

55 Sella, “Nel Caucaso Centrale,” 268.

56 Ibid., 284.

57 Vittorio Sella, “Nel Caucaso Centrale colla Camera Oscura. II° Viaggio,” *Bollettino del Club Alpino Italiano per l'anno 1890 XXIV*, no. 57 (1891): 301–302. “La fotografia registra ciecamente; o meglio con occhi molto aperti ma imparziali, fedeli, al sicuro da ogni irritazione dell'amor proprio, da ogni offesa agli agi dell'uomo civile: registra e ripete la verità assoluta, anche rispetto all'animo degli uomini, per quanto questo si traduce sui lineamenti del viso.”

intentionality behind his mountain photography, often waiting for hours to capture the precise composition he envisioned. This is even more the case for the following summer when Sella returned to the Caucasus and again scribbled his impressions into a notebook, which became the basis for another lengthy report in the *Bollettino del Club Alpino Italiano*.⁵⁸ With his impressions of the region having settled for a year already, the report of the second trip has a slightly different character and is less atmospherically loaded and more focused on the technical aspects of photography and alpinism. Sella opens his second report by writing about his disappointment with the images from the previous year and his plans to return with clearer results of “the characteristic lines of those intricate mountains.”⁵⁹ Sella had a clear conception in mind when setting up his tripod. While the status quo of equipment development in the 1880s required a fair amount of natural light to ensure the desired exposure, he was also interested in representing the mountainous scenes with clear-cut, sharp scenes of the prominent peaks above a bed of wandering clouds.⁶⁰ By these compositions, he not only thought to capture “the true character of the Caucasus” as Freshfield had put it but also the dramatic appeal of the mountains amidst their scenery of icy cliffs and glistening snow fields. The search for new adventures, the glory of first ascents, and the sublime attracted an increasing number of alpinists and photographers to the region—a group that expanded after Sella’s images circulated globally and collectively contributed to a new iconography of landscape in the Caucasus beyond the traditional representation of the picturesque.

Shipping up to Boston: An Exhibition at the Appalachian Mountain Club, 1893

Sella concludes his report of the second trip to the Caucasus by remarking on the unfavorable weather which had barred him from completing the planned illustrative work of the Central Caucasus. While the Italian might not have been fully satisfied with the output of his trips to the Russian Empire, he still managed to bring an impressive set of several hundred photographs back to Biella (exactly “ten dozens” from his first trip and another 375 from his trips in 1890 and 1896). The growing interest in the region—which was not at last sparked

58 Vittorio Sella, *Diario viaggio Caucaso 1890*, unpublished diary, Fondazione Sella, Mazzo 3, Fasciolo 1. For the report see previous footnote.

59 Sella, “Nel Caucaso Centrale. II° Viaggio,” 263.

60 *Ibid.*, 313–315.

by the idea of Europe's highest mountain being in Russia's southern borderlands rather than in the Alps and by the drama of Donkin and Fox's disappearance in the Caucasus in 1888—made the latest reports by Sella, Freshfield, and Co must-reads in the alpinist community. The available visual support of the latest heroics between El'brus and Svaneti was a welcome point of discussion across Europe's alpine clubs. In February 1890, Freshfield wrote a text on "Caucasian photographs" for a booklet published by London's Royal Geographical Society, briefly touching upon the views taken by Donkin and Woolley before primarily discussing Sella's 120 images from the Italian's first trip. He concludes that they would "correct and enlarge our knowledge of the chain illustrated."⁶¹ More importantly, however, Freshfield organized an exhibition of Sella's photographs in 1890, which attracted much attention also beyond London for the work of the latest Murchison Award winner.

Sella's photographs furthermore received a major boost in prominence when they were exhibited at Torino's 1893 Geographical Congress. This time, Sella displayed images from his frequent visits to the Alps throughout the 1880s and from his 1889 and 1890 trips to the Caucasus—images which won a competition of landscape photographs and him the "grand gold medal and diploma of honor."⁶² Already the London exhibit had made the Bostonian Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) become interested in organizing a similar event for a North American audience and—after acquiring a few photographs for its exhibitions in 1890/91—was now hoping to bring Sella's entire Torino exhibit to Massachusetts. Sella, a corresponding member of the AMC since 1891, was pleased to see his works cross the Atlantic Ocean and agreed to have his photographs shipped to Boston immediately after the Torino congress in February. However, they only passed through customs on May 3, with the opening planned for May 5. Unpacking and hanging began immediately, keeping Sella's images in the order they were in Torino and following his geographical grouping. On May 5, 1893, some two hundred AMC members and friends were admitted for a preliminary view of the Italian's photo series from the Alps and the Caucasus before

61 Douglas W. Freshfield, *Caucasian Photographs* (London: Royal Geographical Society, 1890), 7. A review of the exhibition took the same line by stating that "[t]he photograph has the precision and conveys much of the information of a relief model on a great scale" where "[t]hose who have never seen a great mountain view may look on this presentment and form some accurate idea of the reality." N. N. 1890. "Caucasian Exhibition at the Royal Geographical Society," *Times*, February 17, 1890, 13.

62 Charles E. Fay, "The Sella Exhibition," *Appalachia. The Journal of the Appalachian Mountain Club* 7 (1893–1895): 231.

the exhibition was finally opened to the public the next day.⁶³ Over the next three weeks, the exhibition attracted a total of nine thousand visitors. For the local observers—and likely also for the organizers themselves—the images from the Caucasus became a new spectacle and were a pleasant sidekick to the evocative cultural capital of the Alps. The *Boston Daily Advertiser* refers to the exhibition as “deeply interesting”⁶⁴ and a review in the *Boston Evening Transcript* reads:

All the pictorial efforts that have been made to give an idea of the sublimity and beauty of the upper regions of the Alps pale their uneffectual fires beside the photographs of Mr. Vittorio Sella, now on exhibition in the galleries of the Boston Art Club. Painters have vainly tried the impossible task, and it has remained for this indomitable Italian alpestrian to carry his camera to the very summits [. . .] for the purpose of bringing down to us the pictured marvels of those terrible heights. [. . .] These uncommon pictures afford vivid glimpses of the wonderful and unknown world of snow and ice which exists in the high Alps, a world of terrible desolation and isolation, and of awful beauty and majesty.⁶⁵

The views from the Alps were put on display in the principal hall, whereas the Caucasus series found its place in the smaller gallery, but the two regions were still visually represented as a coherent phenomenon—the alpine sublime. This representation was not only practically supported with the two galleries adjoining one another “by so broad an entrance as to reveal most of its wealth to one standing in the [other] hall”⁶⁶ but also through Sella’s visual language. All ignorance of the *Boston Evening Transcript’s* reporter aside, who thought there was “a peculiar and inexplicable fascination about the grim Siberian wastes of the wind-swept peaks,”⁶⁷ the exhibition helped inscribe the Caucasus into a contemporary iconography of mountain photography toward the savage dramatics of the sublime that the reviewer summarized as “a world of terrible desolation and isolation, and of awful beauty and majesty.”

63 Ibid., 232.

64 N. N. 1890. “The Fine Arts,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, May 8, 1893, 4.

65 N. N. 1893. “The Wonders of Mountain Scenery as Shown by the Photographs of Mr. Sella,” *Boston Evening Transcript*, May 8, 1893, 6.

66 Fay, “The Sella Exhibition,” 233.

67 N. N. 1893. “The Wonders of Mountain Scenery,” 6.

The Boston exhibition consisted of 511 images which included all the Torino exhibition's prints plus a few additional views that Sella added for the AMC.⁶⁸ Three hundred and twenty of these images showed the Alps between Mont Blanc, Matterhorn, and Carè Alto while 183 confronted the audience with views from the Caucasus (and another eight images with Sicily's Mount Etna). More than a third of Sella's Caucasus photographs were an "ethnological series" from the northern (11 photographs) and southern valleys (fifty-seven photographs). The rest was divided into five subcategories: 1.) El'brus and neighborhood (twenty-two photographs), 2.) Mountains of Svaneti (thirty photographs), 3.) Central groups (thirty-three photographs), 4.) Fastag-Khokh and Giu'chi (Giuliukh) groups (fourteen photographs), and 5.) Adaï-Khokh (sixteen photographs). An analysis of these 115 alpine scenes suggests that Vittorio Sella and his fellow alpinist-photographers, who had brought cameras to the Caucasus, were in the midst of establishing a new visual language of landscape representation. Sella made ample use of the interplay of light and shadow to underscore the intended dramatics in his scenes through the contrast in the distinct black-and-white images. The entire set of landscape photographs is dominated by four types:

Firstly, Sella sought to capture the grandeur of individual peaks, drawing on a tradition of cultural representation. Whenever possible and as described in his diary, he intended to support this capital with a bed of clouds hovering over the valley or right below the summit which were thereby presented as enshrouded both in myths and mist. The images of Svaneti's two-headed Ushba (nos. 630, 769, 772—Figure 6.1) and the range's second-highest summit Dykh-Tau (no. 574) are Sella's prime examples for this type with which he was particularly satisfied as the result of what he had scribbled as an "indescribable spectacle" into his diary.⁶⁹ However, the morning of his ascent to El'brus had no clouds (but therefore allowed them to conquer the top of the mountain) or an adjacent higher summit from which the image would have received authority through perspective. Sella, therefore, had to portray the region's highest and most prominent mountain from a different vantage point, using a lower perspective with an emphasis on the snowfields, which took up the entire lower half of the composition, below the iconic twin summits (no. 598).

68 N. N. *Catalogue of the Sella Collection of Alpine and Caucasian Views. Exhibited by the Appalachian Mountain Club* (Boston, MA: C. H. Heintzemann, 1893).

69 Sella, "Nel Caucaso Centrale. II° Viaggio," 313. This perception was shared by his audience as an anonymous reviewer refers to the first of Sella's photographs that were exhibited in North America as "appear[ing] with wonderful clearness of detail, and the clouds below make them remarkable pictures." N. N., "Mountain Pictures," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, May 13, 1890, 8.



Figure 6.1. Vittorio Sella. “Ushba at Sunrise.” Fondazione Sella, Biella.

Secondly, Sella and his fellow photographers utilized the camera in an era when it was widely regarded as the primary tool of modernization in scientific exploration. At a time when the majority of the world had already been

mapped, the high altitudes of the Caucasus Mountains were one of the last remaining realms within or on the borders of Europe awaiting input for cartography from expeditions returning from these hardly accessible environments. Sella, therefore, sought to blend his artistic and scientific-cartographic ambitions, or what James R. Ryan calls “the marriage of science and art,”⁷⁰ in a variety of panoramic perspectives over the mountain ranges and valleys. Sella’s panoramas consist of four to seven single images (nos. 716–722—Figure 6.2) and were intended to enhance the alpinist community’s knowledge about the region and aid in preparing for future visits to the Russian Empire, just as Sella himself had found orientation in preparation through Donkin’s photographs.⁷¹



Figure 6.2. Vittorio Sella. “Panorama from Shkhara to Agashtan Glacier.” Fondazione Sella, Biella.

Thirdly, Sella was interested in capturing the sublime by depicting mankind in its diminutiveness compared to nature. His compositions, therefore, repeatedly juxtapose dwarfed humans, animals, and man-made items, such as tents against the enormity of the mountains’ cliffs rising in the background. In these shots, the majestic mountains tower over the humans who aspire to reach the very top. With a human figure in front of soaring Ushba at sunrise (no. 772) or in the middle of a massive seven-photo panorama (no. 720), mankind is repeatedly portrayed as humble en face the natural wilderness. This element of human dwarfishness in the alpine theater was so important to Sella that throughout the 1880s, he even manipulated his negatives retrospectively and inserted little figures in his darkroom.⁷² This representation of the relation between human and landscape encompasses the alpinists’ respect for high-altitude exploration but also their quest for thrill, drama, and glory.

70 Ryan, *Photography and Exploration*, 93.

71 Sella, “Nel Caucaso Centrale,” 256.

72 This visual strategy meets the reception of Kurkdjian’s volcano photos as evident in a 1901 exhibition review article in the newspaper *De Locomotief* where similar compositions were said to bring the viewer “into the wild world of grandeur, of feeling alone, of becoming a small person facing infinite creation” (cited in Galstyan, “Ohannes Kurkdjian’s Duality,” 73).

This relationship is, fourthly, underscored by an emphasis on the dangers and awe-inspiring sights of the massive glaciers, which compose a world of ice, snow, and rocks. The sublime Caucasus was a realm where “fatigue and the accidents of the ascents at times make our eyes blind to the beauties of very high regions,”⁷³ in an approach toward the mountains beyond romantic reverence. Sella’s photographs bring these two elements together, with little figures facing (no. 666—fig. 6.3) or even in the middle (no. 678—fig. 6.4) of the Karaugom Glacier. Taken two years after Donkin and Fox’s disappearance in the Caucasus, Sella knew well how to represent the dramatic appeal of altitudes higher than the Alps can offer. At the same time, the Italian, who understood himself as an alpinist and a photographer to an equal amount and described the conflict occasionally resulting from the two roles’ ambitions,⁷⁴ was also interested in transporting the view of a seemingly symbiotic relationship of photography and high altitudes. Two images from the Shkhara ridge show a piolet and a rope lying in the snow, along with a tripod and Sella himself, ready for action (no. 565; no. 566, without Sella in the frame).

Adopting Best Practices: The Co-Constructed Sublimity of the Caucasus

Over the next decade, Sella’s prints were circulated across North America and as far west as Portland⁷⁵ and San Francisco.⁷⁶ The Italian also continued giving and selling his latest prints to the AMC from trips to the Alps and the Caucasus in the mid-1890s, all through later trips to the western Himalaya and Karakorum in 1909. His images, however, not only continued to be a popular sight in galleries and libraries, where they were displayed with the rationale of awakening visitors to an appreciation of the respective local scenery,⁷⁷ but were also widely used for illustrating books and articles on the Caucasus. Freshfield’s popular

73 Sella, “Nel Caucaso Centrale,” 284. “La fatica e gli accidenti delle ascensioni rendono talvolta cieco il nostro occhio alle bellezze delle regioni altissime.”

74 Sella, “Nel Caucaso Centrale. II° Viaggio,” 289.

75 In 1897, the mountaineering organization “Mazamas” brought the AMC-exhibition to the city hall of Portland in order to spread “[t]he vivid revelation of the sublimity and beauty of an Alpine world to thousands of citizens who before had no realizing sense of its existence [...]” N. N., “Sella and his Work,” *Sunday Oregonian*, June 13, 1897, 20.

76 Charles E. Fay, Helen E. Endicott, and William O. Witherell, “Report of the Committee on the Sella Collection,” *Appalachia. The Journal of the Appalachian Mountain Club* 8, no. 4 (1898): 391–392.

77 Brown, *Making Culture Visible*, 165.



Figures 6.3 and 6.4. Vittorio Sella. "Karaugom Glacier." Fondazione Sella, Biella.

The Exploration of the Caucasus (1896) gave the visibility of Sella's images another boost, but they were also repeatedly integrated into the latest accounts on the region.⁷⁸ Furthermore, his images had an enormous impact on the development of alpine landscape photography as a posthumous critical appraisal of Sella's work by Ansel Adams (1902–1984), one of the most renowned twentieth century landscape photographers known for his images of the American West, demonstrates. In 1946, Adams wrote for the *Sierra Club Bulletin* that “[t]he contemporary photographer will do well to study Sella's craft. [...] The vastness of the subjects and the purity of Sella's interpretations move the spectator to a definitely religious awe.”⁷⁹ Finally, Sella and his photographic activities in the region had become a part of Svaneti's oral history after the Italian had brought some copies of his 1889 photos back to the region when he returned a year later—photos that were found by a team of Italian climbers in local homes more than a hundred years later.⁸⁰

Sella took on the Caucasus one more time in 1896; the same year that Freshfield's account⁸¹ of his trips (1868, 1887, 1889) was published and included Sella's photographs. It has become a classic of mountaineering literature and looked to connect all contemporary knowledge about the region—a daunting task not only for an alpinist and very much in contrast to his first book on the Caucasus, the 1869 *Travels in the Central Caucasus and Bashan*. Other than a problematic reproduction of Russian imperialist narratives,⁸² Freshfield's account is also centered on photographs, which he understands as “authentic records of facts,”⁸³ produced by Déchy, Dent, Donkin, Woolley, the Italian botanist Stefano Sommier (1848–1922), but first and foremost by Sella, whose photographic work he praises as “unrivalled for quality and extent.”⁸⁴ Whether one sees continuity or innovation in Sella's photographic production itself during that trip and thereafter is dependent on the photo in question and an option due to a change in his equipment. Thereby, on the one hand, the majority of his images show

78 See for instance George Kennan, “An Island in the Sea of History: the Highlands of Dagestan,” *National Geographic* 24 (October 1913): 1087–1140; or Merzbacher, *Aus den Hochregionen des Kaukasus*.

79 Ansel Adams, “Vittorio Sella: His Photography,” *Sierra Club Bulletin* 31, no. 6 (1946): 17.

80 Paul Kallmes 1999. “The Caucasus, Russia, 1889, 1890, 1896,” in *Summit. Vittorio Sella. Mountaineer and Photographer. The Years 1879–1909*, ed. Phyllis Thompson Reid and Maureen Clarke (New York: Aperture, 1999), 37. Sella describes how he brought photographs back to Latali in 1890 and how they were well-received, giving him “easy popularity” (*facile popolarità*) among the locals. See Sella, “Nel Caucaso Centrale. II° Viaggio,” 314.

81 Freshfield, *The Exploration of the Caucasus*.

82 See Gutmeyr, “Institutionalising Knowledge and Circulating Imagery,” 44–47.

83 Freshfield, *The Exploration of the Caucasus*, 1:xii.

84 *Ibid.*, xiv.

consistency in composition and themes when compared with his images from 1889 and 1890.⁸⁵ On the other hand, since he was not exclusively reliant on heavy plates anymore after having replaced his Dallmeyer with a Ross camera with a Goerz double anastigmat and 20 x 25 cm Edwards sheet film,⁸⁶ he was also part of the process in mountain photography where more spontaneous climbing scenes added a new dimension of a more dynamic appropriation of space as a realm of human activity to the previous static views off tripod-bound plate cameras.⁸⁷

By then, Sella had received (honorary) memberships in the most important alpine clubs between North America, Western Europe, and the Russian Empire,⁸⁸ effectively making him a key figure in the exchange of knowledge about the Caucasus across borders and continents. As a member of these alpine clubs, he became part of an institutionalized international network that facilitated the circulation of publications and informal knowledge about the organization of climbs abroad. Alpinists across Europe shared their latest insights about transportation, equipment, guides, and porters, and made ample use of visuals to convey their knowledge. Thereby, they created a quantitatively and qualitatively new environment of knowledge circulation that appealed to both amateurs and professionals and therefore decisively contributed to the international “discovery” of formerly unknown regions such as the highlands of the Caucasus.

85 Sella also felt like he had already told his story of the Caucasus for which his 1896 diary is considerably shorter than his previous expedition notebooks. He also decided to contribute only a technical description of the taken routes in the mountains to a co-written report for the *Bollettino* which consists of an introductory section on the region's topography by Sella and a longer report by his friend Emilio Gallo, a textile industrialist, mountaineer, and amateur photographer from Biella, who had come along for the first time. See Vittorio Sella and Emilio Gallo, “Nel Caucaso Centrale colla camera oscura. Terzo Viaggio,” *Bollettino del Club Alpino Italiano* 30, no. 63 (1897): 321–373.

86 *Ibid.*, 323. Sella furthermore called two handheld Kodak cameras his own which he used for snapshots, travel memories and stereoscopic photographs (Sella, “Note biografiche personali,” 19).

87 Bensen, *Souvenirs from High Places*, 56–57 on Sella; 58–73 on small-format cameras and the first steps of “climbing photography” in the long nineteenth century.

88 By the turn of the century, Sella had, among others, received prizes and become an (honorary) member of the Swiss Alpine Club (1886), the Alpine Club (London, 1888), the Imperial Society of Amateurs of Natural Sciences, Anthropology and Ethnography (Moscow, 1892), the Geographical Society of Philadelphia (1895), the Appalachian Mountain Club (Boston, 1897), the French Alpine Club (1898), the Crimean Mountaineering Club (1903), and the Italian Alpine Club (1904). In 1901, Tsar Nikolaï II. furthermore bestowed the Imperial Order of Saint Anna upon Sella for his contribution to the amelioration of knowledge about the Caucasus (See Giuseppe Garimoldi, “Vittorio Sella—Il paesaggio vertical,” in *Paesaggi Verticali. La fotografia di Vittorio Sella, 1879–1943*, ed. Lodovico Sella et al. (Torino: GAM, 2006), 33.

Equivalents to the Western European and North American alpine clubs were now also increasingly founded in the Russian Empire which contributed to the professionalization of knowledge exchange beyond the state's borders.⁸⁹ This additional notion to the already existing international exchange with the Russian Empire's academia, administration, and military—an often overlapping exchange with tasks like cartography being integrated into the military in a similar fashion as when having fostered early Caucasus photography—facilitated the import of both alpinist traditions and visual representations of landscapes. The members of these Russian counterparts to the alpine clubs in Western and Central Europe were pioneers in both military and leisure alpinism and thereby contributed to the mapping of the region's high altitudes, but they also picked up on the imagery of the mountains produced by Sella and his colleagues and continued the visual representation of a sublime Caucasus.⁹⁰ Maurer⁹¹ has underlined the importance of visual representation for the practices of these first Russian alpine clubs which combined their own photo collections within their libraries and began to bring along photographic equipment to their high altitude tours. The image production of photographers such as Grigorii I. Raev (1863–1957),

89 At no time during the Russian Empire did alpinism become a mass movement; it remained confined to the upper classes, who were able to afford mountaineering. These small ranks did however despite such social restrictions increasingly contribute to the systematic exploration of the empire's mountainous regions—a process during which the representatives of an early Russian alpinism were looking to organize themselves. The first alpine clubs in the Russian Empire were founded in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and shared a strong focus on the Caucasus. The short-lived Alpine Club (Al'pinskiĭ klub) within the Tbilisi-based Caucasus Society of Amateurs of Natural Science (Kavkazskoe obshchestvo liubitelei estestvoznaniia) was established in 1877 whereas the Odesa-based Crimean Mountaineering Club (1890, Krymskii gornyi klub) became the Crimean-Caucasian Mountaineering Club (Krymsko-Kavkazskii gornyi klub) fifteen years into its existence. What had before been incorporated into the expeditionary activities of the Russian Geographical Society, now also took place in the framework of such clubs and soon enough other clubs such as the Russian Mountaineering Society (1900, Russkoe gornoe obshchestvo) and the Caucasian Mountaineering Society (1902, Kavkazskoe gornoe obshchestvo) followed. In their shared ambition to scientifically explore the empire's high altitude regions, these societies would publish their own (Russian-language) journals and organize talks and exhibitions which they centered on a visual representation of the respective region by putting together respectable photo collections and having them on display during their events. On the development of these early Russian alpine clubs see Maurer, *Wege zum Pik Stalin*, 51–73. On the establishment and early activities of the KGO, see Elena Iu. Liubushkina, "K voprosu o deiatel'nosti Kavkazskogo gornogo obshchestva," *Gumanitarnye i iuridicheskie issledovaniia* 7, no. 4 (2020): 64–69.

90 See for instance NV Markelov, ed., *Kavkazskoe gornoe obshchestvo. Izbrannaia publitsistika 1904–1916 gg.* (Piatigorsk: Sneg, 2009) for an insight into the establishment and activities of the first alpine club in the Northern Caucasus.

91 Maurer, *Wege zum Pik Stalin*, 60–61.

a member of the Russian and Caucasian Mountaineering Societies,⁹² or Ivan S. Tkeshelashvili (1864–1942), a pharmacist in Essentuki and Vladikavkaz who repeatedly travelled to Svaneti,⁹³ eventually suggests that a new visual language centered on higher altitude scenes of sublime wilderness had been adopted as a central mode of a Russian representation of the Caucasus mountains by the turn of the century. Moreover, this self-produced imperial imagery also circulated back to Western Europe, via postcards for instance,⁹⁴ thereby reinforcing the integration of the Caucasus into the contemporary canon of the co-constructed alpine sublime.



Figure 6.5. Postcard Series “North Caucasus.” Private Collection DGS.

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- 92 Boglachëv, *Pervye fotografy Kavkaza*, 184–190. Raev’s photographs were often used to produce or complement albums with views of the KMV spa resort towns in the North Caucasus, a popular destination in early Russian tourism. These albums are similar in composition and are centered on the urban development of these towns but also use the background of a sublime Caucasus as in the case of a 1912 album which opens with a close-up view of El’brus and the surrounding glaciers (subtitled: Okr. Kislovodska. Gora El’brus, ledniki Malkskii i Karagom s vysot reki Malki, vblizi). In: N. N., *Souvenir du Caucase. Kavkaz* (St. Petersburg: R. Golike and A. Vil’borg, 1912).
- 93 Boglachëv, *Pervye fotografy Kavkaza*, 269–277; Akoeff, *Fotografy i fotograficheskie atel’e Vladikavkaza*, 142–149; Ivan S. Tkeshelashvili, *Svanetiia. Poezdka po Svanetii v 1900 i 1903 godakh i kratkii ètnograficheskii eia ocherk* (Moscow: Kushnerev i Ko, 1905).
- 94 Postcard series such as “Kavkaz—Caucase” or “Sèvernõi Kavkaz—Caucase du Nord” by Scherer, Nabholz & Co (fig. 6.5) brought the iconography of the sublime into mass circulation by including close-up views of Caucasus glaciers into what appeared as a representative and collectible survey of the region.

Conclusions

By the arrival of the twentieth century, the visual representation of alpine landscapes in the Caucasus had seen a partial transformation. An international discovery of its highest summits as a colonial playground of glory in the name of nation and empire along with the awakening scientific interest in surveys of high altitudes, the decreasing technical obstacles to take cameras to glaciers, the increasing accessibility of formerly remote valleys, and the advent of organized alpinism all contributed to a new prominence of sublime sceneries in the visual representation of the region. The resulting iconography of the sublime as presented in Sella's comprehensive photographic production in the Russian Empire constituted one more nuance in the pictorial history of the Caucasus as co-existing representations of the picturesque and the sublime added to the rich portfolio of different images of the Caucasus circulating in the early twentieth century. The depiction of sublime high altitudes in the south of the empire thereby followed Western European visual conventions of how to use photography in mountainous terrain and was heavily informed by the latest viscourses on the Alps that photographers such as the wide-travelling Sella themselves helped to shape. It was however readily adopted by Russian photographers, especially those working as topographers in service of the Russian army, who eventually co-constructed the image of the sublime Caucasus and integrated it into their portfolio of images between scientific exploration and a colonial gaze.⁹⁵

At the same time as Kurkdjian "had a profound impact on how the Dutch East Indies was perceived by the West,"⁹⁶ the visual representation of the Caucasus had thereby received a new nuance within the reimagination of landscapes and a new quality of image circulation. The combination of the locally rooted cultural capital of mountains around the world with the Western European export of an iconography of the alpine sublime laid the ground for a substantial

95 Tatiana Saburova describes a similar entanglement for the visual representations of the Central Asian Semirech'e by exploring the works of Vasilii V. Sapozhnikov (1861–1924), who would look at the region "as a scientist (botanist, geographer, and glaciologist) as well as a coloniser [and] represented the perspectives of a scientist, of Western civilisation, and of the Russian empire." Sapozhnikov's photographs from the turn of the century Semirech'e and Altaï show a striking similarity to the visual language in the works of Russian topographers-photographers working in the Caucasus and underscore a transregional approach to the imperial peripheries within the empire's academic circles. See Tatiana Saburova, "From Siberia to Turkestan: Semirechie in writings and photographs of Vasilii V. Sapozhnikov," in *Photographing Central Asia. From the Periphery of the Russian Empire to Global Presence*, ed. Svetlana Gorshenina et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 185–186.

96 Galstyan, "Ohannes Kurkdjian's Duality," 73.

reimagination of landscapes in the Caucasus toward a realm of sublime wilderness. Sella's images of the Caucasus glaciers and the emigrant Kurkdjian's photographs of volcanoes far away from his Armenian homelands shared an iconography of the persistent sublime in their respective works on the survey of mountain landscapes around the world. For the latter, it was also not the first time that he had become an active part in the visual surveying of landscapes as the avid observer Kurkdjian had already produced a series of stereoscopic views from Ani in the late 1870s, and thereby contributed to reimagination of landscapes in Eastern Anatolia where borders had changed after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878.

CHAPTER 7

The International Discovery of “National Antiquities.” Photographing Archaeological Sites in the Transimperial Caucasus

Before Ohannes Kurkdjian made a name for himself in the development of photography in Indonesia, he had been part of the international rediscovery of the medieval Armenian city of Ani. The once-thriving capital (961–1045) of the late Bagratid Kingdom of Armenia would see many dynasties and empires come and leave the region. Under Byzantine, Shaddadid, Georgian, Timurid, and Safavid Iranian rule, the city gradually lost importance and, by the eighteenth century, then-Ottoman Ani was abandoned altogether. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that travelers (and armchair travelers) from outside the region came across the ruins some forty kilometers outside the fortress city of Kars and rediscovered them for a global audience by extensively writing about Ani in travel accounts and academic papers.¹ When Kars fell in the

1 See, for instance, Robert Ker Porter, *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, Ancient Babylonia, &c. &c. during the Years 1817, 1818, 1819, and 1820*, vol. 1 (London: Longman & Co, 1821), 169–175; Richard Wilbraham, *Travels in the Trans-Caucasian Provinces of Russia and along the Southern Shore of the Lakes of Van and Urumiah, in the Autumn and Winter of 1837* (London: John Murray, 1839), 285–291; William John Hamilton, *Researches in Asia Minor, Pontus, and Armenia; with some Account of their Antiquities and Geology*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1842), 197–202; Charles Texier, *Description de L'Arménie, la Perse et la Mésopotamie*, vol. 1 (Paris: Typographie de Firmin Didot Frères, 1842), 93–116; Andreï N. Murav'ëv, *Gruziia i Armeniia*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg: Tipografia E.I.V. kantseliarii, 1848), 257–288; Ghevond Alishan, *Teghagir hayots' metsats'* (Venice: San Lazzaro, 1855), 27–36; Marie-Félicité Brosset, *Les ruines d'Ani, capitale de l'Arménie sous les rois Bagratides, aux X^e et XI^es, histoire et description*, in two volumes (St. Petersburg: Académie Impériale des sciences, 1860).

Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 and the surrounding province of the same name was incorporated into the Russian Empire, traveling to Ani became an easier albeit still exhausting endeavor and the site became an increasingly popular tourist destination. Its transregional rediscovery was however not only relevant for the development of a local cultural tourism but also marked an important step in the development of archaeology in the Caucasus by bringing together international knowledge, the professionalization of archaeology as an academic discipline, and the use of new methods and techniques—one of which was photography²—against the backdrop of an epistemological shift “by introducing as evidence nontextual forms of evidence.”³

Archaeology’s focus on the tangible, material object brought with it specific hopes and expectations for photography, which was seen as a tool of preservation that was supposed to help overcome the imminent danger of the object in question being lost. This came with the late nineteenth century’s hype surrounding sunken cities, prominently also elsewhere on Ottoman lands such as at Troy and Hattuša, and a paradox romantic vision of ruins insofar as, to put it in Andreas Huyssen’s words, “what is allegedly present and transparent whenever authenticity is claimed is present only as an absence. It is the imagined present of a past that can now be grasped only in its decay.”⁴ In the Russian Empire, archaeology turned from a focus on burial cultures toward the study of urban cultures which resulted in the production of new historical and political narratives⁵ and cultural mythologies between a Romantic fashion for ruins and anxieties about the future.⁶ These developments led to the organization of large-scale excavations and an accompanying influx of photographers assigned to document the findings and the work at the archaeological site, which contributed to a multitude of visions for the ruins in the Russo-Ottoman borderlands. The rediscovery of Ani, standing at the literal and practical crossroads of the two empires, was thereby captured by photographers of varying backgrounds within the

2 By the end of the nineteenth century, the cheapening of photographic reproduction (and the development of railways) raised a (distant) hope to facilitate an overview of artifacts found during the contemporary excavation boom in the Ottoman Empire. See Suzanne L. Marchand, “The Rhetoric of Artifacts and the Decline of Classical Humanism: The Case of Josef Strzygowski,” *History and Theory* 33, no. 4 (1994): 116.

3 *Ibid.*, 106.

4 Andreas Huyssen, “Authentic Ruins. Products of Modernity,” in *Ruins of Modernity*, ed. Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 20.

5 Ekaterina Pravilova, “Contested Ruins: Nationalism, Emotions, and Archaeology at Armenian Ani, 1892–1918,” *Ab Imperio* 1 (2016): 78.

6 Andreas Schönle, *Architecture of Oblivion. Ruins and Historical Consciousness in Modern Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011), 73–131.

framework of expeditions with varying interests. Ani attracted those who were looking for a confirmation of their conviction that “by quantity, richness, and variety of antiquities Russia without exaggeration ranks first in the world,”⁷ academics who articulated the idea of a supranational cultural unity in the Caucasus, scholars who saw Ani as a welcome mirror for their critique of a Eurocentric art history, Western European travelers who projected their traditionally informed Orientalism onto pretty much any non-Greek/Roman site, and Armenians who were interested in making their fellow countrymen familiar with a nationalized view of cultural heritage.

Regardless of the gaze through which an involved actor’s vision of the site was informed, they shared an understanding of the importance of antique artifacts as the foundation for the articulated imaginations. In the attempt to document, preserve, and collect an imagined community’s cultural heritage, photography played a crucial role in the composition of such surveys, whereas the involved viscourses were very much in dialogue with narratives of landscape, modernity, and cohesion as discussed in the previous chapters. The English writer John Ruskin (1819–1900) thought of landscape photography as “merely an amusing toy” while “one of early architecture is a precious historical document; and that this architecture should be taken, not merely when it presents itself under picturesque general forms, but stone by stone, and sculpture by sculpture.”⁸ His fellow countryman Oliver Wardrop (1864–1948), a diplomat and Kartvelologist, described the funds of Tbilisi’s “Caucasus Museum” by writing that “[t]here is also a very large collection of photographs, comprising all that is worth seeing in the Caucasus and in Persia,”⁹ underscoring the idea that a photograph would be the ideal tool to record, survey, and exhibit material objects and thereby make history tangible.

This seventh and final chapter, therefore, explores the use of photography at archaeological sites in the Caucasus. It examines the images of ruins as metaphors of social and spatial transformations and studies the co-optation of the respective visual survey into historical narratives, fostering a range between an all-imperial, supranational consciousness on the one hand and representations of nationalized landscapes and artifacts on the other. In discussing the well-studied history of archaeological photography in the “Orient”, this chapter

7 These are the words of the archaeologist and orientologist Nikolai I. Veselovskii (1848–1918). Cited in Pravitlova, “Contested Ruins,” 89.

8 John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 2nd ed. (London: Smith, Elder, & Co, 1855), xviii–xix.

9 Oliver Wardrop, *The Kingdom of Georgia. Notes of Travel in a Land of Women, Wine, and Song* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1888), 15–16.

merges discourses on the region’s “sacred antiquity,”¹⁰ the international rediscovery of Ani, the photographic work of Ohannes Kurkdjian and Mateos Papazyants on Armenia’s “national antiquities,”¹¹ and the role of Aleksandre Roinashvili’s photographs in the “Travelling Caucasus Museum,” demonstrating how photographic representations of ruins contributed to a broad variety of imagined ancient Caucasus histories with manifold repercussions to this day.

Archaeology and Photography. Imagi(ni)ng and Organizing the World

Europe’s long nineteenth century (1789–1914) was an era of the growth of the “public” domain and related new practices of owning “public things.”¹² Elites across the continent not only developed an interest in their nation’s history but also particularly pursued the survey of its manifestation in the form of historical monuments. Already in 1826, the Russian Ministry of Interior disseminated the order among provincial governors to compile lists of all “monuments of architecture” in their provinces, to add the visual survey of the facades of historical buildings and prevent their demolition.¹³ It was thereby looking to establish an all-empire register of architectural antiquities and while this first attempt at an official survey failed due to unclear instructions and the governors’ concern about additional expenses upon revealing monuments to the state, it documents the state’s increasing ambition to collect and categorize its territories and history while relying on visual documentation in the process.

The potential of photography in surveying historical monuments has been a matter of importance since the technology’s inception. When François Arago presented the daguerreotype to the French Chamber of Deputies, he praised “the extraordinary advantages which could have been derived from so exact and rapid a means of reproduction” as it needed only one photograph “to copy the millions of hieroglyphics which cover even the exterior of the great monuments

10 Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire*, 68–70.

11 On the idea and mechanisms of “national antiquities,” i.e. the mental appropriation of antiquities toward them becoming symbols of national identities, see Monika Baár, *Historians and Nationalism. East-Central Europe in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 167–195; Sebastian Willert, “The Invention of ‘National Antiquities’ in the Late Ottoman Empire. Archaeological Interrelations between Discourses of Appropriation, Preservation and Heritage Construction,” *Diyâr 2*, no. 2 (2021): 304–328.

12 Ekaterina Pravilova, *A Public Empire. Property and the Quest for the Common Good in Imperial Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

13 *Ibid.*, 135.

of Thebes, Memphis, Karnak, and others.”¹⁴ On a related note, the English photography pioneer William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877) also had a background in classical studies and languages from the ancient Middle East and drew a fair share of his interest in developing photography from his curiosity in archaeological scholarship.¹⁵ The western European longing for an exoticized imagery inherent in Arago’s suggestions constituted the basis for an early profusion of photographs from the Middle East, which, in dialogue between travelers and local actors, resulted in the production of an orientalist archive.¹⁶ As a crucial innovation in the production of knowledge and deeply entangled with representations of power and rule, not only Europe’s “Orient” in a Saidian sense but also othered realms played a significant role in the evolution of photography. Thereby, not only did representations and self-representations of diverse populations play a significant role, but photographers also actively engaged with the visualization of the past, as embodied in historical monuments.

The years and decades following Arago’s 1839 plea for using the new medium as a tool for documenting and reproducing antique sights saw a steady increase in—often state-sponsored—recording and surveying projects based on photography.¹⁷ In 1851, for instance, France’s Commission of Historical Monuments developed the *Mission héliographique* and sent five photographers to take photos of its architectural landmarks.¹⁸ Monuments from ancient Greece became subjects of early photographic projects, which underscored the role of Graeco-Roman antiquity in the imaginations of European culture.¹⁹ Western Europeans, however, also swarmed out across the globe and were informed by an imperialist-colonialist mindset behind the idea of owning “public things” that resulted in either art theft or extensive visual surveys of exoticized lands and their pre-colonial histories. Among the most-renowned products of these times are the visual surveys from the Middle East by the French pioneers Auguste Salzmann (1824–1872), Maxime du Camp (1822–1894), and Félix Teynard (1817–1892), the British Francis Frith (1822–1898) and James Graham (1806–1869), and the German Wilhelm Hammerschmidt (1822–1887), to name only a few,

14 Arago, “Report [on the Daguerreotype, presented to the French Chamber of Deputies],” 234.

15 See Mirjam Brusius, *Fotografie und museales Wissen. William Henry Fox Talbot, das Altertum und die Absenz der Fotografie* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2015); Perez, *Focus East*, 15–16.

16 Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan, “Introduction,” in *Photography’s Orientalism. New Essays on Colonial Representation*, ed. Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2013), 2.

17 See Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 4–5.

18 Anne de Mondenard, *La Mission héliographique. Cinq photographes parcourent la France en 1851* (Paris: Éditions du patrimoine, 2002).

19 See Frederick N. Bohrer, *Photography and Archaeology* (London: Reaktion, 2011), 95–100.

who throughout the 1850s and 1860s produced a broad variety of photographs and albums that deeply informed the orientalist vision of the region but also the orientologist knowledge about it.²⁰ These albums emphasized architectural landmarks of antiquity and were thereby considered to complement the contemporary scholarship on the region.²¹

As a popular genre among Western European scholars and tourists alike, similar albums were composed throughout the rest of the nineteenth century²² and, in their variety, testify to the seminal role of the “Orient” in European imaginaries whereas in other colonial settings, a more far-reaching and global appropriation of non-European histories led to similar visual archives of antiquities. The albums of the Dutch photographer Isidore van Kinsbergen (1821–1905) about the *Oudheden van Java* (Antiquities of Java, 1872) and *Boro-Boedoer* (Borobudur, 1874)²³ represent pre-Islamic antiquities as one of the most prominent and widely circulated (prize-winning at the Vienna World’s Fair in 1873) photographic subjects from the Dutch colonies in Southeast Asia. The French teacher and traveler Désiré Charnay (1828–1915) produced the first photographic convolute of Mayan monuments for his survey of ancient sites in

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- 20 Only a footnote to this contextualization on architectural-archaeological photography but key in understanding mid-nineteenth-century visual representations produced by Western European travelers are the remarks by Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan (*Photography’s Orientalism*, 4) that “photographic representations of the Middle East do not entail a binary visual structure between the Europeans as active agents and “Orientals” as passive objects as representation” while at the same time “indigenous practices of photography do not necessarily constitute a locus of resistance to Orientalism.” Today’s scholarship is therefore rich in subtle engagements with Saidian critique when it comes to visual representations of the Middle East. For a brief debate, see Behdad, “Mediated Visions,” 364–365.
- 21 See for instance the programmatic subtitle of Félix Teynard, *Égypte et Nubie. Sites et monuments. Les plus intéressants pour l’étude de l’art et de l’histoire. Atlas photographié accompagné de plans et d’une table explicative servant de complément à la grande description de l’Égypte* (Paris: Goupil & Cie, 1858).
- 22 See for instance the albums by Félix Bonfils (1831–1885) such as *Architecture antique. Égypte. Grèce. Asie Mineure* (1872) and the five-volume *Souvenirs d’Orient. Album pittoresque des sites, villes et ruines les plus remarquables de la Terre-Sainte [La Syrie & de la Côte-d’Asie / L’Égypte & de la Nubie] avec notice historique, archéologique et descriptive en regard de chaque planchet* (1877–1878). Yannis Hamilakis writes about how the themes of Bonfils’s images from Athens would show how he “is not interested in what Athens was becoming but in what it had been” as classical monuments “became the ideal themes for the stereotypical visual presentations that the Western audiences dreamed of and demanded.” Yannis Hamilakis, “Monumental Visions: Bonfils, Classical Antiquity and Nineteenth-Century Athenian Society,” *History of Photography* 25, no. 1 (2001): 5, 12.
- 23 Gerda Theuns-de Boer and Saskia Asser, *Isidore van Kinsbergen (1821–1905). Fotopionier en theatermaker in Nederlands-Indië* (Leiden: KITLV Press and Aprilis, 2005), 218–275.

Central America.²⁴ The Scottish photographer John Thomson's (1837–1921) extensive work in Southeast Asia included pioneering views of the temples of Angkor, which he considered “more curious and extensive than those of Central America, and approaching in their classical appearance the works of the ancient Greeks or Romans.”²⁵ Motivated by the belief that the capital city of the Khmer Empire had been rediscovered by the French explorer Henri Mouhot (1826–1861) in 1860—as if the local population had forgotten about the temples—the Scotsman's images of *The Antiquities of Cambodia* are one more example for a European believing that centuries-old buildings would encapsulate the fate of “a powerful and cultivated race” which “for at least 500 years [. . .] has been on the decline.”²⁶ His fellow Scottish architect and scholar James Fergusson opens his 1876 *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* with an acknowledgement that “[f]or the purpose of such a work as this, however, Photography has probably done more than anything that has been written.”²⁷ Frederick Bohrer has described the growing enthusiasm for photography that emerged from it as “an agent of preservation and restitution, a means to salvage and to forever hold objects that are in danger of being lost,” while at the same time serving as “a technology of efficient surveillance” producing a product that “is systematically, effortlessly, objectively ‘true.’”²⁸ He concludes that regardless of “none of these claims [being] unconditionally true, all remain nonetheless fundamental to the archaeological employment of photography.” Very early in the history of photography, travelers and scholars therefore worked toward the production of a global archive of ancient monuments, which marginalized contemporary non-European realities in favor of an obsession with antiquity. Thereby, the involved actors not only sought to imagine the world and its histories but also effectively looked to organize it.²⁹

24 Charnay not only brought at least forty-five images (the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles calls an album with forty-five albumen prints part of its collection) from Central American ruins into wider circulation but he also published a lengthy account on his findings. See Désiré Charnay, *Cités et Ruines Américaines. Mitla, Palenqué, Izamal, Chichen-Itza, Uxmal* (Paris: Gide, 1863).

25 John Thomson, *The Antiquities of Cambodia. A Series of Photographs taken on the Spot* (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1867), 9.

26 *Ibid.*, prefatory note.

27 James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (London: John Murray, 1876), v.

28 Bohrer, *Photography and Archaeology*, 28.

29 Fittingly, Joan M. Schwartz connects the advent of photography and the modern archive, calling them “the product of social practices which, through the containment and ordering of facts, offer the promise of knowledge and control” and attributing them “common paradigmatic origins in fact-based empiricism of the mid-nineteenth century.” Joan M. Schwartz,

Informed by its own traditions of Orientalism³⁰ and the orientalist genre as an enduring theme in the Russian visual arts throughout the last couple of centuries of the empire’s existence,³¹ photographers in the Russian Empire also made ample use of the camera to organize their own imaginaries within and across the state’s borders. By the second half of the nineteenth century, they had become an integral part of any state-sponsored expedition, commissioned to produce photographic surveys of the newly conquered provinces, which contributed to a unifying narrative of progress through civilization and empire building. Similar to the French or British visual projects, the distant past, as captured in architectural antiquities, quickly became a dominant theme for representational strategies in the new provinces, which were imagined as the Russian heartlands, as well as abroad. Driven by state politics using archaeology as a tool of representation and the institutionalization of archaeology as an academic discipline between the 1850s and 1870s,³² the past was increasingly recreated through an imperial lens that was nonetheless understood to be unmediated and reinforced a colonial view of lands that had once been settled by some of the world’s finest civilizations, which would have long ago disappeared in the abyss of history. These developments resulted in the structure of the famous “Turkestan Album” with the first section and two (out of six) books dedicated to “the past life of the region in preserved ancient monuments,”³³ the representation of Russia’s history told along visual surveys of Christian (Russian Orthodox) antiquities,³⁴ but also in the articulation of an interest of visual representations of archaeology’s

“Records of Simple Truth and Precision’: Photography, Archives, and the Illusion of Control,” *Archivaria* 50 (2000): 39–40.

30 Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism*.

31 Maria Taroutina, “Negotiating between East and West: The Case of Russian Orientalism,” *World Art* 13, no. 1 (2023): 7–28.

32 Pinar Üre, *Reclaiming Byzantium. Russia, Turkey and the Archaeological Claim to the Middle East in the 19th Century* (London et al.: I. B. Tauris, 2020), 17–18.

33 “Proshedshuii zhizn’ kraia v sokhranivshikhsia drevnikh pamiatnikakh” (cited in Predislovie k Turkestanskomu al’bomu).

34 See for instance the voluminous work of Ivan F. Barshchevskii (1851–1948), a pioneer in Russian architectural photography and a collaborator of Moscow’s Archaeological Society, and his images from the Golden Ring in works such as the 47-volume *Ruskaia arkhitektura* (1882–1896) or *Katalog fotograficheskikh snimkov s predmetov stariny, arkhitektury, utvari i prochago, sniatikh fotografom imperatorskoï akademii khudozhestv i imperatorskogo moskovskogo arkhelogicheskogo obshchestva I. Barshchevskim* (Rostov: Tipo-Litografiia I.A. Kramoreva, 1884). For more information on Barshchevskii, including a trip to the Caucasus (vols. 30–31 of *Ruskaia arkhitektura*, 102 images of such antiquities between Sukhumi and Artvin) with a broken camera and lost negatives from Baku see Mariia G. Rogozina, “Kolleksiia fotografii I. F. Barshchevskogo,” *Pamiatniki Otechestva* 2 (1983): 153–156.

political role in the framework of Oriental studies looking abroad for an assumed shared (Christian) heritage.³⁵

Simultaneously, and as Russia emerged victorious from the Caucasus War, archaeological exploration and representation of the southern borderlands moved up high on the agenda of the Russian regional administration. The Imperial Archaeological Commission (Imperatorskaia arkheologicheskaia kommissiia) was founded in 1859 and initially focused on the southern part of the empire, with expeditions seeking remnants of Graeco-Roman and Scythian cultures.³⁶ Many excavations in the wider Caucasus region followed and eventually left an imprint on the agenda of empire-wide meetings of orientologists and archaeologists alike where the value of photography for the respective discipline also became an increasingly important point of debate.

Armenian Antiquities and the Imagination of a National Identity

An early example of a prominent debate about archaeological photographs within Russian academic circles is the images that Ohannes Kurkdjian produced in Ani in 1879. He had sent them to Kerovbe Patkanian (Keropè P. Patkanov, 1833–1889), an Armenian orientologist and linguist at St. Petersburg Imperial University, who discussed and explored the images and their value for the discipline at an international congress in the capital city.³⁷ The interplay between Kurkdjian's images and Patkanian's subsequent publication contributed to the popularization of Ani among a Russian audience as well. The fifth All-Russian Archaeological Congress took place in Tbilisi in 1881, and the seven hundred

35 In 1891–1892, Barshchevskii was invited to accompany the expedition of art historian Nikodim P. Kondakov (1844–1925) to study architectural antiquities in the Middle East. On the collection of Barshchevskii's images within the Russian Academy of Sciences, see Irina V. Tunkina, "Arkheologicheskaia èkspeditsiia imperatorskogo pravoslavnogo obshchestva v Siriiu i Palestinu v 1891 g.: Obzor arkhivnykh materialov fonda akademika N. P. Kondakova," *Verkhnedonskoï arkheologicheskii sbornik* 11 (2019): 424–430. See also the published photos in Nikodim P. Kondakov, *Arkheologicheskoe putestvie po Sirii i Palestine* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1904).

36 On the IAK's research on the Caucasus, its embrace of photography to survey archaeological monuments in the region and all over the empire, and a brief discussion of its funds, see Galina V. Dluzhnevskaiia, *Arkheologicheskie issledovaniia v Evropeïskoï chasti Rossii i na Kavkaze v 1859–1919 godakh (po dokumentam Nauchnogo arkhiva Instituta istorii material'noi kul'tury RAN)* (St. Petersburg: LEMA, 2014), 8–29.

37 Keropè P. Patkanov, *Ob arkheologicheskoi tsënnosti fotograficheskago al'boma Armenii raboty g. Kurkch'iantsa* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia brat'ev Panteleevykh, 1880).

participants, which included almost every renowned name across the disciplines of the Russian Empire’s academic system, but only a handful of scholars from outside, were excited to discuss the latest findings on antiquities in the wider Caucasus region. Several of the congress’s sessions were supported with photographs, which took the present audience straight to the inscriptions and ruins of the discussed sites. One of these sites was the ruins of Ani, and the photographs that represented them were once again those taken by Ohannes Kurkdjian a couple of years prior.³⁸ While the likes of Rudolf Virchow, Gustav Radde,³⁹ and Aleksei S. Uvarov (1825–1884/1885), the president of Moscow’s Archaeological Society and organizer of the 1881 congress, valued the photographs, they saw one more example in a wide canon of fine Christian antiquities from the region, there was more to the photographs of the ruins of Ani.

After serving as a military photographer during the Russian army’s campaign in eastern Anatolia against Ottoman troops, Kurkdjian returned to the region’s highlands in 1879 with the ambition to work on a comprehensive visual study of Armenia’s medieval capital. Braving the hardships in a mostly deserted area with food supplies and even adequate lodging being scarce, he and his team of four companions stayed at Ani for five months and worked toward what would become a collection of photographs which were designed to be sold in a set which told the story of a journey along the monuments of Ani.⁴⁰ This set consists of forty⁴¹ stereoscopic views, mounted on 90 x 178 mm cards by the Viennese publisher Eisenschiml and Wachtl, which are labeled in French and Armenian but not in Russian. It was sold in a cardboard box and came with one of two

38 Virchow and Dolbeschew, “Der archäologische Congress in Tiflis,” 95. The co-author of this report is the very same Dolbezhev who would at the end of the 1880s become an important node of knowledge exchange for Vittorio Sella (see previous chapter). At the congress in Tbilisi 1881, the teacher and archaeologist Dolbezhev helped the few visitors from outside the Russian Empire (and without any Russian language skills) with translations and short protocols of the various sessions to understand what was being presented and discussed. On the singular importance of the 1881 congress for the archaeological study of the Caucasus, see also Liudmila G. Khrushkova, “Izuchenie khristianskikh pamiatnikov Kavkaza i sovremennye diskussii,” *Voprosy vseobshchei istorii arkhitektury* 10, no. 1 (2018): 69–70.

39 See Radde, *Kollektsii Kavkazskago muzeia*, 224–225 for a brief description of the Ani photographs in the collection of the Caucasus Museum.

40 Galstyan, “Ohannes Kurkdjian’s Duality,” 71–73.

41 While the sets that I have encountered, including the sets that are available at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the fully digitized set in Joseph Malikian’s collection (Armenian Image Archive, accessed August 29, 2025, armenianimage.org), all consist of forty images, the hand-numbered cards leave out nos. 11 and 12 but run up to no. 42. What happened to the two missing cards remains unknown as well as whether there had been a set with the cards nos. 1–40 on the market in the first place. See Steven Sim, “Stereoscopic Photographers of ANI,” VirtualANI, last modified April 26, 2006, <http://virtualani.org/kurkdjian/index.htm>.

booklets that described the chosen scenes—one in Armenian and the other in French and German (as it was printed by the Mekhitarist congregation in Vienna), but, again, not in Russian. This choice of language carried significant political implications and repercussions, which were only partially mitigated by the parallel publication of a brief descriptive booklet in Russian, printed in Tbilisi.⁴² Rather, the emphasis on Armenian underscored what Galstyan calls “an example of a local’s attempt to introduce his colonised people to their newly rediscovered heritage”⁴³ while the French and German labels and descriptions were intended to raise awareness for a project that happened to coincide with the Armenian national movement.⁴⁴ The Russian authorities reacted with repression, and Kurkdjian, likely evading the risk of arrest, emigrated in 1881 to Vienna, from where he later embarked on his journey to Southeast Asia.⁴⁵ This reaction was a response to Kurkdjian’s intended inscription of Armenian national sentiments into these photographs and their enthusiastic contemporary reception among his fellow countrymen.

Indeed, a closer look at the forty views from Ani suggests such a reading, extending beyond a strictly archaeological-scientific interest, as the photographs are dominated by four themes that support their integration into a broader framework of nationalism and cultural modernity. Firstly, Kurkdjian intended to evoke a sense of architectural grandeur in the viewer, which he achieved by repeatedly constructing the photographs from lower angles. Kurkdjian’s takes on the remains of the Lion (or Leopard) Gate (no. 2), the Baron’s (or Merchant’s) Palace (no. 10), and the once-domed Cathedral of Ani (no. 24), the site’s largest structure, cleverly confront his audience with an idea of the monumentality of

42 Ohannes Kiurkchian, *Fotograficheskie snimki s razvalin drevnei stolitsy Armenii Ani. Kolleksiia stereoskopii. Fotografia po istoricheskim i etnograficheskim dostoprimechatel'nostiam Armenii O. Kiurkchiana* (Tiflis: Tipografia M. Vartaniansa i Ko, 1881).

43 Galstyan, “Ohannes Kurkdjian’s Duality,” 71.

44 The visual representation of ancient Armenian history contributed to an increasing international consciousness for the cause of the Armenians. The British illustrated newspaper *The Graphic* for instance used Kurkdjian’s images from Ani for engravings that came along a brief report on the “magnificent ruins” of Ani and on how the “inhabitants suffered such miseries that some of them at last resolved to seek safety in emigration” after medieval Armenia had been “successively occupied by Georgians, Tartars, and Ottoman Turks.” N. N., “The Ruins of Ani,” *Graphic*, September 26, 1885, 342 (text) and 345 (images).

45 On Kurkdjian’s photographic work see also the previous chapter on the alpine sublime. While the sources on the tsarist repression of his works are slim, we do know that Kurkdjian remained politically active also from his new home on Java where he joined the local Armenian diaspora community and continued the struggle for independence from abroad within the newly founded Armenian Encouragement Union (Hayots’ khrakhusakan miut’yunè) which remained active until Kurkdjian’s death in 1903. See Robert P’ashayan, *Aram ev Artashes Vruyrner* (Yerevan: Hayastan, 1989), 19–20.

Ani by making the ruins appear larger through perspective. Secondly, and interconnected with the previous point, Kurkdjian emphasizes the desolate status quo of the ruins, using them to tell a story of Ani as a symbol of lost Armenian history that needed to be reimagined. Remaining true to the lower-angled perspectives, the photographs of the Church of St. Gregory (Abughamrents, no. 17), the interior of the Minuchihr (Menûçihir) Mosque (no. 21), and outside views of the Cathedral (nos. 23–24) build on a lower third with scattered rocks and disintegrating building material whereas the center to lower half of the view of the western end of the city walls (no. 5) and especially the entire lower half of the view of the entrance to the Mausoleum of the Child Princes (no. 20) are dominated by loose parts which appear to have fallen off the initial constructions. The desolate yet once-glorious character of the site is thirdly juxtaposed by views of the barren landscape surrounding it. Seven photographs (nos. 14, 18, 19, 33, 34, 35, 36) show the bold cliffs with the ruins standing above the Tsaghkotsadzor valley and the Akhuryan (turk. Arpaçay) river. Particularly, the view of the Convent of the (Hripsimian) Virgins (no. 34, fig. 7.1), towering above the river on a rocky promontory and in a composition with a rare angle from above the monument, underscores the message of human triumph over natural adversity. The focus on Ani’s character as a desolate, abandoned site which had long fallen from its former status as the capital of Armenian statehood is fourthly complemented by a vision of contemplation and nostalgia. Eight images in Kurkdjian’s set (nos. 1, 2, 6, 7, 10, 13, 27, 29) each show one of his companions in contemplative poses, small in relation to the respective frame’s total size yet in the center of the viewer’s attention. Their staged poses hint at the centrality of “the melancholic longing for the past in late nineteenth-century Armenian historiographical photography”⁴⁶ and a related melancholic iconography within a modern Armenian self-representation.⁴⁷ The active integration of the contemplating individual into the views of the ruins of Ani reflects the emotional dimension that Kurkdjian and other Armenian visitors attributed to the site in the late nineteenth century, inviting the viewer to engage with the rediscovery of Armenian cultural heritage and the imagination of an Armenian national identity.

46 Galstyan, *Translating Ruins*, 45.

47 *Ibid.*, 29–41.

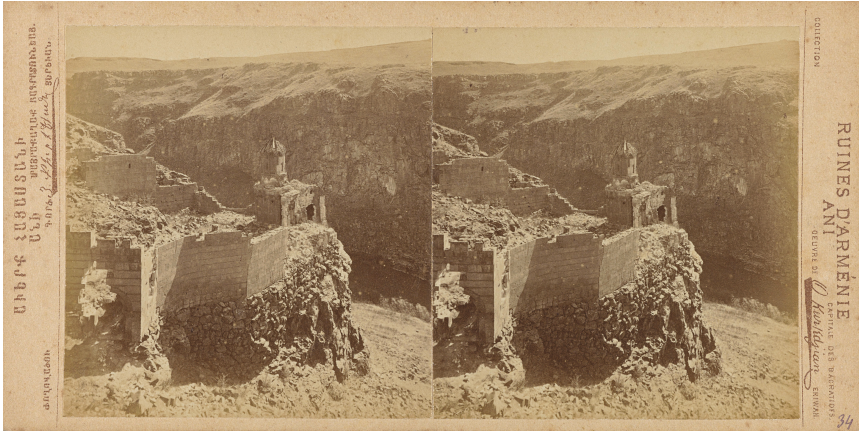


Figure 7.1. Ohannes Kurkdjian. “The Convent of the Virgins.” Wikicommons.

Kurkdjian’s images from Ani connected a supposedly lost history to a late nineteenth-century movement working toward an Armenian national identity in a sense that, how Timothy Mitchell has shown against the backdrop of modern Egypt, it made a key characteristic of the modern nation-state tangible, namely that “for a state to prove that it was modern, it helped if it could also prove that it was ancient.”⁴⁸ The images are furthermore interconnected through a close correlation in the development of archaeology and nation-building in the nineteenth century⁴⁹ and a more specific framework of the study of material culture in Russia, which until the mid-to-late 1890s had been dominated by the search for ethnic roots.⁵⁰

The vision of an Armenian national identity encapsulated in photographs of monuments from ancient to medieval Armenian history is therefore neither the only example of such an approach to archaeology in the late nineteenth-century

48 Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 179.

49 The relationship between archaeology and nationalism had become a particularly popular topic for scholarly writing during the 1990s and against the backdrop of the usage of an ethnic past for shaping identities in the Soviet Union on the one hand and of post-Soviet (and post-Yugoslav) conflicts which involved territorial claims based on ancient histories and archaeological records on the other. See Philip L. Kohl, “Nationalism and Archaeology: On the Constructions of Nations and the Reconstructions of the Remote Past,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 27 (1998): 223–246; Victor A. Shnirelman, *Who Gets the Past? Competition for Ancestors among Non-Russian Intellectuals in Russia* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996); *ibid.*, *The Value of the Past. Myths, Identity and Politics in Transcaucasia* (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2001).

50 Pravilova, “Contested Ruins,” 88.

Russian Empire, nor are Kurkdjian's images the only such product from this time. A decade later, that is, when he had already established himself in faraway Java, another Armenian photographer made active use of the power of photography and architectural history to imagine an Armenian national identity based on cultural heritage. In contrast to Kurkdjian, Mateos Papazyants thereby focused on the Eastern Armenian provinces, which had been under Russian control since the treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828). Little is known about Papazyants's life except that he set up a studio at some point during the 1880s in Ejmiatsin (Vagharshapat), possibly even within the Mother See—the seat of the Catholics, and that a close cooperation with the catholicate gave him access to the religious elites of Armenia, making him a well-connected and widely discussed photographer in the midst of Armenian life in the Russian Empire.⁵¹ His opus magnum is the six-volume *Antiquities of the Past* (*Hnutyunk vanoreits*, 1889–1892), where every tome explores the architectural monuments of a single Eastern Armenian region. Building on his programmatic opening volume without a subtitle (vol. 1, 1889) and following up with surveys of Gegharkunik (vol. 2, 1890), Vayots Dzor (vol. 3, 1890), Goght'an (vol. 4, 1891), Syunik (vol. 5, 1892), and Ejmiatsin and its surroundings (vol. 6, 1892), Papazyants sought to capture a long history of distinctly Armenian architecture. Other than Kurkdjian, he did not solely let his images speak for themselves but added detailed descriptions of the photographed monuments, their details, and the surrounding location. This text was written in the Armenian language only and suggests that Papazyants understood his survey to be of educational value for his fellow countrymen, who were likely his primary audience as he undertook his large-scale project.

A tentative⁵² analysis suggests that he partially picked up on Kurkdjian's work and integrated a similar iconography into his expansive survey, with several

51 Vigen Galstyan, “Mateos M. Papazyants,” *Lusarvest—Database of Armenian Photo-Media Practitioners*, 2016, <http://www.lusarvest.org/practitioners/papazyants-mateos-m/>.

52 I refrain from coming to definite conclusions about Papazyants's works at this point given the many question marks about his life on the one hand but especially because of the inconclusive nature of the albums that I have come across during my research in archives and libraries. There seem to exist slightly different, sometimes incomplete versions of the individual volumes (for two different versions of Papazyants's opening volume see for instance B-503 and B-504 in the “art and visual material” funds of the National Library of Armenia), some of the volumes were re-organized and re-cased as “Ancient Armenian monasteries” (Drevne-armianskie monastyri, B-525), while the consecutive numbering of Papazyants's images does not necessarily correlate with the structure of these volumes. In combination, many open questions around his image production and circulation remain open but these albums and their inherent visual language deserve further attention within the framework of discourses

(unidentified) sitters striking contemplative poses in front of inscriptions above a church entrance or a cross-stone (*khachkar*). Given the hardly comparable background of the abandoned site of Ani and nineteenth-century Armenian history in the provinces within the Russian Empire's borders, the prevailing viscourses in the photographs by Papazyants, however, focus on a narrative of established Armenian traditional life rather than lost histories encapsulated in desolation and barren landscapes. These albums, therefore, engage their audience without a trope of a vast and empty landscape but show the monuments as functional and integrated into everyday life with a perspectival emphasis on the preserved parts of the site, albeit with an accompanying assortment of varying stages of desolate monuments from the half-intact St. Astvatsatsin Church in Noratus to the semidetached walls of Kotavank (known also as Surb Astvatsatsin; both in the second volume on monuments in Gegharkunik as nos. 251 and 259), and thoughtfully placed larger groups of people in traditional attire.

While the visual languages in Kurkdjian's set from Ani and Papazyants's extensive, commented survey of Eastern Armenia show significant differences, they both contributed to the development of an increasingly nationalizing narrative on perceptions and depictions of landscape and architectural history as reflected in their images of Armenian monuments within (and across) the borders of a multiethnic empire. Both photographers were influenced by the rise of an Armenian national movement, which—in the Russian Empire and particularly under Tsar Alexander III—emerged partly in response to the policies of Russification. They were also shaped by the dominant use of national or ethnic classifications in archaeology in the second half of the nineteenth century, two wider societal and academic factors to which locally rooted photographers were not immune in their takes on archaeological sites in the Caucasus region.

The Transnational Interest in a Supranational Ani

By the turn of the century, the field was, however, increasingly subjected to change, and archaeological artifacts were not primarily classified by nationalities or ethnic groups anymore but rather part of broader concepts such as “archaeological culture.”⁵³ By then, the architectural and artistic exploration of the Russian provinces had, according to Ekaterina Pravilova, “turned into a true

on Armenian identity in the late nineteenth century (as addressed in Galstyan, *Translating Ruins*, 145–187).

53 Pravilova, “Contested Ruins,” 88–89.

crusade,” which foresaw key roles for archaeological institutions in surveying the empire (and nation) and meant a boost for the production of archaeological photographs.⁵⁴ In the nineteenth-century spirit of positivism, the Russian state and its institutions thereby followed the Western European example, embracing archaeology to support increasingly larger excavations. Russia’s scientific interest in digs within and across its imperial borders was especially encouraged by rivaling British and French projects in the Near East but also by increasingly active foreign interest in the South Caucasus which led to condemnations of French excavations in Russian Armenia being “nothing more than predatory grave-robbing”⁵⁵ and only further spurred imperial objectives as the main motivation to develop and fund archaeological activities in the name of the empire in its own south.

While Armenian communities across the Ottoman and Russian imperial borders had embraced Ani as a symbol of their own nationalized cultural heritage, the medieval site became a focal point of transimperial archaeological interest. Soon to be dubbed the “Pompeii of the Caucasus,”⁵⁶ the “Armenian Palmyra,”⁵⁷ or compared with Kyiv,⁵⁸ a new group of actors came to explore Ani by the 1890s and succeeded in firmly establishing it on the cultural horizon of an audience beyond a such with an already pronounced regional interest in the Caucasus. The same year that Papazyants concluded his project on “antiquities of the past” of Eastern Armenia by publishing his sixth and final volume in 1892, a then twenty-seven-year-old Georgian historian and linguist, Nikolai Ia. Marr (Nikoloz I. Mari, 1864/1865–1934) led the first excavation at Ani, putting it back into the spotlight of medieval Armenian sites. Complaining that

54 Pravilova, *A Public Empire*, 131–147. The Imperial Archaeological Commission (*Imperatorskaia Arkheologicheskaiia Komissiiia*, IAK) made sure that professional photographers joined its scholars on their trips to the empire’s provinces for their survey work. As a result, the IAK library contained more than 13,500 photographs by 1914. For more details on the photographs working for the IAK see Galina V. Dluzhnevskaiia, “Fotograf[y] Imperatorskoĭ Arkheologicheskoi Komissii,” *Arkheologicheskie vesti* 14 (2007): 245–258.

55 See Nikolai Ia. Marr’s comments on the French amateur archaeologist Jacques de Morgan’s work for his two-volume *Mission scientifique au Caucase. Études archéologiques et historiques* (A scientific mission to the Caucasus. Archaeological and historical studies, 1889–1890). Cited in McReynolds, “Nikolai Marr,” 107.

56 Moskvich, *Illustrirovannyĭ prakticheskii putevoditel’*, 280–285.

57 Andreev, “Na razvalinakh Armianskoi Pal’miry.”

58 *Ibid.*, 236. In this fictionalized travelogue from 1898, a nameless photographer (who is likely to have been based on Aram Vruyr, see below) compares the importance of Ani for the Armenians to that of Kyiv/Kiev for the Russians as the respective “mother of all cities” (*mat’ gorodov*). This is in line with the contemporary narrative of “Kiev as the cradle of the Russian state and people” (see Faith Hillis, *Children of Rus’. Right-Bank Ukraine and the Invention of a Russian Nation* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013], 40.)

there were not any scientific studies about the antiquities or the city of Ani in Russian language until the 1890s,⁵⁹ he built upon the support of the Imperial Archaeological Commission whose chairman, Alekseĭ A. Bobrinskii (1852–1927), had traveled to Ani in the year before and had, to the despair of Marr, brought back his own fragments of Ani’s history for display at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. Marr’s first summer in Ani merely lasted for a month, but he would return in 1893 to continue his work, only for a lack of funds to end his excavations of the site for more than a decade.⁶⁰ It was only a start to what would follow in the next century, but it already stood within the poles of an imperial project of knowledge production and power relations on the one hand and a pronounced collaboration with local elites in the Caucasus on the other. Marr’s companions at the excavation site from the very start included the architect and draftsman Toros Toramanyan (1864–1934) and would later see, among others, (art) historians and archaeologists such as Hovsep Orbeli (1887–1961), Ashkharhbek Kalantar (1884–1942), Giorgi Chubinashvili (1885–1973) and Vukol Beridze (1883–1963), as well as photographers and painters such as Aram Vruyr (1863–1924) and Arshak Fetvadjian (1866–1947) join his ranks as professionals or trainees in Ani. This approach, which relied on a team of “native” professionals from the Caucasus region itself, was very much in line with his idea to change the study of the Caucasus toward researching small minority groups without literary traditions in their respective vernacular languages and a subsequent scholarly dependence on “native” informants.⁶¹ Marr thereby often relied on the knowledge of the local population near Ani to uncover new clues about the site’s history.⁶²

As Marr’s work in Ani came to an unexpected halt, and since he had no photographer with him during the first couple of summers at the site for large-scale

59 Nikolai Ia. Marr, “Zapiska akademika N. Ia. Marra o Kavkazskom Istoriko-Arkheologicheskom Institute,” *Izvestiia Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk*, Prilozhenie k protokolu X zasedaniia Otdeleniia Istoricheskikh nauk i Filologii Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk 6 sentiabria 1917 goda (1917): 987. On the importance of the Ani excavations for the development of the study of Armenian art see Irina R. Drampian, “K istorii izucheniia srednevekovoi armianskoĭ freskovoi zhivopisi,” *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta. Iskusstvovedenie* 8, no. 2 (2018): 232–257.

60 McReynolds, “Nikolai Marr,” 107–108.

61 Tolz, *Russia’s Own Orient*, 116.

62 See Tat’iana M. Devel’ and T. B. Tomes, “Sobranie N. Ia. Marra v fotoarkhive Leningradskogo otdeleniia instituta arkheologii AN SSSR,” *Patma-banasirakan handes / Istoriko-filologicheskii zhurnal* 3 (1971): 290 for a reference to an episode in Marr’s diary in which he describes how a local guide showed him a rock with an inscription that he had been looking for. Artashes Vruyr furthermore describes the multiethnic composition of Marr’s Armenian, Kurdish and Turkish excavation workers whom he recruited from Ani’s neighboring villages. See Artashes Vruyr, *Anium* (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1964), 24.

image production,⁶³ it was the British businessman Henry F. B. Lynch (1862–1913) who introduced a new batch of images into circulation. Based on two trips to both Russian and Ottoman Armenia in 1893/94 and 1898, he published a two-volume travelogue which included twenty-eight reproduced photos of a visit to Ani, including five images from the nearby monastic complex Ghoshavank (Horomos).⁶⁴ For Lynch, a visit to Ani as a “study of the living evidence of a vanished civilization which is lavished upon the traveler within her walls” taught “a lesson of wider importance, transcending the sphere of the history of architecture” insofar as it would “leave no doubt that this people may be included in the small number of races who have shown themselves susceptible of the highest culture.”⁶⁵ It is in this sense that the photos Lynch selected for his book show Ani in all its remaining glory, almost exclusively from lower angles, which reveal a striking similarity to Kurkdjian’s stereoscopic set.⁶⁶ His images, however, lack the emphasis on the barren landscape and desolate condition of the ruins, and instead focus on well-preserved details of a sculptured stone molding and a pilaster in the building on the citadel.⁶⁷ He highlights some buildings’ “almost perfect preservation,”⁶⁸ while underscoring that others “will not endure for many years longer, unless steps be taken to save it from falling in”⁶⁹ for which he calls on wealthy Armenians and the Russian government alike to take matters into their hands.⁷⁰ Lynch navigates his image production in this field of tension between the remaining grandeur on the one hand, and the looming destruction and oblivion on the other—two forces that came together in his understanding of photography as a tool of preservation. He furthermore contrasts the “genius of [the Armenians]” which “has been exploited by the semi-barbarous peoples

63 He was however eagerly waiting for a camera to arrive during his first trip to Ani in 1892 as he wanted to replace his practice of drawing findings with capturing them in photographs. He sent a first batch of photos to St. Petersburg at the end of June 1892, roughly a month after having arrived in Ani. See Klavdiia M. Peskareva and Oktjabrina S. Balikian, eds., “Dokladnye zapiski N. Ia. Marra o raskopkakh v Ani (1892 g.),” *Lraber Hasarakakan Gitutyunneri / Vestnik obshchestvennykh nauk AN Armianskoï SSR* 5 (1981): 102–105.

64 Henry F. B. Lynch, *Armenia. Travels and Studies. In two volumes* (Vol. I: The Russian Provinces. Vol. II: The Turkish Provinces) (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1901). The book was translated into Armenian (1902, Beirut) and Russian (1910, Tbilisi) within a year respectively decade after being published in Great Britain.

65 *Ibid.*, 1:391.

66 See, for instance, his photos of the “Cathedral from South-East” (*ibid.*, 1:370, fig. 72), the “Chapel of St. Gregory, Entrance” (*ibid.*, 1:381, fig. 86), or the “Chapel of the Redeemer” (*ibid.*, 1:383, fig. 88).

67 *Ibid.*, 1:373, 379 (figs. 75 and 82).

68 *Ibid.*, 1:374.

69 *Ibid.*, 1:383.

70 *Ibid.*, 1:391–392.

of Asia”⁷¹ in the spirit of Western European traditions of Orientalism and the increasing awareness of the repression of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.⁷² Lynch was not at last informed by the Hamidian massacres which took place between his trips and made him even more outspoken in the second volume of his book and, when writing about Malazgirt (Manazkert), concludes that “[a]n Armenian genius produced these works, and a Turk destroyed them,” leading to “a strangely pathetic spectacle of fallen greatness, of a culture which has disappeared.”⁷³

In the meantime, Marr published his first papers on Ani,⁷⁴ advanced his academic career towards a professorship at St. Petersburg University, and traveled with his fellow Georgian historian and linguist Ivane Javakhishvili (1876–1940) to Sinai to study manuscripts. By 1904, he was able to resume excavations in Ani and developed it into the standout archaeological project in the Russian Empire until the years of and after World War I, when the Armenian genocide, revolutions in the dissolving empire, and newly drawn Soviet-Turkish borders ended this chapter of scholarship. Between 1904 and until the end of the 16th campaign in 1917 Marr’s excavations were carried by a second level of local collaboration insofar as Marr was strongly dependent on the financial support of private benefactors from the region, especially the Armenian communities in Baku and Tbilisi, and its diaspora organizations such as the Council of the Armenian Churches in St. Petersburg.⁷⁵ Marr, therefore, had to navigate his work within a set of expectations in him. On the one hand, the Russian administrators in the Caucasus were skeptical vis-à-vis his Ani excavations as they feared his work might contribute to a rise of Armenian nationalist sentiments if the site became

71 Ibid.

72 See Jo Laycock, *Imagining Armenia. Orientalism, Ambiguity and Intervention* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 43–98.

73 Lynch, *Armenia*, 2:274.

74 Nikolai Ia. Marr, “Novye materialy po armianskoï èpigrafiĕ,” *Zapiski vostochnago otdeleniia imperatorskago russkago arkheologicheskago obshchestva* 8 (1894): 69–103; Nikolai Ia. Marr, “Ani, stolitsa drevnei Armenii (Istoriko-arkheologicheskii nabrosok),” in *Bratskaia pomoshch’ postradavshim v Turtsii Armianam*, 2nd ed., ed. Grigoriĭ A. Dzhanshiev (Moscow: Tipografia I.N. Kushnerev & Co, 1898), 197–222.

75 Nikolai Ia. Marr, *Oraskopkakh i rabotakh v Ani letom 1906 goda* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1907), 55; McReynolds, “Nikolai Marr,” 109–110. For more information on local resistance and support of Marr’s project see also Nadezhda I. Platonova, “Nikolai Iakovlevich Marr (1864–1934),” in *Ottsy-osnovateli RAIMK: Ikh zhiznennyĭ put’ i vklad v nauku*, ed. Vladimir A. Goroncharovskii (St. Petersburg: Institute for the History of Material Culture RAS, 2022), 83–89.

a symbol of lost Armenian statehood, whereas parts of the Armenian community, on the other hand, did indeed expect such a narrative.⁷⁶

Marr, however, rejected any nationalist co-optation of his work, and, as has been repeatedly shown, sought to de-nationalize Ani’s vision, aiming for an idea of cross-cultural encounters, which found manifestation in the medieval architecture of a multiethnic community.⁷⁷ This idea of a de-nationalized history of Ani was very much in line with contemporary scholarship of a “liberal empire”⁷⁸ but it was at the same time conflicting with the vision that Armenians had developed for “their” medieval capital and the centrality of an appropriation of Ani for the narrative of a historically rooted cultural center for an otherwise widely dispersed people across the borders of three different empires. Marr, therefore, repeatedly had to defend his epistemologically grounded history of Ani as an example of cross-cultural and interreligious influences and cooperation in the Caucasus against the vision of its symbolic and emotional centrality for the Armenian community and their idea of historical Armenia, not least because he was dependent on the financial, political, and logistical support of this group to keep the excavations going and avoid the risk of them being shut down due to a shortage of funds, as had happened to him in the 1890s. On the other hand, by 1913, Marr’s vision of Ani representing an entire region as a space of cultural confluence rather than conflicting national visions as well as his imperialist view of Russia on a special mission in the Caucasus eventually secured him support and funding from St. Petersburg, where officials were finally interested in countering foreign presence in Ani and comparable archaeological sites.⁷⁹

The support from the Armenian communities, as well as eventually also from an official side in the empire’s capital, allowed Marr to make his excavations a permanent project from 1904. It saw the foundation of a museum and the establishment of proper research infrastructure at Ani, which included a photo laboratory. Photography played a key part in the development of the site as Marr heavily relied on photography to document findings from the excavations’ very first days, especially multilingual inscriptions that he would send to his colleagues,⁸⁰ and informing both the IAK in St. Petersburg and a wider

76 Ibid.; Tolz, *Russia’s Own Orient*, 41–43.

77 McReynolds, “Nikolai Marr,” 110–119; Pravilova, “Contested Ruins,” 70–72; Tolz, *Russia’s Own Orient*, 127.

78 See Marina Mogilner’s work (*Homo Imperii*) as discussed in the second chapter.

79 McReynolds, “Nikolai Marr,” 114–115.

80 Klavdiia M. Peskareva and Oktiabrina S. Balikian, eds., “Dokladnye zapiski N. Ia. Marra o raskopkakh v Ani (1904–1907 gg.),” *Lraber Hasarakakan Gitutyunneri / Vestnik obshchestvennykh nauk AN Armianskoï SSR* 10 (1981): 102–103. The photographic production amassed

audience about the history of the site and his progress. The images that came into circulation from the context of a de-nationalized view of Ani added exactly this element to the discourse on medieval Armenia. This is particularly evident in a report that Marr published on the progress of the excavations during the year 1906, which included thirty reproduced photographs showing excavation overviews, details of columns, artifacts, and also workers with a wheelbarrow or collectively placing a column on its foundation.⁸¹ Three images⁸² stand out here as they all depict a 2.26 meter high and later lost statue of King Gagik I emphasizing the ruler's headgear, "undoubtedly a turban, and a Muslim turban" that, according to Marr, represented how the Armenian Bagratid kingdom had been culturally and politically influenced by Byzantine Empire in the West but had also borrowed traditions from (Sasanian) Iran and through its contact with the wider Muslim world.⁸³ Through the generous integration of images of the same statue, Marr reinforced the narrative of Ani as a site of cross-cultural confluence, which he explained as relevant for the wider region, including the Persian renaissance influences on Georgian and Armenian literature,⁸⁴ and for the Caucasus having been a mediating link already in ancient history.⁸⁵

Marr does not specify the details of how he planned or intended to use photography for his work beyond an understanding of photography as a tool of documentation, and he does not credit the photographers with whom he was working, but two names left their imprint on the visual documentation of Ani in the early twentieth century. On the one hand, there was Istanbul-born and Tbilisi-based Aram Vruyr (1863–1924) who had the task to document the ruins and progress of the excavations through the lens of his camera, worked as the head of the photographic department in Ani—for which it is plausible that the majority of the images brought by Marr into circulation were taken by Vruyr—and was often joined by his sons Ara and Artashes. On the other hand, it was his

at least 2,285 images that were supposed to constitute an integral part of the archival and museal documentation of Ani but were to a good part lost on a train between Armavir and Baku during the turmoil of war and revolution after 1917. Therefore, ironically, the most remaining photographs from Marr's excavations are actually those that he sent to St. Petersburg in 1892–93 and are now kept in the archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg. See Devel' and Tomes, "Sobranie N. Ia. Marra," 289–295; Nikolai Ia. Marr, *Ani. Knizhnaia istoriia goroda i raskopki na meste gorodishcha* (Leningrad and Moscow: OGIZ, 1934), xi; Platonova, "Nikolai Iakovlevich Marr (1864–1934)," 90–91.

81 Marr, *O raskopkakh*.

82 See *ibid.* for illustrations 16 (p. 21) and on table XIII in the appendix.

83 *Ibid.*, 20–30.

84 *Ibid.*, 43–44.

85 *Ibid.*, 49.

Ottoman Armenian compatriot, Toramanyan, who had studied architecture in Istanbul and Paris before coming to Ani to study medieval Armenian architecture. Marr, however, notes that also other collaborators at the excavation site, such as N. N. Tikhonov, S. N. Poltoratskiĭ, and his son Iuriĭ N. Marr (1893–1935), contributed to the photographic production for which the uncredited images in Marr’s reports in many cases cannot be assigned to one particular name with certitude.⁸⁶

Vruyr had officially joined Marr for the Ani excavations for the first time in 1911, but he had been traveling to Ani since 1886 and throughout the 1900s.⁸⁷ For the following summer, Marr gives us some details about the quantity and nature of the work by his photographer in chief, who took images of 157 archaeological subjects, which “include also landscapes, but landscapes of Ani’s nature also have their own archaeological content.”⁸⁸ This was, however, not the first time Vruyr visited and engaged with photography in Anias he had been part of the team that Kurkdjian had brought in 1879.⁸⁹ Like Kurkdjian, Vruyr was born in the Ottoman Empire before moving to the Russian Empire (Tbilisi), where he worked as an actor on Armenian stages across the region. Having learned photography under Kurkdjian’s guidance however, Vruyr picked it up as a second profession and went on to devote a fair share of his life to producing images of Armenian cultural sites in the Caucasus. By continuing the work of his teacher after the latter’s emigration to Southeast Asia, by spending his summers in Ani in the framework of Marr’s expeditions and by photographing ruins of churches in the Elisavetpol’ and Yerevan Governorates on assignment by Marr,⁹⁰ Vruyr was responsible for producing of one of the largest photographic compendium of archaeological sites in the imperial Caucasus. His son, Artashes, retrospectively numbered the photographic production of Aram Vruyr to have reached two hundred photos already in 1903, that is, before Marr returned to Ani the

86 See Marr, *Ani*, 78; Peskareva and Balikian, eds., “Dokladnye zapiski N. Ia. Marra o raspokakh v Ani (1904–1907 gg.),” 111.

87 Marr, *Ani*, 87; Vruyr, *Anium*, 13.

88 Marr, *Ani*, 98. “Zavedyavshii fotograficheskoi chast’iu A. M. Vruir uspel sfotografirovat’ 157 arkhelogicheskikh siuzhetov. V chisle ikh imeiutsia i peizazhi, no peizazhi aniiskoi prirody byvaiut svoim arkhelogicheskim sodержaniem.”

89 On the biography of Aram Vruyr, see Vigen Galstyan, “Aram Minasi Vruyr (Mak’ashch’yan),” *Lusarvest—Database of Armenian Photo-Media Practicioners*, 2016, accessed September 21, 2023, <http://www.lusarvest.org/գործիչներ/վրույր-արամ/>; and P’ashayan, *Aram ev Artashes Vruyrner*, 20–43.

90 Klavdiia M. Peskareva and Oktiabrina S. Balikian, eds., “Dokladnye zapiski N. Ia. Marra v arkhelogicheskuiu komissiiu (1909–1915 gg.),” *Lraber Hasarakakan Gitutyunneri / Vestnik obshchestvennykh nauk AN Armianskoi SSR 2* (1982): 89–90.

following year.⁹¹ However, the majority of his collection was irretrievably lost after Vruyr brought all his negatives to Istanbul in 1909. Despite the Imperial Academy in St. Petersburg's request and provision of travel expenses, he could not recover them in time before the outbreak of World War I in 1914.⁹²



Figure 7.2. “The Excavation Team at Ani, 1912.” Vruyr, *Anium*, 48–49 / Wikicommons.

The memoirs of Artashes Vruyr, who assisted both his father and Toramanyan before experimenting with photography himself and eventually being promoted to an official photographer at Ani in 1916, provide a better insight into the materials and photographic practices used during the excavations. He describes the lenses used (e.g. Emil Busch no. 3), formats (9x12, 13x18, 18x24, 24x30), tripods, and the team's predominant reliance on equipment (plates, lights, mirrors) produced by the British manufacturer Ilford.⁹³ The surviving results of this photographic production at the excavations demonstrate that the mindset surrounding the “myth of Ani”⁹⁴ had not changed from the first visual take by

91 Vruyr, *Anium*, 13.

92 *Ibid.*, 39–40.

93 *Ibid.*, 51–61, 95.

94 Pavel Tchobanian, “Ani et son mythe (XIII^e–XIX^e siècles),” in *Ani. Capitale de l'Arménie en l'an mil*, ed. Raymond H. Kévorkian (Paris: Paris Musées, 2001), 276–281.

Kurkdjian in 1879 to the photos of his apprentice Vruyr in the early twentieth century. The dissemination of Vruyr’s images began with the production of a set of fifty cards featuring stereoscopic photographs.⁹⁵ Thereby, not only the format of “Ani—The Capital of the Bagratids” perpetuated Kurkdjian’s work, but also the employed visual language shows a striking similarity. A new element is the emphasis on the archaeological work conducted at Ani, with one of the images showing Toramanyan next to a seemingly random assortment of discovered inscriptions and other fragments. The already established pensive poses of a melancholic iconography within a modern Armenian self-representation are particularly evident in a retrospective selection of Aram’s photographs for the memoirs by his son, Artashes, which among others includes photographs of the writer Perch Proshyan (1837–1907) posing at the Akhuryan river bank and below the high-rising cliffs with the Convent of the (Hripsimian) Virgins on top (taken in 1892) and of the actress Siranuysh (Meropē Sahaki Kant’arjian, 1857–1932) deep in contemplation at the ruins of the Church of the Holy Apostles (Surb Arakelots, taken in 1904).⁹⁶ Despite the later integration of Aram Vruyr into Marr’s official excavation team, the surviving images demonstrate a visual interest that extends beyond a strictly archaeological-scientific one, toward a continuity in the representation of Ani as “national antiquities.” The integration of prominent figures of Armenian cultural life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is representative of this transition. However, given the loss of most of the photographer’s work and Artashes’s selection happening almost half a century after Marr’s expedition had found an end, it is, however, impossible to judge how the surviving photographs relate to the entire corpus of Vruyr’s images from Ani.

In June 1909, a prominent visitor followed this deeply inscribed narrative of Ani as the epitome of Armenian culture. No other than Catholicos Matteos II traveled to the excavation site, a two-day visit recorded in an account by the priest Krikor Balakian (1875–1934) who had joined the head of the Armenian churches among twelve other clergymen and summarizes the contemporary enthusiasm about the rediscovery of Armenian history as follows: “I was overjoyed with this opportunity to see Ani—I had such a thirst to see those eternal monuments of the past glory of our forefathers. I wanted to kiss that holy soil and the broken stone crosses and half-destroyed ruins which our ancestors

95 Steven Sim, “Stereoscopic Photographs of Ani,” VirtualANI, last modified November 1, 2005, <http://virtualani.org/kurkdjian/morestereocards.htm>.

96 Vruyr, *Anium*, unpaginated plates.

made with their blood and tears.”⁹⁷ He quotes Matteos II addressing Marr: “Through your excavations, you reveal to the whole world the true picture of the magnificent past of a misfortunate and exiled people.”⁹⁸ Balakian’s report is representative for the inherent contemporary connection between Ani as a “museum of national antiquity, which is also a living witness to the ancient glory of Armenian civilization”⁹⁹ and an early twentieth-century presentation of Ottoman Armenian life that was dominated by repression and violence from the Hamidian massacres of the mid-1890s to the Adana massacre in April 1909 that had taken place merely a few weeks before the pilgrimage to Ani. Both Balakian’s writings and the thirty-two photographs that he claims to have taken himself and developed “in Europe with great care”¹⁰⁰ before they were printed in his book *The Ruins of Ani* perpetuate this balancing act of imagery already known from Kurkdjian’s set of photographs. While he repeatedly guides the reader toward details in the photographs and the grandeur of the site,¹⁰¹ focus and composition of the majority of the images are centered on the established tropes of desolation, barren landscapes, and melancholia. The connection between past and present becomes particularly evident in a portrait of Catholicos Matteos II next to the statue of King Gagik I, which, for Balakian, represents “a beautiful example of Armenian art in the tenth century” rather than Marr’s reading of cross-cultural confluence. An awareness of the circulated imagery of Ani, which not only included Kurkdjian’s set but also the paintings by Fetvadjian,¹⁰² suggests a reading of Balakian’s images as one more aspect of a contemporary reclamation of Armenian history in favor of at least a cultural and possibly a political awakening for the years to come. In describing the later destroyed tomb of King Ashot III at Ghoshavank (Horomos), Balakian is thereby outspoken on the site’s state, significance, and necessary preservation:

The current state of this tomb of this famous Armenian king of the Pakradunis is simply pitiful. [. . .] Is there no wealthy Armenian who can repair his grave and adorn it—a grave which, although

97 Krikor Balakian, *The Ruins of Ani* (Constantinople: M. Matteosian Press, 1910), 94. Reissued as a translation by Peter Balakian (New Brunswick et al.: Rutgers University Press, 2019).

98 *Ibid.*, 99.

99 *Ibid.*, 5.

100 *Ibid.*, 8.

101 “As the photograph shows, the southern and northern walls are ornamented like those of the cathedral with eleven delicate pilasters and sculpted arches, which are joined to each other.” (*ibid.*, 41–42); “As one can see in the photograph, the interior is very impressive and majestic thanks to its five- (at one time six-) columned and arcaded structure.” (*ibid.*, 61).

102 *Ibid.*, 91–92.

speechless, issues a silent reproach to every humane and caring Armenian who visits it. It is impossible to see the extent of these ruins of Ani and not be touched or not to weep. How could the Armenian visitor not be moved and not shed tears [. . .]. It was here that our holy ancestors lived, prayed, and were massacred by enemies who attacked Ani from all directions, and in part because Armenians were preserving their nationality and their Christian faith brought to them by the Holy Illuminator. Truly it is an impossible thing to recall all this and not be moved, since every stone cross and inch of soil is inundated and irrigated with the blood and tears of the Armenians; every ruin and every inscription, and every column or arch ornamented with carvings has an ancient story of its past glory.¹⁰³

While Balakian was a one-time visitor in 1909, Toramanyan had long become the key member in the scientific exploration of Ani for Marr’s team. Praised in the highest notes by all his contemporary colleagues at Ani,¹⁰⁴ the architect had an immediate and long-lasting influence on knowledge production and preservation about Ani comparable to Vruyr’s role insofar as it was their work that systematized the visual documentation of the site in the early twentieth century and captured several monuments and artefacts which would not survive the destructive forces in World War I and its aftermath.¹⁰⁵ Toramanyan, who had come a long way from his city of birth, Şebinkarahisar, to the sites of his architectural education in the Ottoman and French capitals, first work experiences in Bulgaria, extensive travels across Egypt, Greece, and Italy, before arriving at Ani for the first time in 1903.¹⁰⁶ It was in Paris that he met the editor of the

103 Ibid., 76–77.

104 Ibid., 89–90; Sonia Mirzoian, ed., “Pis’ma N. Ia. Marra ob arkheologicheskikh raskopkakh v Ani (1904–1917 gg.),” *Lraber Hasarakakan Gitutyunneri / Vestnik obshchestvennykh nauk AN Armianskoï SSR* 12 (1979): 99; Vruyr, *Anium*, 13.

105 The images Aram Vruyr took from the Armenian cemetery in Jugha (today’s Culfa in Azerbaijan’s Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic) and especially the many *khachkars* in 1915 are a particularly striking example for the visual preservation of cultural heritage whose threat of destruction extends well into the twenty-first century (see Hamlet Petrosyan, “The Culture of Julfa *khachkars* and their Repatriation Movement,” *Eurasiatica. Quaderni di studi su Balcani, Anatolia, Iran, Caucaso e Asia Centrale* 16 (2020): 181–203. On Aram Vruyr’s trip and photography in Jugha, see Artashes Vruyr, “Aram Vruyri ‘Jugha’ hnagitakan antip aknarkë,” *Patma-banasirakan handes / Istoriko-filologicheskii zhurnal* 4 (1967): 170–180.

106 Josef Strzygowski, *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa*, vol. 1 (Vienna: Anton Schroll, 1918), 7–12; Nazik T’oramanyan, ed. *T’oros T’oramanyan. Namakner* (Yerevan: Haykakan SSR Gitut’yunneri Akademia, 1968), 5–14.

journal *Banasēr* (Philologist), Garabed Basmadjian (1864–1942), with whom he followed the call of Ani and conceived the project to travel east to study Armenian architectural history. While Basmadjian returned to Paris with the plan to raise the necessary funds for working at Ani—a financial idea that would never be met—Toramanyan stayed behind and dedicated the rest of his life to exploring and describing archaeological sites between Zvartnots, Ejmiatsin, Tekor (Digor), and Ani.¹⁰⁷ Marr arranged a first financial contribution of over fifty rubles per month for Toramanyan, which ended his despair and got the architect's Ani career started.¹⁰⁸ He officially joined Marr's team in 1905 and would not only become a key figure in the successful progress of the excavations but also in the documentation of its findings. Marr was particularly enthusiastic about the drawings and photos that Toramanyan provided him with, as expressed in a letter from February 1906: "I won't say anything about your last picture. It is wonderful and it is impossible to further compliment it. I would sing about it, but I am not a singer. I would write a poem for it, but I am not a poet."¹⁰⁹ He himself began publishing in Armenian journals such as *Anahit* and *Mshak*, but it was his extensive notes and the significant visual corpus of the site he produced as both a productive draftsman and keen photographer that attracted attention beyond archaeological circles in the Russian Empire.

The Austrian art historian Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941), who cultivated contacts to scholars in the Russian Empire throughout his entire career,¹¹⁰ had published on Armenian art history since 1891,¹¹¹ and had repeatedly travelled to St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Yerevan since the late nineteenth century, invited Toramanyan to Vienna in 1913. The contact between them was

107 T'oramanyan, *Namakner*, 10.

108 For this first exchange of letters between Toramanyan and Marr, writing back and forth about raising funds for the architect's work at Ani, see *ibid.*, 17–26. Also the later correspondence between the two is dominated by discussions about their financial situation, underscoring the precarity of Toramanyan's work life and the difficulties Marr had in securing funds.

109 "Dzer verjin nkari masin voch'inch' ch'em asum. Hianali ē ev dra masin ēli asel anhnar ē. Piti yergeri, bayts' yergogh ch'em. Piti sharakan mē horinei, bayts' banasteghts ch'em." *Ibid.*, 36–37.

110 Marina Dmitrieva, "Josef Strzygowski und Russland," in *Von Biala nach Wien. Josef Strzygowski und die Kunstwissenschaften. Akten der internationalen wissenschaftlichen Konferenzen zum 150. Geburtstag von Josef Strzygowski in Bielsko-Biala, 29.–31. März 2012*, ed. Piotr Otto Scholz and Magdalena Anna Długosz (Vienna: European University Press, 2015), 150–174; Liudmila G. Khrushkova, "Joseph Strzygowski, Joseph Wilpert and the Russian school of Byzantine Studies," *Cahiers archéologiques* 56 (2015): 173–189.

111 Josef Strzygowski, *Das Etschmiadzin-Evangeliar. Beiträge zur Geschichte der armenischen, ravenatischen und syro-ägyptischen Kunst* (Vienna: Verlag der Mechitharisten-Congregation, 1891).

established by a student of the Austrian professor, Levon Lisitsyan (1892–1921), who had come to study in Vienna from Tbilisi (via Munich and Moscow) and had already translated some of Toramanyan’s previous works from the Armenian.¹¹² Toramanyan gladly accepted and came to the Habsburg capital with a wealth of unpublished material. While Marr was trying to get the architect’s writings published in Russian journals, Toramanyan preferred to keep the materials together and was looking at a larger publication which is where Strzygowski came in and persuaded him that his own publication plans of what would become known as “The Architecture of the Armenians and Europe” was the right venue.¹¹³ Toramanyan shared his enormous archive of notes, drawings, and photographs with the art historian and was promised a reference to his pioneering contributions in the title of the forthcoming book.¹¹⁴ Later that same year, Strzygowski led an expedition of the Viennese department of art history via Tbilisi to Armenia (September 14–October 4, 1913), which primarily consisted of a visit to Ani, where the Austrian team was guided by Toramanyan. Marr was absent at the time and would meet Strzygowski in St. Petersburg the following year, but he had given orders to ensure the team from Vienna had full access to the site and could take as many photographs as they wanted.¹¹⁵

Including drawings, plans, and comparative material from Italy, Egypt, and Jordan, Strzygowski made ample use of visual materials in *Die Baukunst*, which

112 Friedrich Polleroß, “Der Strzygowski-Nachlass zur armenischen Architektur und sein historischer Kontext,” *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für vergleichende Kunstforschung in Wien* 75, nos. 1–2 (2023): 6; For letters from Toramanyan to Lisitsyan, dated 5 January 1912 and 2 March 1913, see Toramanyan, *Namakner*, 192–193, 208–210.

113 Christina Maranci, *Medieval Armenian Architecture. Constructions of Race and Nation* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 160.

114 “Im Uebrigen rechne ich mit Ihrer freundlichen Zusage, dass ich, was ich an Aufnahmen benötige, Ihrem Material entnehmen darf. Ich will ja keine Monographien, sondern eine zusammenfassende Orientierung geben. Wen[n] Sie Bauten finden, die vor dem Jahre 1000 liegen und die ich nicht kenne, so bin ich Ihnen für Grundriss, Ansicht und ein oder das andere Detail sehr dankbar. Mein Buch soll heissen: „Armenien als Kernland de[s] altchristlichen Gewölbebaues.“ Ergebnisse einer mit Unterstützung [sic!] des Ministeriums unternommenen Expedition unter Benutzung selbständiger Aufnahmen des Architekten Toramanyan bearbeitet von Strzygowski, Lissizian und Glück.” Draft letter from Strzygowski to Toramanyan, April 5, 1914, Archive of the Department of History of Art at University of Vienna, Nachlass Strzygowski, Karton 1, Mappe 8.

115 Strzygowski, *Die Baukunst*, 1:21. At the same time, Marr seems to have been unhappy with the possibility of Toramanyan potentially sending Strzygowski the same photos that he received from the architect—at least a letter from Toramanyan to Marr (January 7, 1914) has the former categorically denying that this would have happened. See Toramanyan, *Namakner*, 229–230.

ultimately featured 828 illustrations across its two volumes. Reprinted photographs of architectural monuments from the wider Caucasus region constituted a good half (437) of it and two hundred were taken by Strzygowski himself (if the unattributed photos were indeed taken by him) which means that despite describing the photographic production during the 1913 expedition as the foundation of the book,¹¹⁶ he also heavily relied on the photographic works of others. Upon his return to Vienna, he had immediately asked Toramanyan to provide him with additional photos that he had not been able to take.¹¹⁷ Beyond the rich materials that Toramanyan had brought or sent him (with a total of eighty-nine reprinted photographs taken by and attributed to the Armenian architect, see Figure 7.3 for an exemplary image), he also included photos by Kurkdjian, Lynch, Ermakov—whose works he described as artistically inadequate¹¹⁸ but still integrated sixty-two photos into his book—, Arshak Nahapetyan (unverified biographical data), whose two-volume album “Caucasian Views” was an important source of information for the art historian, and several others. However seminal the obtained materials were for the writing of Strzygowski’s book, by the time *Die Baukunst* was published in 1918, he had forgotten his promise to prominently include Toramanyan in the title, and all that was left was a recognition of the architect’s contribution in the introduction.¹¹⁹

116 Strzygowski, *Die Baukunst*, 1:12.

117 “Liber [sic!] Herr Toramanyan! Ich freue mich herzlich, dass Sie mir wenigstens die Grundrisse der Bauten von Artik gesandt haben. Nun fehlen noch die Photographien. Mir liegt vor allem [auch] an der kleinen Kirche, von der ich leider nicht eine einzige Aufnahme habe und die mir doch um der spitzbogigen Hufeisenform von ausserordentlichem Wert wäre. Bitte falls Sie durch Artik kommen und unsere Aufnahme[n] misslungen sein sollten—füllen Sie diese Lücke noch aus.” Draft letter from Strzygowski to Toramanyan, April 5, 1914, Archive of the Department of History of Art at University of Vienna, Nachlass Strzygowski, Karton 1, Mappe 8.

118 Strzygowski, *Die Baukunst*, 1:12. “Ich ziehe öfter die künstlerisch bisweilen leider recht unzulänglichen Aufnahmen der Firma Jermakow in Tiflis heran [...]”

119 All names other than Strzygowski’s were relegated to a reference on the inner title page within the new baroque title “Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa. Ergebnisse einer vom Kunsthistorischen Institute der Universität Wien 1913 durchgeführten Forschungsreise. Planmäßig bearbeitet von Josef Strzygowski unter Benützung von Aufnahmen des Architekten Thoros Thoramanyan. Mitarbeiter: Assistent Dr. Heinrich Glück und Leon Lissitzian.” Toramanyan was increasingly disappointed by Strzygowski which, after at first being annoyed why it took him so long to send him a copy of *Die Baukunst* (in a letter from Toramanyan to Kalantarian from November 13, 1919, T’oramanyan, *Namakner*, 261–262), turned into outspoken bitterness by the 1930s (see Maranci, *Medieval Armenian Architecture*, 78).



Figure 7.3. Toros Toramanyan. “Ani, Church of St. Gregory (Abghamrents). View from the Southeast.” Strzygowski, *Die Baukunst*, 1:127, fig. 130.

The integration of Toramanyan’s materials as part of Marr’s exploration of a supranational Ani but also of photographs that had been produced within a framework of a nationalized view of cultural heritage did, however, not hinder Strzygowski from inscribing an entirely different narrative into the

historiography of Armenian architecture. Contrary to the imperialist Marr, the Austrian explored Armenian architecture with a focus on racial and ethnic purity against a threat of decay caused by foreign invasion.¹²⁰ In his highly problematic because overtly racist analysis of architectural history,¹²¹ Strzygowski made use of photography to underscore a claim that architectural forms had had Iranian origins before migrating westward toward Europe via Armenia.¹²² Toramanyan was deprived of an adequate appreciation of his contribution to Strzygowski's work, not to speak of a monetary compensation for his materials, and furthermore lost the majority of his own Ani archives in the turmoil of the evacuation of the site after 1917 but the architect remains the central node of exchange between to polarizing visions of archaeological history. His works were central to Marr's development of a transcultural and imperialist vision of Ani, but they were of no lesser importance to Strzygowski's nationalist interpretation based on racial hierarchies. These fundamentally different approaches to write about the history of Ani were in wide sections based on an overlapping corpus of photographs, which eventually suggests an inherent autonomy of the photographic object that could be re-framed for either orientation.

120 Ibid., 27. The publication of Toramanyan's materials in Strzygowski's book was received enthusiastically in parts of the Armenian press where one could read how "the cannons of Toramanyan" were "bearing the genius of Armenian people to conquer the respect, love, sympathy, and admiration of Europe." Cited in Pravilova, "Contested Ruins," 92.

121 As the antisemitic nationalist that he was, Strzygowski is certainly one of the most controversial figures in art history. His theories have been criticized ever since they were published, for instance by Marr who would call them "anachronistic" and furthermore rejected the Austrian's claim to an inherent "Armenianness" in architecture already more than a decade before *Die Baukunst* was published. See Marr, *O raskopkakh*, 2-3. Suzanne Marchand (*The Rhetoric of Artifacts*, 110) has thereby shown how Strzygowski's work was embedded in then new "equally positivistic and *völkisch*, patterns of collecting artifacts." His work is in its early critique of Eurocentrism in art history and its pioneering approach to Armenian architectural history however also meritorious, thereby deserving a more complex analysis that has for the last twenty-five years been spearheaded by the American Armenian art historian Christina Maranci.

122 Strzygowski, *Die Baukunst*, 1:5-6. "Denn wenn ich recht sehe, hat die Art des Bauens von der in diesem Werke zu handeln sein wird, d. h. die Kuppel über dem Quadrat als herrschender Baumitte sich von Armenien aus über das Mittelmeer und Europa verbreitet [. . .] Wenn sich überdies herausstellte, daß die Bauformen, die ich im vorliegenden Werke vorführe, im letzten Ende vielleicht ostarischen Ursprunges sind? [. . .] Wir werden dann, wie von Mesopotamien aus auf die Spur unseres mittelalterlichen Gewölbebaues, so von Armenien aus auf den Ursprung der wichtigsten Gattung des abendländischen Kuppelbaues seit der Renaissance kommen."

A Traveling Museum and National Sentiments. Photography between Temir-Khan Shura and Persepolis

Ani became the biggest archaeological draw in the region with some 2,300 people flocking to Ani every year between 1904 and 1914¹²³ who would sometimes march as far as one hundred kilometers on foot to reach the promised land.¹²⁴ The visitors were often met by Marr himself, who would show them around the site and conclude the tour by guiding them through a small museum where some of Ani's most important artefacts were on display. Marr's approach of developing the medieval Armenian capital into a museum¹²⁵ was a key element in the success of the Ani excavations, as it made regional history tangible to a wider audience. Furthermore, Marr and his team frequently struggled with the underfunding of their campaign, for which they were interested in monetizing their work. Their entrepreneurial spirit found manifestation in printing and selling booklets and picture postcards of Ani, which led to another important source of the production and circulation of archaeological images from the region.¹²⁶

The idea to publicize archaeological research in the Caucasus was, however, not confined to Marr or Ani but had taken root in the mid-nineteenth century when the Imperial Russian Geographical Society had established a branch in Tbilisi. Its members began collecting artifacts and opened the first museum in the region in 1852. It would later become the basis for Gustav Radde's "Caucasus Museum." The history of these first collections toward the institutionalization of museology in Georgia was accompanied by an intellectual struggle between a projection of the political unity of the region in the second half of the nineteenth century onto ancient to medieval artistic production¹²⁷ on the one hand and an

123 Pravilova, "Contested Ruins," 70.

124 Ibid., 93.

125 Marr had always considered the site of Ani itself to be "a museum of Armenian art," even before he designated an actual building to become a museum within Ani and equipped it with artefacts found during the excavation. See Marr, "Ani, stolitsa drevnei Armenii," 198.

126 Pravilova, "Contested Ruins," 85. For examples of these picture postcards printed between ca. 1910 and 1915 see Steven Sim, "Vintage Picture Postcards Showing the Ruins of Ani," VirtualANI, last modified October 26, 2004, http://virtualani.org/postcards/postcards_museum_of_an.htm.

127 Alžběta Filipová, "For Beauty, Nation and God. The Creation of the Georgian National Treasure," *Venezia Arti* 27 (2018): 43. Filipová explores this against the backdrop of the 1875 book *Kavkaz v drevnikh pamiatnikakh khristianstva* (The Caucasus in Ancient Monuments of Christianity) by Dimitri Bakradze (1826–1890), in which the Georgian historian places the described Armenian and Georgian monuments in strict alphabetical rather than chronological, regional or thematic order. She furthermore concludes that "Bakradze's

increasing national awakening with a heightened interest in Georgia's cultural heritage on the other. The reception of antiquity and the search of ties between Georgian history and ancient cultures, thereby, was a central theme in the ambition of the Georgian intelligentsia to represent Georgia as an old state with long-lasting cultural traditions which was not at last supposed to counter the Russian imperial claim of having civilized the Caucasus.¹²⁸ Organizations such as the Society of Amateurs of Caucasus Archaeology (Obshchestvo liubitelei Kavkazskoi arkheologii, 1873) or the Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians (kartvelta shoris ts'era-k'itkhvis gamavrtselebeli sazoga-doeba, 1879) were founded as a result of these accelerating interests while the latter would play a particularly important role in the development of a Georgian national movement.¹²⁹

The aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 likewise affected Georgian and contemporary appropriations of medieval history as it did for Armenians (with Ani at the center of attention), since formerly Ottoman territories, that had been at the center of Georgian irredentist fantasies for centuries, were now “reunified” with the rest of the country within the Russian Empire. Paul Manning has shown how these major political changes happened at the same time as contemporary archaeological discourse's facilitation of the perception of old Georgian churches (in opposition to new Russian ones) as historical monuments as traces or remnants of a Georgian nation—monuments which eventually “could be assigned, once and for all, on the basis of original authorship, to exactly one such transcendent historical national unity.”¹³⁰ Within this discourse, he argues, these monuments were appropriated on a predominantly textual rather than visual basis, with works such as Bakradze's “Archaeological Journey through Guria and Adjara”¹³¹ representative of this textualizing approach to monuments.¹³²

major archaeological publications [. . .] reflect Russian colonial policy to a certain extent, because they were sponsored by the state, under the auspices of the Imperial Archaeological Commission, in a period of thorough russification.”

128 Ketevan Gurchiani, “Classical Reception in Georgia. An Introduction,” in *A Handbook to Classical Reception in Eastern and Central Europe*, ed. Zara Martirosova Torlone, Dana LaCourse Munteanu, and Dorota Dutsch (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 541–547.

129 For a discussion of the importance of the latter society, see Oliver Reisner, “Die georgische Alphabetisierungsgesellschaft. Schule nationaler Eliten und Vergemeinschaftung,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 48 (2000): 66–89.

130 Paul Manning, “Materiality and Cosmology: Old Georgian Churches as Sacred, Sublime, and Secular Objects,” *Ethnos* 73, no. 3 (2008): 338–340.

131 Dmitrii Bakradze, *Arkheologicheskoe puteshestvie po Gurii i Adchare* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Akademia Nauk, 1878).

132 Manning, “Materiality and Cosmology,” 341.

Bakradze and his contemporaries were simultaneously aware of photography's potential for documenting their objects of interest. Outlining the aims of the newly founded Society of Amateurs of Caucasus Archaeology in 1873, he determined that photographing buildings was an indispensable tool in preserving ancient remains.¹³³ The life and work of Aleksandre Roinashvili (1846–1898) connected all these dots and brought together the interest in ancient and medieval monuments across the entire region, a developing national movement among the Georgian elite,¹³⁴ the museumification of archaeological research, and the advent of photography in archaeology. Born to a peasant family in Dusheti, Roinashvili briefly attended the military school in Ananuri but eventually decided to move to Tbilisi in search of vocational training.¹³⁵ At the age of fourteen, he became the apprentice of the icon painter Fëdor Khlamov, who was also a pioneer in the sector of photography. By 1865, the aspiring Roinashvili had learnt the craft and obtained the necessary equipment and materials, which allowed him to open his own photo studio in the regional capital. This move retrospectively often earned him the designation of the “first Georgian photographer,” but in a cosmopolitan Tbilisi, it was, however, less his ethnic background than his ambitious work at the intersection of archaeology, museology, and photography that made him stand out within the national movement in late nineteenth-century Georgia.

Roinashvili's oeuvre was manifold and covered everything from ethnographic type photography and portrait photography of seemingly every Georgian public figure of the time to the reproduction of artworks and archaeological artefacts. He became an avid collector of the latter and extended his horizon well beyond the city limits of Tbilisi. In 1880, he moved to Telavi to produce a photographic compendium of Kakhetian antiquities, only to move to Temir-Khan-Shura (today's Buinaksk) a year later, where he remained for eight years.¹³⁶ There, in Dagestan, he worked on his personal collection of archaeological artefacts that he planned to transform into a groundbreaking museum project—the “Travelling Caucasus Museum” (Peredvizhnoi Kavkazskii muzei / kavkasiuri

133 Cited in Gela Gamkrelidze, *Researches in Iberia-Colchology (History and Archaeology of Ancient Georgia)* (Tbilisi: Georgian National Museum, 2012), 11.

134 This national movement eventually translated also into a transition of Bakradze's all-Caucasus research framework toward an exclusive emphasis on Georgian ancient and medieval heritage as evident in the work of Ekvtime Taqaishvili (1863–1953). See Filipová, “For Beauty, Nation and God,” 43–45.

135 For biographical information on Roinashvili see Tabize, *alek'sandre roinašvili*, as well as his obituary in *Kavkaz* 125, May 13, 1898, 2.

136 Tabize, *alek'sandre roinašvili*, 29–30.

modzravi muzeumi). He was thereby motivated by an aversion to foreign travelers buying and shipping off artifacts, which, in his view, belonged to the Georgian people—a motivation not unlike Marr’s concerns about “grave-robbing” foreign excavations in the Caucasus. The collector and photographer frequently exchanged ideas with Bakradze, whom he informed in December 1885 that he had already collected almost six hundred objects, which he planned to exhibit on the road in the near future.¹³⁷ For both the preparation and implementation of his traveling museum, Roinashvili made ample use of photography to achieve his goals. He attached some to his letters when asking for support, while also producing photo albums with views of Caucasus antiquities that he provided to scholars such as Dmitrii N. Anuchin to raise awareness for his work in scholarly circles. When Roinashvili would finally take his “Travelling Caucasus Museum” to Astrakhan’, Saratov, Samara, Moscow, and St. Petersburg in 1887–1888, his exhibit not only included a broad variety of over eight hundred¹³⁸ artefacts from coins to arms and silk but also boasted more than one thousand stereoscopic images that were ready to be viewed by as many as twenty-two visitors at the same time.¹³⁹ Roinashvili’s journey received considerable attention in the press in Tbilisi and St. Petersburg alike with the former’s daily *Iveria* reporting from the start of the undertaking in Astrakhan and praising him for his efforts¹⁴⁰ while the imperial capital’s newspaper *Peterburgskii Listok* described the owner of the museum as a photographer by profession who “little by little had developed a passion for archaeology” while roaming the Caucasus for interesting artifacts.¹⁴¹ According to this article, Roinashvili estimated his photo collection in the “tens of thousands,” which seems exaggerated by the time it was written (1888) but is a testament to the prominent role of visual materials in his archaeological approach. Furthermore, Roinashvili shared with Marr a constant concern of not having enough funds to continue his work, for which the photographer

137 *Ibid.*, 32–33.

138 Aleksandr[e] S. Roinov [Roinashvili], *Kratkii katalog Peredvizhnago Kavkazskago muzeia* (Saratov: Saratovskii Listok, 1887).

139 Tabiže, *alek’sandre roinašvili*, 48–56.

140 “dasasrul, ar šegvizlian ara vst’k’vat’, rom didis k’ebisa da pativis c’emis ġirsia b-ni roinašvili asetis mxneobisa da gamrjelobisit’vis. kidev vitqvīt rom scored.” N. N. 1887. “kavkasiis arxeologiuri da istoriuli muzei a. roinašvilisa astraxanši,” *Iveria* 198, September 24, 1887, 2. The article was probably written by the newspaper’s founder and editor Prince Ilia Chavchavadze (1837–1907) himself, a key figure in the development of the Georgian national movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

141 “[...] g. Roinov malo po malu pristrastilsia k arkheologii i nachal priobretat’ vsiokia drevnosti i zamechatel’nyia izdeliia kakkia emu popadalis!” N. N. 1888. “Kavkazskii Muzei,” *Peterburgskii Listok* 19, January 20, 1888, 2.

occasionally had to sell one of his artefacts to keep going. He, however, always took a photograph of the object in question and added the image to his archive, which remained at the center of his ambition to create a visual heritage of the Georgian nation.

Roinashvili returned to Temir-Khan-Shura before moving back to Tbilisi with a plan that had been on his mind throughout the process of establishing his collection, that is, to put it on a long term basis in form of a settled museum which was supposed to house the many objects he had collected and the photographs he had taken over the past twenty-five years. He quickly reintegrated himself within the Georgian elites of the city, opened another photo studio, became a central figure in the establishment of the Tbilisi Society of Amateur Photographers,¹⁴² and eventually founded a photo school, which became the place to go for anyone interested in learning the craft of photography in late nineteenth-century Tbilisi.¹⁴³ He encouraged wealthy philanthropists to get involved in establishing a museum for the Georgian nation. In a letter published in the newspaper *Iveria* in 1895,¹⁴⁴ he claimed that “in the Russian Empire, almost no nation can be found that does not have its own national house or museum. Finns, Little Russians,¹⁴⁵ Poles, and even Kazan’ Tatars have their own secular museum.” He considered the time to have come and accused his compatriots of being idle and not allowing the nation’s future generation to see its past despite having the advantage of a glorious history.¹⁴⁶ Six years had passed since he had returned to the city but, still, plans to establish a national museum had been in vain. He therefore bought another (third) photo studio, where he established what he still thought of as a temporary historical museum based on his traveling exhibition—an institution that was often visited by foreign tourists who would buy photos of ruins and artefacts from the Caucasus region from Roinashvili.¹⁴⁷

Before embarking on his journey across the cities of Russia, he had drawn up a will in which he left all his property, including his photographs and archaeological

142 Žanzava, *tp’ilis is moqvarul p’otograp’t’a sazogadoeva*, 10–12.

143 Tabiže, *alek’sandre roinašvili*, 57–58.

144 “rusetis imperiaši t’it’k’mis arc’ ert’i eri ar moipoveba, rom sakut’ari erovnuli saxli, anu muzeumi ar hk’ondes. p’inlandielebs, mc’ire rusebs, polonelt’ da qazanel t’at’rebsac’ki ak’vt’ sakutari saero muzeumi.” Alek’sandre Roinašvili, “saero muzeumis saxlis šesaxeb,” *Iveria* 256, November 26, 1895, 3–4.

145 Roinashvili’s use of “mc’ire rusebs” here is the equivalent to the contemporary *malorossiiane*, an imperialist designation for Ukrainians.

146 Ibid. “c’ven-ki, romelt’ac’ upiratesoba gvakvs carsulis didebit’a, xelovnebit’a, mcignobrobit’a, mxitvrobot’, azradac’ ar mogvd is davaarsot’ amgvvari erovnuli saxli, rat’a dainaxos c’venma momavalma t’aobam t’avis i carsuli, t’avis i dideba.”

147 Tabiže, *alek’sandre roinašvili*, 87–88.

artefacts, to the Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians¹⁴⁸—a will that was respected upon his unexpected death in 1898. His wish for his collection of artifacts to help establish the foundation of a united national museum was, however, unfulfilled. In 1905, his photographic estate was furthermore bought by fellow-photographer Dmitrii Ermakov, whose work encompassed all genres and parts of the Caucasus region and continued the tradition of archaeological photography.¹⁴⁹ Today, Roinashvili's collection is scattered across different museum funds in Georgia.

The acquisition of Roinashvili's collection by Ermakov is one more example that speaks volumes for the latter's exceptional position in the development of the photography sector in the fin de siècle Caucasus. Not only does his extensive oeuvre, covering vast swaths of the region, bring attention to Ermakov to this day, but his studio also became a vital point of international exchange, as travelers stopped by to purchase the newest images, while other notable local photographers started their careers as his students. The most prominent name to have come from the ranks as Ermakov's students is Antoin Sevruguin (c. 1851–1933) whose life and work are of a remarkable complexity that mirror the roles that the Iranian-Russian borderlands, transimperial archaeological interests, and the relationship between the two empires played in the development of photography in

148 Ibid., 40.

149 The incorporation of Roinashvili's photographs into the archive of Ermakov and the profusion of reproduced photographs by the latter has led to the occasional erroneous authorship assignment—a common problem with Ermakov's catalogue and albums containing a substantial amount of images originally made by other photographers. Many of Roinashvili's photographs are however signed with his russified name "A. S. Roinov" across the frame. Also beyond his death, contemporary archaeologists such as T'aqaišvili continued to make ample use of Roinashvili's and Ermakov's photos of ancient ruins and artefacts for their own work on a Georgian national heritage. See, for instance, Ekvtime Takaishvili, *Arkheologicheskiia èskkursii. Razyskaniia i zametki*, vol. 1 (Tbilisi: Tipografia K.P. Kozlovskago, 1905), 68; Ivan[e] Dzhavakhov [Javakhishvili] 1915. "Terminy iskusstv" i glavneishiiia svedeniia o pamiatnikakh iskusstva i material'noi kultury v drevnegruzinskoï literature," *Khristianskii vostok. Seriiia posviashchennaia izucheniiu khristianskoï kul'tury narodov Azii i Afriki* 3, no. 1 (1915): 27–29. Ermakov also joined the archaeologist on an expedition to Svaneti to survey the region's antiquities but it seems that he arrived ill-prepared as he, despite having been warned about the churches being very small and the necessity to bring a narrow-angle lens, did not bring an adequate equipment to take the desired photographs of inside frescoes which—alongside other technical mishaps—made Takaishvili call the entire edition flawed in many ways ("amrigad es gamoc'ema mraval mxriv naklulovania." Ek'vt'ime T'aqaišvili, *ark'eologiuri ek'spedic'ia le'xum-svanetši 1910 cels* (Paris: N.p., 1937), 4–6, 351). For more information on the transfer of Roinashvili's photographs into the archive of Ermakov see Lili Mamac'ašvili, "alek'sandre roinašvilis šemok'medeba da misi roli samuzeumo-saark'ivo memkvidreobis šek'mnaši" (PhD diss., Shota Rustaveli Theatre and Film Georgia State University, 2018), 74–82.

the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The complex biography¹⁵⁰ of the Armenian-Iranian Sevruguin who moved from Tbilisi to Tabriz and further on to Tehran, his city of birth, to open photo studios with his brothers and at some point throughout the 1890s as “a nationalist and political statement” dropped a photographic imprint saying he was a “Russian photographer” (*‘akkas-e rus*) in favor of the honorific title “Khan” bestowed upon him by the shah,¹⁵¹ personally represents what Nile Green has described as how “the Caucasian borderlands of imperial Russia formed the transmission zone for photography in Iran.”¹⁵² His teacher might have had a word in helping Sevruguin establish the right contacts in Tehran, as Ermakov himself had worked for Nasr-ed-Din Shah as court photographer and had also briefly taught photography at the Dār al-Fonun.¹⁵³

Within Sevruguin’s rich oeuvre, which Ali Behdad argues “seems to have photographed almost everyone and everything in Iran over his fifty-year career”¹⁵⁴ and that Staci Scheiwiller refers to by writing that “if there were an authorial gaze and vision that helped define Qajar Iran, it was through Sevruguin’s eyes,”¹⁵⁵ a key element was the documentation of the country’s pre-Islamic and Islamic history. As thousands of his glass plates were destroyed by a fire in 1908 when his studio was attacked by anti-constitutionalists,¹⁵⁶ it is difficult to determine the relative numbers of the archaeological photographs in his entire corpus. However, the surviving images scattered across collections worldwide provide insight into the nature of Sevruguin’s work at archaeological sites in Iran.¹⁵⁷ Sevruguin was far from the first to photographically document the archaeological sites in Iran, as both court and foreigners had set their eyes and cameras on the famous ruins of Persepolis already in the 1850s¹⁵⁸ but the impact of what scholar have described as “some of the most visually striking photographs of

150 On the many labels, identities, and interpretations that have come from studying Sevruguin’s life and work, see Staci G. Scheiwiller, “Relocating Sevruguin.”

151 *Ibid.*, 145.

152 Nile Green, “New Histories for the Age of Speed: The Archaeological-Architectural Past in Interwar Afghanistan and Iran,” *Iranian Studies* 54, nos. 3–4 (2021): 359.

153 Scheiwiller, “Relocating Sevruguin,” 151. For more on Ermakov’s work in Iran, see the contributions and images in Ketī Trapaidze and Michael Vickers, eds., *Dimitri Ermakov in Iran* (Tbilisi: Kolori, 2019).

154 Behdad, *Camera Orientalis*, 78.

155 Scheiwiller, “Relocating Sevruguin,” 145.

156 *Ibid.*, 153–154.

157 For a brief summary, see Tasha Vorderstrasse, “Preserving Iranian Material Culture through Photography,” in *Antoin Sevruguin: Past and Present*, ed. Tasha Vorderstrasse (Chicago, IL: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2020), 31–51.

158 See Bonetti and Alberto Prandi, “Italian Photographers in Iran,” 18–23; Tahmasbpour, “Photography in Iran,” 7.

Persia's ancient monuments"¹⁵⁹ and "a primary photographic source for scholars of the pre-Islamic monuments of Iran"¹⁶⁰ is unrivalled for the imperial age with numerous scholarly publications reprinting his images, credited or not, and his overall "dominance over the market that is attested by the sheer number of his photographs that survive in albums assembled by Iranians and Non-Iranians alike," as Mira Xenia Schwerda summarizes it.¹⁶¹

By the early twentieth century, these photographs were produced in a complex era where the years of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution were not only a key episode for modern Iranian history in general but also for the history of Iranian photography,¹⁶² while they could build on decades of a co-existing late nineteenth-century re-imagining of Iran's past by the Qajar intelligentsia on the one hand,¹⁶³ and react to transimperial expressions of power through archaeological knowledge production and interpretation, not at last by the Russian Empire, on the other. While the linguistic choices on the imprints of photographers occasionally lead to speculation about their identities and affiliations,¹⁶⁴ Scheiwiller asks whether the nationalist sentiments of the revolution might have been the spark or reason for Sevruguin to embrace an Iranian identity and thus drop the title "Russian photographer" on his photos.¹⁶⁵ This element is just one within the many interrelated networks of political, cultural, commercial, and aesthetic dimensions which informed Sevruguin's and his contemporaries and made it attractive to put forward a visual take on archaeological monuments in Iran—takes among which Sevruguin's stood out by integrating human figures and thereby establishing a modern, photographic connection of early twentieth century Iran to the country's distant yet presentable and glorious past (see fig. 7.4).¹⁶⁶ On the other

159 Judith A. Lerner, "A Case of Synchronicity: Photography and Qajar Iran's Discovery of Its Ancient Past," in *The Eye of the Shah. Qajar Court Photography and the Persian Past*, ed. Jennifer Y. Chi (New York: Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, 2015), 158–177, 166.

160 Bohrer, *Photography and Archaeology*, 78.

161 Schwerda, *Iranian Photography*, 89.

162 See, for instance, Helbig, "From Narrating History to Constructing Memory."

163 Potts, "Pre-Modern Globalization," 928–930.

164 See Tasha Vorderstrasse, "To be or not to be an Armenian: (Re-)Identification and Assimilation of Armenian Photographers in the Qajar, Russian, and Ottoman Empires," in *Antoin Sevruguin: Past and Present*, ed. Tasha Vorderstrasse (Chicago, IL: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2020), 65–75, 70–73. That the matter of identities, especially with parallel Iranian and Armenian ones, is fairly complex has been discussed by Hourii Berberian, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1911* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 8–10.

165 Scheiwiller, "Relocating Sevruguin," 164–165.

166 On Sevruguin's human element in landscapes and ruins, see also Silvana di Paolo, "Images of Ruins as Metaphorical Places of Transformation. The Case of Persepolis," in *Receptions of the Ancient Near East in Popular Culture and Beyond*, ed. Lorenzo Verderame and Agnès Garcia-Ventura (Atlanta, GA: Lockwood Press, 2020), 49–61, 58.

hand, Sevruguin for instance participated in excursions led by Western European scholars such as art historian Friedrich Sarre (1865–1945) and archaeologist Ernst Herzfeld (1879–1948) from Germany who would make extensive use but not credit the work of the photographer¹⁶⁷ and who would bring their own vision into the field—a vision that the businessman Sevruguin knew how to cater. Consequently, the significant corpus of images taken at the country’s archaeological sites reflects the general ambivalence of photography in Qajar Iran, between being informed by colonial power relations on the one hand and the awakening of national sentiments toward an empowering self-representation on the other.



Figure 7.4. Antoin Sevruguin. “Persepolis. Entrance.” Smithsonian.

167 Friedrich Sarre and Ernst Herzfeld, *Iranische Felsreliefs. Aufnahmen und Untersuchungen von Denkmälern aus alt- und mittelpersischer Zeit* (Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, 1910). See also Behdad, *Camera Orientalis*, 92.

Conclusions

Roinashvili's work and life show the deep intertwinement of archaeology, nationalism, and photography in the late nineteenth-century Caucasus that informed the production and circulation of images of historical artefacts and ruins. As much as his studio had become a venue for exchanging ideas on the future of the Georgian national movement, his work toward the establishment of a Georgian National Museum, as well as the early decision that the society was the right circle to continue his cause, provided the background for his prolific photographic oeuvre. The approach by Roinashvili toward visuality in archaeology shows how photography was understood as both a documentary and educational tool that was supposed to bridge a gap between ancient heritage and a contemporary audience while also working the interplay between cultural memory and nationalism. His involvement in the formation of a Georgian national movement and the belief that only photography would preserve, protect, and exhibit cultural heritage correlates with the visual appropriation of Armenian antiquity in the works of contemporary photographers who equally made use of ruins as metaphors of social and spatial transformations in their visual take on landscapes and artefacts as representations of an Armenian identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The varying visions of Armenian ruins in the works of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century photographers such as Ohannes Kurkdjian, Mateos Papazyants, Aram Vruyr, and Toros Toramanian, and the integration of their photographs into the scholarly oeuvre of archaeologists or art historians like Nikolai Marr and Josef Strzygowski demonstrate the complexity of archaeological photography when it comes to questions of belonging, identity, and representation. These images demonstrate how visual records served not merely as scientific documentation, extending to the preservation of cultural heritage, but were also understood as a medium ready to convey emotional narratives within an intimate relationship between visual culture, archaeological research, and national identities and sentiments. Especially the produced photographs of Ani, one of the region's most important medieval cultural sites, and their usage were informed by different visions of antiquity which oscillated between a Western orientalist gaze, an early critique of Eurocentrism in contemporary art history, the idea of a supranational cultural unity as postulated by Russian orientologists, and the integration of architecture and landscape into visions of national identities.

Conclusions: Caucasus Connected

By the time the age of empires in the Caucasus ended after World War I, photography had firmly established itself as a mass medium of circulation and local production around the globe. In an era marked by a revolution in communications and mobility, the world had become a much smaller place, drawing unprecedented attention to images from regions once considered peripheral, like the Caucasus. Factors such as the exploitation of its oil springs or the alpinist conquest of its peaks subsequently thrust the region into the global spotlight. Photography was pivotal in the revolution of communications and evolved through global networks of exchange rather than national ones. As one facet of cultural negotiation and adoption processes, pictorial practices both incorporated innovations from abroad and exported locally amalgamated visions.

Every photo produced stems from extensive conceptual and practical networks that underpin its production, circulation, and reception. Through the examination of several exemplary networks, *Camera Caucasica* explores the intricate interplay between imperialism, modes of globalization, vernacular traditions, and sociohistorical questions of the long nineteenth century that influenced the development of photography in the Caucasus region. The photographs discussed throughout this book have therefore been considered as part of a much larger visual corpus that can be put in dialogue with transregional or even global developments rather than as an isolated individual photographer's singular efforts. The first images taken in the Caucasus were already informed by a complex network of cultural imperialism, economic interests, technological possibilities, and international scientific exchange. The continuous development of photographic technology from the 1830s until the 1910s allowed photographers a new mobility, which, in combination with smaller cameras, less knowledge needed to operate them, and sinking costs contributed to the increasing social permeability of the medium and the ease of taking spontaneous—sometimes even hidden—photos outside a studio. The genre-specific logics of visual outlets, such as the picture postcard and the photo album with their own dynamics in pictorial practices, influenced the kinds of images produced to contribute to viscourses of social, religious, imperial, regional, local,

and ethnic representation. Religious dogmata and related traditional pictorial traditions influenced how different groups initially approached photography, shaping their acceptance or skepticism, which in turn affected their participation or absence in early photography. Notions of industrial progress and nature, in relation to mobility and sport, established a visual language between a railway vision and an alpine sublime for the Caucasus, which emerged through an exchange with global expressions of modernity, whereas the manifold photographs of archaeological sites in the region resulted from parallel discourses on Orientalism and an early critique of Eurocentric archaeology and art history, as well as ideas about supranational cultural unity colliding with visions of national identities that drew upon iconographies of architecture and landscapes. Thus, as objects of historical analysis, photographs should always be considered within the context of the networks of political, cultural, aesthetic, social, discursive, and economic relations that constitute the foundation of their production, circulation, and reception.

A key factor in the assemblage of all involved elements in any photographic network under investigation is the underlying quest for interpretational sovereignty through representation and self-representation. It affects the choice of themes and motives that end up being depicted in the images and defines the narrative framing, undermining the autonomy of the photographic object. As photography remained expensive until late in the long nineteenth century, processes of representation and self-representation were thereby often dependent on mediators who sought to perpetuate and consolidate the visions of a ruling elite and were thereby connected to authorities interested in shaping or transforming the meaning of discourses. The spatial visions of the transimperial Caucasus were therefore shaped by emerging imagery that developed through state actors discovering photography as a suitable tool to portray power, rule, and order. Through the continuous exchange with Western European innovation in photographic technology and the accompanying dissemination of pictorial practices ready for local amalgamation, the notion of (political) modernity, as it was thought and postulated as a phenomenon in European enlightenment throughout the nineteenth century,¹ translated into visions of empire, identity, and belonging coming from all sides and within the Caucasus region. Ideas of a *mission civilisatrice*, concepts of typicality and

1 On “the phenomenon of ‘political modernity’—namely the rule by modern institutions of the state, bureaucracy, and capitalist enterprise” and its global heritage, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 3–6.

“variety in unity,” all-imperial surveys and the growth of the public domain, and imaginations of space and landscape had varying influences on *what* was depicted *how* in photographic projects that answered to comparable calls of empires using photography as a tool to translate political power into visual representation. Amidst the agency of elite mediators, spatial visions increasingly offered subversive potential as national movements conflicted with all-imperial ideas. In contrast, the gradual lowering of costs allowed other groups and classes to participate in the production and consumption market of images. Such political and social considerations were factors in the development of the (self-)representation of a region like the Caucasus when, by the late nineteenth century, adventurers flocking to the mountains sought to express their imaginary geographies through photographic images or local individuals and families readily embraced the medium to inscribe a personalized self-assertion into imaginations of (lost) homelands with lasting effects also beyond imperial rule in the region.² The dynamics and fluidity of spatial representation through photography also correlated with varying appropriations of history where ever-changing interpretations of the, often distant, past and visions for the future were visually assembled anew in favor of an imagined present in the Caucasus.

Imperialism was a central element in Russian politics, culture, and society, with long-lasting effects on the center-periphery relations within and beyond the borders and existence of the Russian Empire, even to this day. To connect nodes across imperial borders, both my background in imperial Russian history and the quantitative dominance of photography in the service of visions of the Russian Empire have essentially shaped my archive into a study that brings a new imperial history of Russia in dialogue with the parallels in photographic developments and imperialism in the adjacent Ottoman and Qajar empires, which ultimately contribute to a global history of photography and knowledge exchange. By exploring the use of the camera by key institutions of the modern Russian state, such as the military, the ministries of internal affairs, and railway transport, and academic organizations, it becomes clear how the photographic practices of Russians who represented the state’s peripheral provinces bore the burden of imperialist and colonialist thought—a conclusion that is certainly not only valid for the Caucasus but also applies to viscourses rooted in other parts of the Russian Empire. Learned societies conceptualized events, such as the 1867 All-Russian Exhibition in Moscow, in which photography played a

2 See, for instance, Armen T. Marsoobian, *Reimagining a Lost Armenian Home. The Dildilian Photography Collection* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017).

significant role in mentally appropriating the imperial provinces whereas the developing discipline of anthropology within Moscow's and St. Petersburg's academic institutions contributed to a discourse of colonial exoticization by essentializing ethnic groups from the Caucasus through their allegedly "typical" physiognomy or environments. Empires were, however, also interested in promoting an image of visual cohesion, supporting a claim to imperial integrity, which can be seen in state-planned or state-funded projects such as the Ottoman *Elbise-i Osmaniyye* or Sergei Prokudin-Gorskiĭ's take on the Caucasus in which representations of plurality within diversity were favored over individuality in typicality. The exploration of empire-driven photographic practices, however, is only the first step toward a decentered and decolonized history of photography that shifts its focus from Russian studio photography in Moscow and St. Petersburg to non-Russian practitioners in other parts of the empire. Similar points can be made about the emphasis in the fields of Ottoman and Iranian photographic history, in which the provinces bordering the Russian Empire mostly remain footnotes in otherwise rich scholarship, and the exchange of photographers across the borders offers potential for future research. Image production in the multiethnic cities of the southern borderlands was equally carried by developing local scenes such as in Baku with at least forty-five photographers/studios operating before 1917 and transimperial actors such as the brothers Rostomyan or Antoin Sevruguin who managed to bridge the visual cultures between the Caucasus and Tehran, whereas the premises of Dmitriĭ Ermakov became a hub of knowledge exchange for everyone interested in photography and traveling through the region. In the case of the Caucasus, such a transimperial approach, that transcends disciplinary boundaries in Russian imperial history, contributes to an understanding of the region as a distinct macro-region, one that writes its own histories worthy of exploration in a broader framework beyond the undoubtedly relevant intersections with Russian culture and politics.

The experience of imperial rule in the Caucasus not only intersects in the fields of Qajar, Ottoman, and Russian history, but also connects the history of the respective imperial projects to a global history of empires. Locally rooted histories can be situated within a global circulation of ideas, knowledge, practices, individuals, and groups, as well as commodities—elements that all come together in the history of photographic practices. On the one hand, a thriving local photography scene had emerged in the Caucasus by the end of the age of empires; but on the other hand, it was deeply entwined in global processes of photographic development. As inclusive as global histories of photography have become, Eastern Europe, and especially the wider Caucasus, has hardly

been part of such explorations,³ which does not do justice to the manifold global entanglements of the region's own photographic history. Examples such as the global construction of the sublime, as seen in the Italian alpinist Vittorio Sella's photographs of Caucasus summits and the Armenian photographer Ohannes Kurkdjian's images of Indonesian volcanoes, show how landscapes were reimagined within a global exchange of iconographies while a new quality of image circulation facilitated the wide-reaching reception of photographs from the Caucasus at international exhibitions and world's fairs. Internationally formed discourses on race and ethnographic "typicality," as well as the export of Western European and Russian Orientalism, put down roots in the (self-)representation of the region's population, often facilitated by the logics of commercial photography that flourished when business attracted foreign capital and a growing number of travelers, such as in fin de siècle Baku with its globally important oil sector.⁴ On a similar note, the role of the West cannot be neglected when exploring photographic practices in the Caucasus region, as it was the primary source of technological innovation in the field of photography and many photographers learned or refined their craft on trips to Western or Central Europe, underscoring their inclusion in networks of exchange and their cultural proximity to the empires out west. Ultimately, long nineteenth-century globalization in all its facets—with a new sense of interconnectedness, spanning from revolutions in communication and transportation, to the mobility and movement of individuals and peoples, industrialization, and the peak of imperialism, as well as to the circulation of knowledge, capital, and commodities across borders—shaped the development of photographic practices on a local level.

These global influences were met by vernacular traditions, which in combination ultimately translated into regional varieties of photographic practices. As much as the camera worked as an equalizer with the technological prerequisites mostly being equal and simultaneous around the world, the conception that it was also an allegedly objective device ready to mechanically produce

3 See, for instance, the contributions in Erina Duganne, Heather Diack, and Terri Weissman, *Global Photography. A Critical History* (London: Routledge, 2020); Sissy Helff and Stefanie Michels, eds., *Global Photographies. Memory—History—Archives* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2018).

4 On a comparable note, see how the development of commercial photography in Asia followed the steps of globetrotters along the ports of arrival for steamers in Carmen Pérez González, *From Istanbul to Yokohama. The Camera Meets Asia 1839–1900* (Cologne: Walther König, 2014), 27–47.

images beyond human prejudice was soon replaced by an understanding of how photographs were the result of complex and interwoven networks of (socio-)cultural traditions, (geo-)political developments, and economic processes—networks that were continuously and variously reassembled in every region of the world. In the wider Caucasus region of the nineteenth century, a history of photography therefore not only answers the call of universally practiced visual culture in the age of mechanical image production but also tells the story of local amalgamation where the question of different liturgical significance levels for the image among the various religious groups living in the region added to varying socio-economic preconditions and related access to chemicals, leading to the Armenian communities in urban centers in the Ottoman, Qajar, and Russian empires playing a significant role in the development of an early photography scene. National sentiments among Georgians and Armenians shaped how photography was utilized to visualize ancient monuments and thereby imagine both history and the present for minority non-Slavic communities in the Russian Empire, for which Aleksandre Roinashvili, for instance, conceptualized a “Travelling Caucasus Museum” firmly based on photography as a tool to survey regional antiquities. While not-yet-emigrated Kurkdjian sought to capture the emotional centrality of the ruins of Ani for his fellow Armenians, Mateos Papazyants’s survey of antiquities in the Eastern Armenian provinces under Russian rule mirrored his vision of an Armenian national identity encapsulated in historical monuments. Within their local specificity, these projects were again interrelated with an international discourse on photography and archaeology, underscoring how the interplay between a camera’s globally influential universalism, on the one hand, and its status as a device adaptable to local traditions and epistemologies, on the other, results in what comes closest to a conceptualization of vernacular photography. The *Camera Caucasica* is, therefore, best understood outside a binary of local and global or even Western visual traditions; rather, it is a historical product that built upon cultural exchange resulting in hybridized photographic practices that defy claims to an inherent essentializing uniqueness but find expression within a wide-ranging spectrum of themes, visions, and modes of representation stemming from a dynamic sociopolitical context.

The networks that produce this context consist of relations and connections between humans and nonhuman entities, including objects, machines, ideas, technologies, organizations, and geographical arrangements. Together, these actors influenced the emergence and evolution of photography in the Caucasus region, transforming it into a commodity by the early twentieth century. Human agency in photographic practices extends beyond the photographers

who printed their names on the back of images and their exchanges within the professional community, but it also includes the guides and porters who assisted the first alpinists in transporting their bulky photo equipment above five thousand meters, and the entrepreneurs who imported chemicals and lenses for local markets. The materiality of the camera itself and its underlying technology constitute central nodes of nonhuman agency, as they dictate or constrain what humans can effectively realize within the contemporary technological state of the art. The discovery and utilization of photosensitive chemicals paved the way for the first photographic images, and the growing understanding of the chemicals' inherent properties to react to light gradually allowed for more fields of application for photography. Like photographic practices elsewhere in the world, the first images taken in the Caucasus were of static objects, such as mountains around the spa towns in the North Caucasus, or translated into static human portraits, as the sitter for a daguerreotype had to sit still for a good amount of time (reducing from several minutes to about twenty seconds). Technological advancements such as the invention of more sensitive emulsions and faster shutters brought continuous change to photographic practices, as it became easier and more affordable to take photographs. However, environmental factors such as the availability of direct sunlight (which affected exposure times), and temperature, and humidity were beyond human control and remained an issue throughout the long nineteenth century, dictating how photographers such as Vittorio Sella had to plan their days in the field, set up their tripods, and use the interplay of light and shadow for the intended effect. Furthermore, the agency of landscapes and ideas of landscapes, between the imagined sublimity of the Caucasus summits and the barren landscapes of the eastern Anatolian plateaus, as well as natural or ancient man-made monuments, shaped how these images were conceptualized. The introduction of roll film cameras not only paved the way for an amateur photo culture, but it also allowed photographers to take spontaneous, sometimes even hidden, snapshots on the road, as foreign travelers such as the French Hugues Krafft or the German Carl Friedrich Lehmann-Haupt wrote of their visits to Baku or Tbilisi. While these technologies were designed by humans, their capabilities and limitations ultimately shaped what was thinkable and realizable in photography. All these nonhuman entities were not passive elements in photographic practices, but interacting with each other and with human intervention, actively produced the final photographic image.

While a global effort in knowledge production and exchange accompanied the development of photography, the resulting images have played a crucial role in structuring knowledge about regions worldwide, and the Caucasus is no

exception. From its inception and throughout the nineteenth century, rulers of the Russian, Ottoman, and Qajar empires, along with leading intellectuals at state-sponsored organizations, showed a strong interest in photography. Many state-affiliated actors were keen to exploit the technology and aimed to contextualize the region's diverse population within narratives that promoted an official agenda. In the Russian Empire, the institutionalization of academia—anthropology and archaeology in particular—integrated photography into modes of producing and disseminating knowledge. Large-scale visual surveys formed the backbone of ethnographic-anthropological exhibitions, providing the urban Russian population with their first systematic visual encounter with the region's geography and ethnic diversity. These surveys acquainted them with concepts of space and the imagined "typicality" associated with the Caucasus. The visual language within ethnographic-anthropological photography from the region, however, remained largely incoherent throughout imperial times, ranging from visions of imperial space united in diversity to concepts of the exotic "Other." Alpinists used photography to ameliorate geographical and cartographical knowledge of uncharted high altitudes. Photographs of ancient churches and monasteries were foundational for archaeological studies in the Caucasus and contributed to the integration of regional knowledge into global networks of knowledge exchange on the history of the region. They were, however, also seminal for the imagination of nationalized homelands and antiquities, subverting all-imperial visions. At the same time, Ottoman rulers sought to establish a counternarrative to established orientalist tropes and joined the international quest to maintain or regain control over imperial self-representation by producing photo albums that addressed a global audience at world's fairs or were brought abroad as diplomatic gifts with the aim of challenging outside perspectives.

These projects share a wish to conceptualize and realize photographic images that served as tools for claiming or asserting control over vastly heterogeneous territories, while also showcasing the long arm of centralized rule, extending to the imperial peripheries. The visualization of modernization and state-induced change, which was contrasted with traditional ways of life, played a central role in these visions. Photography was often wielded, then, from a position of power, pressed knowledge toward stereotypes, and supported imperialist narratives, which were made at times at the expense of minorities. A prime example of this is the case of Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire, who became marginalized by the state's efforts to produce visual knowledge despite the community's centrality in the development of photography across the region. The role of

photography in structuring knowledge about the Caucasus has therefore been both multifaceted and profound. It ranged from a tool of scientific documentation to playing a part in political narratives in the service of the powerful state, as well as in national self-expression, effectively shaping what people saw and thought about the Caucasus both within the three adjacent empires and on the global stage. Ultimately, this tension of central yet marginalized agency is representative for the dialectically interrelated spatial logics behind photographic practices in the transimperial Caucasus where a region that at the same time was an imperial periphery as well as an intercultural and transimperial zone of contact constituted the background for a participation in global networks of photographic circulation on the one hand and a reality of extremely uneven power relations between different centers and the periphery that was the Caucasus on the other hand—two spatial logics that co-directed the photographic histories in the region.

Photographic practices in the wider Caucasus region were thus fueled by complex networks that provided the conceptual and practical basis for the production, circulation, and reception of images. While *Camera Caucasica* addresses several of these networks and introduces the reader to the diversity of the subject, it is not an all-encompassing compendium, and many questions remain open or are even unaddressed. Microstudies of individual photo studios will continue to help us understand how they functioned as places of social and cultural exchange. Such studies will hopefully also allow us to find traces of the people behind the scenes, busy with developing, sorting, or selling photographs, who contributed to the success of the photographer's name on the front of the shop while their own names remained unmentioned. As these helping hands often belonged to women, such explorations would also contribute to discussions about how women's agency contributed to the development of nineteenth-century photography, adding a *herstory* to an otherwise men-dominated field. Microstudies of developing photographic societies in the imperial provinces will also allow us to gain a better understanding of the legal challenges that practitioners faced, both on an individual level and when uniting their efforts. A social history of portrait photography has the potential to reveal how local photography reflected processes of creating modern societies. This includes studying the social lives of photographs within families over time, from the nineteenth century to the present, and analyzing the compositional evolution of individual and family portraits.

All these themes, both discussed and open for future explorations, demonstrate how the history of photographic practices in the transimperial Caucasus is

emblematic of their integration into an intercultural contact zone, which serves as the foundational underpinning for the production and circulation of images. *Camera Caucásica* does not present photography in the Caucasus as a distinct subgenre within the global history of photography, but instead invites exploration of its underlying networks as entangled across conventional boundaries and as engaging in an interplay between local and global traditions and developments. Thereby, it offers not only a postcolonial reading of imperial power and center-periphery relations but also inscribes the history of local photography in the Caucasus into the broader history of photography as a global discipline. This decenters the latter and encourages the exploration of actors, themes, and complex dynamics of cultural exchange that remain under-represented in Eurocentric perspectives.

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