

SPACE, IMAGE AND DISPLAY IN
RUSSIAN CENTRAL ASIA, 1881-1914

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Declaration

I, Jennifer Mary Keating, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

This thesis investigates the relationship between environment and empire in late tsarist Central Asia, and suggests that the making and unmaking of space was integral to the imperial experience. It contends that land and its representation were crucial to processes undertaken on local and imperial scales to re-fashion parts of Central Asia from a 'vast', 'alien' and 'inhospitable' colony into an integrated frontier of empire. In examining the environment as a site for the physical enactment and negotiation of Russian rule, the chapters investigate how imperial settlers interacted with the region's built and natural landscapes, through the planning of transport routes, the creation of settlements, irrigation, afforestation and planting projects. I use visual sources as the project's access points into the Russian spatial imaginary: vital interfaces between material and metaphorical space that documented the changing environment but were also used to project future ambitions, to inscribe meaning, and to appropriate, segregate, contest and re-order terrain.

Environment, image and the spatial imagination were entwined in a symbiotic relationship, with attempts to modify Central Asia's landscapes, and the visual representations of these actions, revealing that the concept of Turkestan as a monolithic colonial space underwent significant fragmentation. The physical and imaginative transformation of terrain gave rise to new characterisations of the region as a modern, connected, innovative and fertile site, notions that were debated and disputed by a variety of state and sub-state actors in Central Asia and the imperial centre. I argue that the public circulation of images speaks to the importance of the environment as a visual component in the legitimisation of Russia's presence on Central Asian soil, and as a key arena for the evolution of local and imperial spatial identities, some of which threatened to precipitate the eventual dissolution of the Turkestan Governor Generalship.

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Abbreviations

GARF	Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Moscow
GIM	Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei, Moscow
RGIA	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv, St Petersburg
RGVIA	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voenno-istoricheskii arkhiv, Moscow
TsGAKFFD (SPb)	Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv kinofotofonodokumentov, St Petersburg
TsGARK	Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Respubliki Kazakhstan, Almaty
<i>CAS</i>	<i>Central Asian Survey</i>
d.	delo
f.	fond
GUZZ	Glavnoe upravlenie zemleustroistva i zemledeliia
Izd.	Izdatel'stvo
<i>JfGO</i>	<i>Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas</i>
<i>Kritika</i>	<i>Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History</i>
l.	list
ob.	oborot
op.	opis'
<i>PSZ</i>	<i>Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii</i>
<i>RPGONO</i>	V. I. Masal'skii (ed.), <i>Turkestanskii krai</i> , vol. 19 of V. P. Semenov-Tian'-Shanskii (ed.), <i>Rossia. Polnoe geograficheskoe opisanie nashego otechestva, nastol'naia i dorozhnaia kniga dlia russkikh liudei</i> , SPb: Izd. A. F. Devriena, 1913
<i>SEER</i>	<i>Slavonic and East European Review</i>
<i>SOV</i>	<i>Semirechenskie oblastnye vedomosti</i>
SPb	St Petersburg
SR	<i>Slavic Review</i>

Tip.	Tipografiia
TKK	<i>Turkestanskii kara kurt</i>
TS	<i>Turkestanskii skorpion</i>
TSKh	<i>Turkestanskoe sel'skoe khoziaistvo</i>
TV	<i>Turkestanskie vedomosti</i>
ZO	<i>Zakaspiiskoe obozrenie</i>

A note on dates and transliteration

All dates are given according to the Julian calendar. The transliteration of Russian is based on the system adopted by the Library of Congress, although I have made exceptions for well-known names that have a slightly different Anglicised version, for instance K. K. Pahlen and Tsars Alexander and Nicholas.

Where Russian terms are transliterated rather than translated - for example *uezd* and *oblast'* - I retain the Russian form of the plural.

In transliterating the names of Central Asian settlements and geographic features, I use the conventional Russian spelling - for instance Samarkand rather than Samarqand - which is symbolic only of my search for ease and consistency of reference.

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Introduction

On 28 April 1870, the inaugural issue of Russian Turkestan's first newspaper, *Turkestanskii vedomosti*, contained an eye-catching statement. Alongside the paper's opening conceit that it would chart the establishment of 'civilisation' in a country 'for so long stagnating under the yoke of Islam and Asiatic despotism', was the revelation that 'until very recently ... we must truthfully admit that the surface of the moon was more familiar to us, at least according to drawings, than the landscapes of Central Asia'.¹ The sentence spoke volumes about Russia's relationship with Turkestan, succinctly capturing the ubiquitous notion that, despite commercial, diplomatic and occasional military contact in previous centuries, Central Asia in its new guise as a colony of the Russian empire was an 'unknown and little studied' land, known less in fact than the face of the earth's satellite.² The glib remark also revealed what, for the purposes of this thesis, are several other significant references. The comparison with the moon alluded to existing Russian perceptions that the Central Asian landscape was both geographically distant and physically desolate, much like its lunar equivalent. Secondly, in citing the drawn image, the author introduced the notion of vision, something that would be of great import to how Russians conceived of their new colony, and one which was to prove a particularly potent force in a land that physically looked very different from the imperial heartland.

This thesis discusses the ways in which Turkestan's natural environments were central to attempts by Russian settler society to transform a land 'less known than the moon' into an integral part of empire.³ It does so by examining the relationship between material space, in the form of environmental change, and metaphorical space, in the form of Russian ideas about Central Asia as an isolated, archaic and alien place. In exploring the connection between environment and empire, I consider how a range of Russian colonists sought to interact with, appropriate or transform the region's deserts, rivers, forests, fields, valleys and settled oases. I examine a number of actions commonly construed as intending to 'fertilise this huge and hitherto unproductive space': the planning and construction of new water and rail routes; irrigation projects; afforestation and the cultivation of crops; and the creation of new urban and rural settlements.⁴ Such activities were broadly part of a long-standing tradition of irrigation, planting and settlement carried out by Central Asia's indigenous inhabitants for several millennia, yet took on new significance when conceptualised by Russian outsiders as integral to making a land to which they had little claim their home. These efforts to 'improve' the land are the project's entry points into a wider Russian imaginary of space and environment, which operated on multiple imperial and local scales.

¹ *TV*, 1870, No. 1, pp. 1, 4.

² *TV*, 1870, No. 1, p. 1.

³ I use 'Turkestan' to refer to the administratively-bounded Governor Generalship, and 'Central Asia' in relation to the broader region, including the protectorates of Bukhara and Khiva, the neighbouring Governor Generalship of the Steppe, and Transcaspia and Semirech'e when they were not formally part of Turkestan.

⁴ *Sredniaia Aziia i ee prigodnost' dlia vodvoreniia russkoi zhizni*, SPb: Tip. S. Muller & I. Bogel'man, 1889, p. 49.

The study in overview

Upon its formation in 1867, the Governor Generalship of Turkestan was the Russian empire's newest and southern-most territory, the prize of military action in the Central Asian khanates between the Caspian Sea and the Qing empire. At its largest extent it consisted of a territory equivalent on today's geo-political map to the states of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and the southern third of Kazakhstan. Initially, its landscapes, which consisted of up to 75 per cent arid desert and steppe, were not valorised in the same way that Ely describes Russia's embrace of its own 'meager nature' and open, level plains,⁵ neither were they spoken of in the same alluring tones as the grasslands of the European steppe,⁶ or even in the same terms as how other 'empty' frontiers were popularly conceived of as places of promise.⁷ Instead, Russians commonly described the land as superheated, threatening and barren: a different world, liminal in time and space.⁸ Surrounded on all sides by mountain, sea or desert, despite its geographical contiguity to the rest of the empire, Turkestan may well have been separated by an ocean.

This thesis is an enquiry into how the Russian settler community engaged with a land seen predominantly as 'a vast, alien and almost exclusively Muslim territory',⁹ and demonstrates how existing ideas about the region's alterity began to evolve into new notions of Turkestan as a productive and connected world, driving - and driven by - environmental intervention. I contend that the physical environment was an arena where ideas about Turkestan as a colonial space and about the Russian empire at large could be tested, developed or destroyed, primarily by the imperial state, but also by a range of local settlers who often contested and negotiated the state's visions. Built and natural landscapes were not simply a stage 'upon which actors enact significant historical events', but were at the very heart of imperial and local practices of place-making and identity formation.¹⁰ In this sense, the thesis serves to problematise the environment as a site for the negotiation of Russian spatial practices, in both a physical and conceptual sense.

To understand the evolution of Turkestan as 'space' is to acknowledge that it, like any other administratively-defined spatial entity, province or region was socially as well as legally constituted: existing in a cognitive sense as much as in cartographic form.¹¹ This project concerns

⁵ C. Ely, *This meager nature: Landscape and national identity in imperial Russia*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002.

⁶ D. Moon, *The plough that broke the steppes: Agriculture and environment on Russia's grasslands*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, and W. Sunderland, *Taming the wild field: Colonization and empire on the Russian steppe*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.

⁷ M. Bassin, 'Turner, Solov'ev and the "frontier hypothesis": The nationalist signification of open spaces', *Journal of Modern History*, 1993, 65: 3, pp. 473-511; W. Cronon, 'The trouble with wilderness: Or, getting back to the wrong nature', *Environmental History*, 1996, 1: 1, pp. 7-28; F. J. Turner, *The significance of the frontier in American history*, London: Penguin, 2008 [originally published 1893].

⁸ See for instance the characterisation of Central Asia as a land 'at the edge of the civilised world', composed of 'unending steppes' and 'deathly sands', in the popular journal *Niva*, in N. N. Karazin, 'Ataka sobak pod Urgutom', *Niva*, 1872, No. 38, p. 597. Such claims will be discussed further in chapters one, two and four.

⁹ A. Morrison, 'Killing the cotton canard and getting rid of the Great Game: Rewriting the Russian conquest of Central Asia, 1814-1895', *CAS*, 2014, 33: 2, p. 133.

¹⁰ E. Hirsch, 'Landscape: Between place and space', in E. Hirsch & M. O'Hanlon (eds), *The anthropology of landscape: Perspectives on place and space*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 3.

¹¹ See C. Evtuhov, *Portrait of a Russian province: Economy, society, and civilization in nineteenth-century Nizhnii Novgorod*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011, and A. Remnev, 'Siberia and the Russian

itself with three different types of 'space': space as Turkestan's physical environment, its peoples, buildings, trees, rocks, sand and rivers; space as the imaginative, conceptual Turkestan; and visual material as a distinct discursive space, which for our purposes acts as a crucial interface between the two - an arena where 'imagined' and 'lived' space co-existed.¹² I argue that rather than being discrete entities, environment, image and the spatial imagination were intertwined in a symbiotic and multi-directional relationship. I thus conceive of them as what Mitchell labels a 'triad' or 'trialectic': a triangulation of the topic that can be viewed from different angles and which allows an avenue of research 'that perhaps none of these terms can provide in isolation or in tandem'.¹³

Interventions in the environment were made out of the physical necessity of accommodating Russian settler society, but also driven by imaginative visions of Turkestan as a 'productive' colonial space where Russia could take on the mantle of a 'civilised', European power. Images of these actions were not impartial witnesses: although they could be used to document physical transformations of the landscape, they also drove these activities through their use as imaginative planning devices, and at the same time actively produced space by reordering and conflating geographically-disparate sites into new settler landscapes. In this sense, visual material - particularly photographs and maps - was a crucial intermediary between physical landscape and the Russian spatial imagination. This dialogue between the physical refashioning of the environment and the discursive production of landscape and attachment of particular aesthetic meaning to terrain speaks to the imperial ambition to transform Central Asia into a productive and Russified part of empire, and to the use of colonial space as a site for the negotiation of imperial self-image. Equally, the gulf between the claims that visual material was used to support and the realities on the ground alludes to the limits of the state's abilities to enact its wishes.

The thesis also makes more far-reaching conclusions. It challenges the traditional 'geography of power' conceptualised by modern historiography that sees Turkestan as an administratively-bounded entity governed from Tashkent, with a surrounding core and periphery.¹⁴ Instead, my research reveals alternative configurations of space and power, and proposes that what are commonly regarded as peripheral regions were in fact key sites where new visions for a 'second Turkestan' were being enacted. Moreover, I demonstrate that there was no single narrative of what or where Turkestan was. The 'imperial language-game' of space and environment,¹⁵ of isolation, connectivity and boundedness was a vocabulary deployed in text and image that many utilised for their own increasingly diverse purposes, from Krivoshein's visions for a 'second Turkestan', to those who used visual evidence of spatial dislocation to lobby for new railways, to

Far East in the imperial geography of power', in J. Burbank, M. von Hagen & A. Remnev (eds), *Russian empire: Space, people, power, 1700-1930*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007, pp. 437-438.

¹² See R. Paulett, *An empire of small places: Mapping the southeastern Anglo-Indian trade, 1732-1795*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012, particularly chapter one.

¹³ W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and power*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. x.

¹⁴ Remnev, 'Siberia and the Russian Far East in the imperial geography of power'.

¹⁵ A. Kangas, 'Playing games with empire: Finnish political imaginaries on the early Soviet state', in S. Turoma & M. Waldstein (eds), *Empire De/Centered: New spatial histories of Russia and the Soviet Union*, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013, p. 220.

urban settlers who used portrayals of their retrograde urban space to criticise the state, to those who spoke convincingly of Turkestan as their own 'native' home.

By revealing how images were used to designate Turkestan as a new series of model sites and ethnically segregated landscapes, the thesis demonstrates how environmental change and its representation were used to support an increasingly complex number of claims that show the diversity of spatial imaginations within settler society. Turkestan could be many things at once: isolated yet a connecting bridge to China and India; backward and archaic yet modern and innovative; empty and barren yet productive and agricultural; a cohesive whole or a collection of regions with strong individual identities. Thus I challenge notions that Central Asia existed in the Russian imaginary only as a static outpost of empire and a backward 'Orient', by proving that there was no cohesive imperial imaginary. In doing so, I point towards a fragmentation of Turkestan as a bounded space in favour of increasingly localised views that envisaged a separation of Turkestan's core from its periphery.

If traditional environmental history examines the 'effects of human action on the world's ecosystems',¹⁶ this project takes the premise in a new direction, by interrogating the ways in which the effects of human actions to modify Central Asia's environments were documented and deployed by settler society as evidence to make claims about the nature of imperial space. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate that aspects of environmental and visual history can be fruitfully combined to engage with broader debates about imperial history and the processes by which space was re-made, both physically and imaginatively.

Colonialism, Orientalism and Central Asia

Research into Russian Central Asia has undergone something of a renaissance in recent years. Despite the publication of several formative histories of Turkestan in the period before 1991,¹⁷ western scholars were hampered by a lack of access to archival sources, while Soviet historiography remained constrained by the 'dismal hues' of Marxist-Leninist ideology.¹⁸ Mirroring parallel developments in Russia's new imperial history more broadly however,¹⁹ the past twenty-five years have seen scholars making use of newly-opened archives to examine complex issues of ethnicity, identity, confessional and ethnic encounter and the mechanisms of

¹⁶ J. Richards, *The unending frontier: An environmental history of the early modern world*, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003, p. 3.

¹⁷ E. Allworth, *Central Asia: A century of Russian rule*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967; E. Bacon, *Central Asians under Russian rule: A study in culture change*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966; G. Demko, *The Russian colonisation of Kazakhstan, 1896-1916*, Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1969; R. Pierce, *Russian Central Asia: A study in colonial rule, 1867-1917*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960.

¹⁸ Y. Bregel, *Notes on the study of Central Asia*, Bloomington: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1996. Bregel's comments refer to the lack of objective analysis and insistence on Marxist-Leninist jargon that was 'thoroughly distorting and falsifying' the history of Central Asia, pp. 6-7. For samples, see K. E. Bendrikov, *Ocherki po istorii narodnogo obrazovaniia v Turkestane, 1865-1924*, Moscow: Bezbozhnikov, 1960, and P. G. Galuzo, *Turkestan – koloniia: Ocherk istorii kolonial'noi politiki russkogo tsarizma v Srednei Azii*, Tashkent: Gosudarstvennoe izd. UzSSR, 1935.

¹⁹ On the new imperial history, see A. Miller, 'Between local and inter-imperial: Russian imperial history in search of scope and paradigm', *Kritika*, 2004, 5: 1, pp. 7-26; J. Sahadeo, 'Visions of empire: Russia's place in an imperial world', *Kritika*, 2010, 11: 2, pp. 381-409; W. Sunderland, 'What is Asia to us? Scholarship on the Tsarist East since the 1990s', *Kritika*, 2011, 12: 4, pp. 817-833.

Russian rule in Central Asia, gradually moving towards particular aspects of the lived experience of empire. Studies of everyday life have revealed resistance, corruption, collusion, the role of Muslim elites and the internal dynamics of both Russian and Muslim societies in Turkestan.²⁰

As Adeeb Khalid has pointed out, despite the insistence of post-Soviet Russian scholars that the empire had no colonies (returning instead to the notion of *prisoedinenie*), or the determined approaches of Central Asian historians to establish their own national histories, western scholarship has moved beyond the well-worn question of whether Turkestan was an imperial colony, with the answer received in the affirmative.²¹ Indeed, 'little about Turkestan can be understood without acknowledging its coloniality'.²² Rather than wrangling over whether colonialism and imperialism are appropriate categories to be applying, and whether a metropole with contiguous land-based territories can be defined as an 'empire', research now engages with the more meaningful issues of in what ways, with what ends, and by whom, techniques of rule were used, applied and appropriated.

Hand in hand with the acknowledgement of Central Asia's coloniality is the thorny issue of Orientalism. Ever since Said's seminal works on the topic, Orientalism - the cultural and political construction of an 'East' or 'Orient' by the 'West' in order to subjugate and control - has been at the heart of global imperial history, with innumerate attempts to debunk, refine or refute Said's thesis.²³ Much has been made of Russia's position between east and west, with a number of studies providing insightful research into Russian constructions of 'Orientals' and their uses, and the place of Russia's southern and Asian lands, Central Asia included, in the imperial imaginary.²⁴ Such studies uncover the imperial frontier as a test ground where the empire could enact Orientalising approaches and policies of rule in order to prove its own 'European', 'civilising' credentials,²⁵ while at the same time, identifying multiple subtleties of what Asia represented to

²⁰ S. N. Abashin (ed.), *Tsentrāl'naiā Aziia v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii*, Moscow: NLO, 2008; D. Brower, *Turkestan and the fate of the Russian empire*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003; A. Khalid, *The politics of Muslim cultural reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998; A. Morrison, *Russian rule in Samarkand, 1868-1910: A comparison with British India*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008; J. Sahadeo, *Russian colonial society in Tashkent, 1865-1923*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007; P. Sartori (ed.), *Explorations in the social history of modern Central Asia, (19th-early 20th century)*, Leiden: Brill, 2013; N. G. Suvorova, *Aziatskaia Rossiia: Liudi i struktury imperii*, Omsk: OmGU, 2005.

²¹ A. Khalid, 'Culture and power in colonial Turkestan', in S. Gorshenina & S. Abashin (eds), *Le Turkestan Russe: Une colonie comme les autres? [Cahiers d'Asie Centrale No. 17-18]*, Tashkent, Paris: IFÉAC, 2009, pp. 413-447. For a debate over Turkestan and the empire's 'colonial' nature, with reference to traditional western Orientalism, see *Kritika*, 2000, 1: 4, pp. 691-727.

²² Khalid, 'Culture and power', p. 415.

²³ E. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978, and E. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, London: Vintage, 1993. For a sample of the huge body of post-colonial studies that Said's work sparked, see B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths & H. Tiffin, *Key concepts in post-colonial studies*, London: Routledge, 1998; H. Bhabha, *The location of culture*, London: Routledge, 1994; L. Chrisman & P. Williams, *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: A reader*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993; A. Macfie, *Orientalism*, London: Longman, 2002; G. Spivak, *In other worlds: Essays in cultural politics*, New York: Methuen, 1987; D. Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the unsaid*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007.

²⁴ M. Bassin, *Imperial visions: Nationalist imagination and geographic expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840-1864*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; M. Bassin, 'Russia between Europe and Asia: The ideological construction of geographic space', *SR*, 1991, 50: 1, pp. 1-17; S. Dickinson, 'Russia's first "Orient": Characterizing the Crimea in 1787', *Kritika*, 2002, 3: 1, pp. 3-25.

²⁵ N. Breyfogle, *Heretics and colonizers: Forging Russia's empire in the South Caucasus*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005; D. Brower & E. Lazzarini, *Russia's Orient: Imperial borderlands and peoples, 1700-*

different groups of Russians and local peoples.²⁶ Central Asia has offered particularly fruitful pickings for those uncovering the dimensions of Russian Orientalising attitudes, from the nature of military rule that excluded indigenous Muslim populations from political participation, to the cultural construction of imperial hierarchies through photography, the creation of ethnically segregated cities, and the role of Russian intellectuals in explicating the ‘white man’s burden’ that Russia had purportedly assumed in the region.²⁷

For this study, the concept of Orientalism might better be described as the point of origin from which the research develops: the start, rather than overall focus of my investigations. I do not seek to dispute that Russian conceptions of, and actions towards, the Central Asian landscape were predicated on profoundly Orientalising notions. The majority of the activities and their representations examined in the thesis – settlement creation, irrigation, railway building, crop cultivation – were all interventions stimulated to some degree by the idea that rural land was ‘empty’, ‘cut-off’ and ‘remote’, and had been left to deteriorate by ‘lazy locals’. In a similar fashion, Russian discourse predicated urban landscapes as ‘dirty’, ‘squalid’, ‘labyrinthine’, and in need of containment and segregation from Russian settlements, thus also replicating familiar Orientalising notions from other empires, and enforcing a hierarchy of power that placed Russians and their capacities to ‘improve’ the land in a superior position to ‘natives’.²⁸ That these were the predominant base attitudes to the environment is not contested.

Neither is it my intention to replicate practices of exclusion by reducing indigenous Central Asia society to the margins of this study, yet in examining Russian activities and Russian representations of their work, it is to my regret that this cannot be a study in the same vein as several excellent recent works that have begun to reveal the history of Central Asian society on its own terms, or the detailed interaction between what we would traditionally conceive of as ‘colonisers’ and ‘colonised’.²⁹ There are several good reasons for my approach. Firstly, in terms of

1917, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997; R. Crews, *For prophet and tsar: Islam and empire in Russia and Central Asia*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006; A. Jersild, *Orientalism and empire: North Caucasus mountain peoples and the Georgian frontier*, Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002.

²⁶ D. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian mind from Peter the Great to the emigration*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010, and V. 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.

²⁷ B. Babajanov, “How will we appear in the eyes of inovertsy and inorodtsy?” Nikolai Ostroumov on the image and function of Russian power’, *CAS*, 2014, 33: 2, pp. 270-288; R. Crews, ‘Civilisation in the city: Architecture, urbanism, and the colonisation of Tashkent’, in J. Cracraft & D. Rowland (eds), *Architectures of Russian identity, 1500 to the present*, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2003, pp. 117-132; M. Dikovitskaya, ‘Central Asia in early photographs: Russian colonial attitudes and visual culture’, in T. Uyama (ed.), *Empire, Islam, and politics in Central Eurasia*, Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2007, pp. 99-134; S. Gorshenina, ‘Tashkent: (Ne)-ekzoticheskii gorod?’, in E. Shteiner (ed.), *Orientalizm/oksidentalizm: Iazyki kul’tur i iazyki ikh opisaniia*, Moscow: Sovpadenie, 2012, pp. 186-205; A. Morrison, ‘Metropole, colony, and imperial citizenship in the Russian empire’, *Kritika*, 2012, 13: 2, pp. 327-364; A. Morrison, ‘Peasant settlers and the “civilising mission” in Russian Turkestan, 1865-1917’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 2014, 42: 4, pp. 387-417.

²⁸ On colonial city building practices in general see A. King, *Colonial urban development: Culture, social power and environment*, London: Routledge 1976.

²⁹ See for instance Khalid, *Politics of Muslim cultural reform*, and a number of articles in Sartori, *Explorations in the social history of modern Central Asia*, including T. Welsford, ‘Fathers and sons: Re-readings in a Samarqandi private archive’, pp. 299-323. Almost all of such studies make comprehensive use of extant Turkic language material, which I am sadly unable to do.

sources, this study is conducted through the lens of visual representation, and Turkestan's visual image remained, in the tsarist period at least, constructed almost entirely by Russians, operating in various guises as cartographers, engineers, artists and photographers.³⁰ Moreover, the contexts in which these images were displayed were uniformly Russian in design and manufacture. Secondly, an examination of the Russian community's relationship with the land by necessity means that this study leans towards space and terrain more than to issues of ethnicity. Ideas of self and Other underpin a good deal of this work, as they provided the foundation from which Russians approached Central Asia as a 'civilising' power, yet with the exception of chapter three, which considers how ethnicity and religion could be embedded in landscape, I focus more on depictions of land than people.

Examining Turkestan through the binary of Russian versus 'native', of self versus Other, risks being equally essentialising to both groups when explored from either perspective. This study contends that within each category, there are multiple conflicting, contrasting, and diverse experiences to be told, very often as mutually antagonising as they were reciprocal. Given the nature of the sources at hand, this study can only interrogate one of these ethnic groups, and I thus conceive of this work as a part of Russia's imperial history, focusing specifically on Russian colonial society in Turkestan as a subset of a wider literature that investigates the dynamics of Russian settlement across the empire.³¹ The quest to control or alter nature was quite clearly an exercise in power relations between coloniser and colonised peoples, both in terms of Russia's physical attempts to control resources and appropriate land, and in terms of the land's imagined availability. In a similar fashion, the visual representation of peasant villages, segregated cities, irrigation networks and railway lines also embodied a 'cultural technology of rule' that privileged visibility and knowledge of the land.³² Nevertheless, this project makes the case that while environmental intervention and its representation could sustain Orientalising hierarchies, this was not all that they did. To conceptualise attitudes towards the land solely within the frame of coloniser/colonised is to obscure the nuance of the situation. Of more interest to the present study is how within settler society, Russian conceptions of space were complex and heterogeneous, with visual material deployed and utilised by a variety of groups, or 'multiple voices' for their own ends.³³ The chapters trace an increasing divergence of ideas about what Central Asia meant as an imperial space, contested between and within the Russian state and local Russian actors. I thus

³⁰ There are however, notable exceptions, including the journal *Molla Nasreddin*, although it was published in Baku, and the pioneering Uzbek photographer Khudaibergen Divanov.

³¹ Given the pressure on land in western Russia during the nineteenth century, increasing numbers of peasants from central and western Russia were migrating to the southern steppes, Siberia and Central Asia, aided by the construction of railways and by the efforts of the Resettlement Administration. For a sample of literature that reviews the topic from the sixteenth century, see N. Breyfogle, A. Schrader & W. Sunderland (eds), *Peopling the Russian periphery: Borderland colonization in Eurasian history*, London: Routledge, 2007; M. Khodarkovsky, *Russia's steppe frontier: The making of a colonial empire, 1500-1800*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002; J. Pallot & D. Shaw, *Landscape and settlement in Romanov Russia, 1613-1917*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990; W. Sunderland, *Taming the wild field*. For the specifics of resettlement in Turkestan, see Brower, *Turkestan and the fate of the Russian empire*, chapter five, and Morrison, 'Peasant settlers'.

³² Mitchell, *Landscape and power*, and F. Hirsch, *Empire of nations: Ethnographic knowledge and the making of the Soviet Union*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005, particularly pp. 10-15, 30-45.

³³ See MacKenzie's remarks on the 'unstable' nature of culture in J. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, theory and the arts*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995, pp. 13, 208.

aim where possible to ‘explode’ the Russian perspective, by illuminating the disparate groups that comprised the Russian presence in Central Asia, in a similar fashion to that undertaken very effectively by Jeff Sahadeo in his study of Tashkent’s settler society.³⁴

Space, landscape and environment

This study adopts a new approach to examining Russian society in Turkestan, which I hope fruitfully reveals the detail and complexity of the ways in which settlers conceptualised and engaged with the natural environment, and the evolution of spatial imaginings of Turkestan as an imperial entity. I do so by exploring the relationship between spatial practices – interventions in the landscape that included irrigation, city building, afforestation and route planning – and the representation of space, and use the visual image as one of several possible media through which these two practices were connected. It is my aim to demonstrate that physical action towards the environment drove, and was driven by, more conceptual ideas about space, and that the deployment of images recording the transformation of the landscape reveals a multiplicity of imperial and local ideas about what kind of space Turkestan was. The thesis thus sits at the confluence of three sometimes overlapping fields: space as physical terrain, in the form of environmental history; spatial and landscape theory; and visual history.

Russian environmental history has expanded rapidly in recent decades, with research engaging in new and exciting ways with Russian (principally Soviet) efforts to explore, document, manage, preserve and transform the resources of the natural environment, particularly with regard to steppes, forests and waterways.³⁵ Such studies place the natural world ‘not simply [as] a background but a dynamic force’, that is to say, a vital arena for the historical evolution of attitudes towards the environment, and for enacting various versions of self-identification.³⁶ This interaction between humans and nature has begun to be interrogated fruitfully in several works that examine what Bruno terms ‘frontier environmental history’, which considers the significance of the natural world in Russia’s imperial expansion, and the evolving dynamics of exploitation and preservation on the frontier landscape.³⁷ David Moon’s work in particular conceives of Russian encounters with ‘new and unfamiliar environments’ – in Moon’s case, the grasslands of Russia’s European steppes – as formative moments where landscape was both literally and metaphorically ‘fertile ground’, no more so than for the emergence of new understandings of nature, ecology and

³⁴ Sahadeo, *Russian colonial society*.

³⁵ The recent special issue of *SEER* contains an excellent introduction to environmental history in the Russian context: J. Oldfield, J. Lajus & D. Shaw, ‘Conceptualising and utilising the natural environment: Critical reflections from imperial and Soviet Russia’, *SEER*, 2015, 93: 1, pp. 1-15. See also A. Bruno, ‘Russian environmental history: Directions and potentials’, *Kritika*, 2007, 8: 3, pp. 635-650; ‘Environmental history as middle ground’, *Ab Imperio*, 2008, 4, pp. 19-26; P. Josephson, N. Dronin, A. Cherp, R. Mnatsakanian, D. Efremenko & D. Lanin, *An environmental history of Russia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 1-21.

³⁶ Bruno, ‘Russian environmental history’, p. 636.

³⁷ Recent publications that deal with the environment in an imperial context include R. Jones, *Empire of extinction: Russians and the North Pacific’s strange beasts of the sea 1741-1867*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014; Moon, *The plough that broke the steppes*; Richards, *The unending frontier*, pp. 242-273, 517-546; M. Sokolsky, ‘Between predation and protection: Forests and forestry in late Tsarist Primor’e’, *Sibirica*, 13: 2, 2014, pp. 28-61; Sunderland, *Taming the wild field*.

awareness of the environmental impact of colonisation.³⁸ To borrow Moon's theory, I would add that such new and unfamiliar environments were also 'fertile ground' for evolving understandings of empire and frontier as both physical and imaginative space, as this thesis seeks to demonstrate.

Inroads into Central Asia's environmental history during the tsarist period have only recently begun. For the most part, studies engage with the natural world through the lens of land administration and its social and economic implications, as authors probe legal aspects of tenure and the effects of rural colonisation.³⁹ In contrast, relatively little is known about the natural environment on its own terms, although several very recent works and one unpublished PhD thesis have begun to examine key instances of environmental change, most notably with regard to irrigation and water usage.⁴⁰ These studies are important points of reference for the present project, yet none considers Russian environmental intervention on a broad scale by connecting together various different types of activity – irrigation, afforestation, settlement creation and so forth. It is this gap that the present study aims to fill, and by looking at environmental change and its representation in wider perspective, to contribute a detailed explanation of the significance of the natural world to how Russians thought about their place in Central Asia, and Central Asia's place within the empire. In this sense, I take a good deal of inspiration from the larger field of imperial environmental history that has done much not only to explore the environmental impact of colonialism in various degenerative and conservationist guises, but also how imperial powers strove for 'mastery over nature' by attaching aesthetic, ecological and ideological importance to their attempts to re-shape colonial landscapes.⁴¹

³⁸ See Moon, *The plough that broke the steppes*, and D. Moon, 'The steppe as fertile ground for innovation in conceptualising human-nature relationships', *SEER*, 2015, 93: 1, pp. 16-38.

³⁹ For more detail on the practicalities of land management, see B. Penati, 'Managing rural landscapes in colonial Turkestan: A view from the margins', in Sartori, *Explorations in the social history of modern Central Asia*, pp. 65-109, and B. Penati, 'Swamps, sorghum and saxauls: Marginal lands and the fate of Russian Turkestan (c. 1880-1915)', *CAS*, 2010, 29: 1, pp. 61-78. See also the special issue of *Central Asian Survey*, 2010, 29: 1, dedicated to 'The land question in colonial Central Asia'; D. Brower, 'Kyrgyz nomads and Russian pioneers: Colonization and ethnic conflict in the Turkestan revolt of 1916', *JfGO*, 1996, 44: 1, pp. 41-53; P. Geiss, *Pre-tsarist and tsarist Central Asia: Communal commitment and political order in change*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003; Morrison, 'Peasant settlers'; Morrison, *Russian rule in Samarkand*, chapter six.

⁴⁰ J. Obertreiss, "'Mertvye" i "kul'turnye" zemli: Diskursy uchenykh i imperskaia politika v Srednei Azii, 1880-e - 1991 gg.', *Ab Imperio*, 2008, 4, pp. 191-231; M. Peterson, 'Technologies of rule: Empire, water, and the modernization of Central Asia, 1867-1941', unpublished PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2011; E. Pravilova, 'River of empire: Geopolitics, irrigation, and the Amu-Darya in the late XIXth century', in Gorshenina & Abashin, *Le Turkestan Russe*, pp. 254-287; A. Shioya, 'Who should manage the water of the Amu-Darya? Controversy over irrigation concessions between Russia and Khiva, 1913-1914', in Sartori, *Explorations in the social history of modern Central Asia*, pp. 111-136.

⁴¹ For an excellent introduction to the field in general, see W. Beinart & L. Hughes, *Environment and empire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 8-21, and for a representative sample of the broader literature, see Beinart & Hughes, *Environment and empire*; D. Blackbourn, *The conquest of nature: Water, landscape and the making of modern Germany*, London: Pimlico, 2007; S. Brain, *Song of the forest: Russian forestry and Stalinist environmentalism, 1905-1953*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011; W. Cronon, (ed.), *Uncommon ground: Rethinking the human place in nature*, New York & London: W. W. Norton, 1996; A. Crosby, *Ecological imperialism: The biological expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; D. Davis, *Resurrecting the granary of Rome: Environmental history and French colonial expansion in North Africa*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007; R. Grove, *Green imperialism: Colonial expansion, tropical island Edens and the origins of environmentalism, 1600-1860*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; J. MacKenzie, *The empire of nature: Hunting, conservation and British imperialism*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988; R. MacLeod (ed.), *Nature and empire: Science and the colonial enterprise*, Chicago: University of

Physical landscape and imagined space, while often treated independently, are inseparably linked. This is not a particularly large leap to make, given that recent developments in environmental history have done much to disprove notions of the 'naturalness' of the natural world, revealing that even the very idea of 'nature' is itself a human construct.⁴² Just as the ideas of nature and landscape are socially constructed, so too is the idea of space in a wider sense, which exists on a series of entangled real and social scales, intersecting and superimposed.⁴³ Using the prism of the geographical imagination, a concept first coined by Said in his studies of Orientalism, a range of anthropologists, social theorists and historical geographers have interrogated how notions of space and geography are the socially conditioned products of the human actions of seeing, perceiving and representing landscape, themselves bound up with preconceived prejudices, hierarchies and aesthetic preferences.⁴⁴ Our understanding of space as a socially-conditioned construct also has a huge debt to the work of Lefebvre and Soja, who both conceived of a spatial trialectic: in Lefebvre's scheme, physical space, social space and mental space, in other words, direct spatial practices, representations of space, and spaces of representation.⁴⁵ Since Lefebvre's and Soja's ground-breaking work, a whole spatial turn has emerged which in broad strokes takes as its foundation the socially constructed nature of space, and of particular interest to this study, investigates the connections between 'real' and 'imagined' space: between the practice of space and its representation.⁴⁶

This approach has proved to have useful applications in imperial history, with a number of studies productively combining analyses of real and imagined landscapes, demonstrating that environmental imagination and material intervention were closely interconnected, as imperial powers sought to impose their idealised visions onto nature. Grove examines physical and textual gardens, islands and 'Edens' as 'metaphors of the mind', tracing the evolution of ideas of colonial

Chicago Press, 2000; L. Schiebinger, *Plants and empire: Colonial bioprospecting in the Atlantic world*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004; J. Shapiro, *Mao's war against nature: Politics and the environment in revolutionary China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

⁴² Cronon, 'The trouble with wilderness', and D. Weiner, 'A death-defying attempt to articulate a coherent definition of environmental history', *Ab Imperio*, 2008, 4, pp. 30-50. See also White's remarks on the nature of the 'natural' and 'unnatural' in R. White, *The organic machine: The remaking of the Columbia river*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1996, particularly chapter two.

⁴³ R. White, 'The nationalization of nature', *The Journal of American History*, 1999, 86: 3, p. 985.

⁴⁴ For more on the geographical imagination and its applications, see D. Cosgrove, *Geography and vision: Seeing, imagining and representing the world*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2008; D. Cosgrove & S. Daniels, (eds), *The iconography of landscape: Essays on the symbolic representation, design and use of past environments*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988; D. Gregory, *Geographical imaginations*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994; D. Harvey, 'Between time and space: Reflections on the geographical imagination', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 1990, 80: 3, pp. 418-434; Hirsch & O'Hanlon, *The anthropology of landscape*.

⁴⁵ H. Lefebvre, *The production of space*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991 [trans. D. Nicholson-Smith, originally published 1974]; E. Soja, *Postmodern geographies: The reassertion of space in critical social theory*, London: Verso, 1989; E. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996. There are interesting parallels between Lefebvre's conception of space and Soja's firstspace (perceived), secondspace (conceived), thirdspace (lived).

⁴⁶ For some of the best examples of, and introductions to, this immense field, see M. de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984; M. Foucault, 'Of Other spaces', *Diacritics*, 1986, 16, pp. 22-27; P. Hubbard & R. Kitchin, *Key thinkers on space and place*, London: SAGE, 2004; Y-F. Tuan, *Space and place: The perspective of experience*, London: Edward Arnold, 1977; B. Warf & S. Arias, *The spatial turn: Interdisciplinary perspectives*, New York: Routledge, 2009.

possessions as 'natural Gardens of Eden' to 'managed and planned' Edens.⁴⁷ Kennedy has demonstrated persuasively that the physical landscapes of British hill stations in India were an 'artifice of memory and illusion', created and managed to 'replicate the social and cultural environments that embodied the values they [the British] sought to project'.⁴⁸ Just as the British endeavoured to 'reshape the world they found, compelling it to conform more closely to the world they wished it to be', so this project conceives of Turkestan as a series of socially constructed and interweaving landscapes of nature, people and things, the transformation of which both reflected and shaped Russian cognitive visions of what the land's ideal state should be.⁴⁹

My approach builds to some extent on elements of these lines of enquiry that have developed into imperial Russia. Despite examining different geographies and time frames, such works by and large conceive of nature, landscape and environment as 'discursive space' in which multiple conceptualisations of local, regional and imperial identity could be enacted and negotiated.⁵⁰ Bassin, Conterio and O'Neill have all examined the 'invention' of places and regions through a combination of material and cultural interventions,⁵¹ while others have fruitfully analysed the link between identity and landscape,⁵² and edited collections have investigated the production of empire through spatial practices more broadly.⁵³ But as Baron notes, spatial history in the Russian context still remains greatly underexplored, with very little sustained research into the processes by which mental and geographic space intersected, the impact of spatial practices on representations of landscape and geography, or the role that local societies played in the evolution of spatial imaginaries connected to particular regions or places.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Grove, *Green imperialism*.

⁴⁸ D. Kennedy, *The magic mountains: Hill stations and the British Raj*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996. For similar works, see for instance G. Myers, 'From "Stinkibar" to "The island metropolis": The geography of British hegemony in Zanzibar', in A. Godlewska & N. Smith (eds), *Geography and empire*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, pp. 212-227, and J. Zarobell, *Empire of landscape: Space and ideology in French colonial Algeria*, University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010.

⁴⁹ Kennedy, *The magic mountains*, p. 62.

⁵⁰ A. Rosenholm & S. Autio-Sarasmo (eds), *Understanding Russian nature: Representations, values and concepts*, Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute, 2005, p. 9.

⁵¹ Bassin, *Imperial visions*; M. Bassin, 'Inventing Siberia: Visions of the Russian east in the early nineteenth century', *American Historical Review*, 1991, 96: 3, pp. 763-794; J. Conterio, 'Inventing the subtropics: An environmental history of Sochi, 1929-36', *Kritika*, 2015, 16: 1, pp. 91-120; K. O'Neill, 'Constructing Russian identity in the imperial borderland: Architecture, Islam, and the transformation of the Crimean landscape', *Ab Imperio*, 2006, 2, pp. 163-192.

⁵² C. Ely, 'Prospect, refuge, coherence, mystery: Landscape theory and Russian terrain', in Rosenholm & Autio-Sarasmo, *Understanding Russian nature*, pp. 21-43, and Ely, *This meager nature*.

⁵³ M. Bassin, C. Ely & M. Stockdale (eds), *Space, place and power in modern Russia: Issues in the new spatial history*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010; J. Burbank, M. von Hagen & A. Remnev (eds), *Russian empire: Space, people, power, 1700-1930*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007; J. Smith (ed.), *Beyond the limits: The concept of space in Russian history and culture*, Helsinki: SHS, 1999; Turoma & Waldstein, *Empire De/Centered*.

⁵⁴ For useful surveys of Russian spatial history, see N. Baron, 'New spatial histories of twentieth-century Russia', *JfGO*, 2007, 55: 3, pp. 374-400; M. Rolf, 'Importing the "spatial turn" to Russia: Recent studies on the spatialization of Russian history', *Kritika*, 2010, 11: 2, pp. 359-380; S. Smith-Peter, 'Bringing the provinces into focus: Subnational spaces in the recent historiography of Russia', *Kritika*, 2011, 12: 4, pp. 835-848. For an interesting application of such methods in literature, see J. Buckler, *Mapping St Petersburg: Imperial text and cityscape*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Nowhere is this more so than in the case of tsarist Central Asia, where little has been done to examine the relationship between environmental spatial practices and their representations, and where 'critical attentiveness to the spatial tropes that inform scholarly and political analysis is sorely needed'.⁵⁵ While we know a little about the ideological underpinning of Turkestan's spatial borders,⁵⁶ we know less about other processes that contributed to the evolution of Turkestan as a space that existed independently from the lines on a map. It is the contention of this thesis that Turkestan as an imagined spatial entity was more complex than has been thought. Being positioned at the edge of empire, Central Asia was initially conceived in the Russian mind as something of a liminal world, very much what Shields defines as a 'place on the margin' both in terms of its geographic peripherality and its perceived cognitive location at the edge of the 'known' world.⁵⁷ Yet I contend that the Russian spatial imaginary of Turkestan underwent significant evolution and fragmentation. Firstly, traditional ideas of Turkestan as metaphorical space - as a barren, isolated, archaic, Oriental backwater - gave way to a new conceptual Turkestan characterised as a 'fertile breadbasket', at the forefront of technological innovation, and as a vital bridge between Europe and Asia. Concurrently, Turkestan as physical space also evolved, with the appearance of new settlements, the creation of new waterways, and the construction of new railways that crisscrossed the land. The thesis suggests that these two spatial scales were intimately connected, and traces the consequences of this dual evolution in two directions. Only some parts of Turkestan took on new significance in the imperial psyche, and these were the regions that saw the most profound level of environmental intervention. I discuss the significance of model sites, particularly towns and rural nomadic areas, as key places where the state sought to construct visions of a 'new Turkestan': a green, agricultural and Russified frontier. Concomitantly, a significant portion of the region remained beyond the reach of the state, revealing not only the extent of the Russian administration's ambition, but also the limits of the imperial experiment. Thus the development of material and metaphorical space contributed to a significant splintering of Turkestan, and I argue that while this was largely the result of actions of the imperial state, the Resettlement Administration, the office of the Governor General or other government departments, local settlers beneath the state level also played a significant role in negotiating or even contesting the new spatial forces at play.

Image, display and visuality

If material efforts to transform terrain were closely linked to discursive ideas about space, the visual image acts as the medium through which this thesis explores the connection between environmental change and Russian notions about Central Asia as a geographically and temporally liminal colonial land. In this sense, the image is the interface between real and imagined space, or, to paraphrase Lefebvre, if the material environment was an arena where spatial practices were

⁵⁵ M. Reeves, 'Introduction: Contested trajectories and a dynamic approach to place', *CAS*, 2011, 30: 3-4, p. 309.

⁵⁶ S. Gorshenina, *Asie centrale. L'invention des frontières et l'héritage russo-soviétique*, Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2012.

⁵⁷ R. Shields, *Places on the margin: Alternative geographies of modernity*, London: Routledge, 1991.

performed, images were both a representation of this space, and themselves a distinct space of representation. I contend that they were a crucial component in the physical and social production of landscape and nature, used both to plan and record Russian activities such as urban development, railway construction and irrigation, but also in doing so, constructing powerful new spatial narratives: documenting the environment but also actively constituting it by reordering existing landscapes and investing them with aesthetic or ideological meaning.⁵⁸ This approach owes much to sustained research done in recent years that has demonstrated how visual culture, as a 'way of seeing', was a critical component of the geographical imagination, witnessed perhaps most obviously by the use of cartography to visualise and order land, but also by photography, art and other visual media that combine both the physical act of looking and the imaginative function of foreseeing, representing and projecting ideas about land and people.⁵⁹ Visual material rendered nature and the environment observable, visible and knowable, holding 'privileged status' as a way of 'incarnating and circulating information', due to its perceived impartiality, particularly in the case of photography and cartography.⁶⁰

Such sources have traditionally been taken at face value, prized for their 'mechanical objectivity'.⁶¹ Visual theorists, cultural anthropologists and historians, amongst others, have done much to debunk this notion, demonstrating that the photograph, and to a lesser degree, the map's, perceived authority could be used to construct, complicate and distort historical narratives, how they could be staged, faked or retouched in order to communicate desired messages, and at the same time, how images held 'a multiplicity of meanings for different audiences in diverse viewing contexts'.⁶² In imperial historiography, a great deal of research has been done to investigate how maps, photographs and art were prime cultural technologies of rule, used as imperial propaganda and to sustain hierarchies of power, Orientalist stereotype, and tropes of exoticism and primitivism, while also being open to appropriation and negotiation by the indigenous peoples whom they were used to observe.⁶³ A closely-related body of work interrogates the use of visual

⁵⁸ This links very much to ideas of landscape as cultural practice and process, in amongst others, Hirsch, 'Landscape: Between place and space', and Mitchell, *Landscape and power*, especially pp. 1-34.

⁵⁹ Cosgrove, *Geography and vision*; Mitchell, *Landscape and power*; J. Schwartz & J. Ryan (eds), *Picturing place: Photography and the geographical imagination*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2003.

⁶⁰ D. Bleichmar, *Visible empire: Botanical expeditions and visual culture in the Hispanic Enlightenment*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012, p. 18.

⁶¹ J. Tucker, *Nature exposed: Photography as eyewitness in Victorian science*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005, p. 3.

⁶² Tucker, *Nature exposed*, p. 235. For introductions to post-visual-turn research, see P. Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The uses of images as historical evidence*, London: Reaktion Books, 2001; M. Dikovitskaya, *Visual culture: The study of the visual after the cultural turn*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006; J. Evans & S. Hall, *Visual culture: The reader*, London: SAGE, 1999; N. Mirzoeff (ed.), *The visual culture reader*, London: Routledge, 1998; W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture theory: Essays on verbal and visual representation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994. Such works give a good overview of the panoply of intellectuals who have also written on the visual, including Barthes, Benjamin, Bourdieu, Foucault, Freud and Lacan.

⁶³ J. Beaulieu & M. Roberts (eds), *Orientalism's interlocutors: Painting, architecture, photography*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2002; F. Bohrer, *Orientalism and visual culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in nineteenth-century Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; D. Brody, *Visualizing American empire: Orientalism and imperialism in the Philippines*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010; J. Hackforth-Jones & M. Roberts (eds), *Edges of empire: Orientalism and visual culture*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2005; E. Hight & G. Sampson (eds), *Colonialist photography: Imag(in)ing race and place*, London: Routledge, 2002; MacKenzie,

material in articulating notions about imperial landscape and environment, deployed very often by the colonial state as a means of controlling, prescribing and reforming nature, but also by settler and indigenous societies.⁶⁴ In the Russian field however, such approaches are still in their infancy. Despite Russia's rich visual heritage, historians have traditionally been reticent about using visual sources as historical documents outside studies of art or architecture, and very few monographs on Russia's imperial history use images as their primary source base. This thesis is an attempt to bridge the gap between the wider body of work on imperial culture that has fruitfully used visual material as a crucial component of analysis and Russia's new imperial history, and as such is part of an emerging trend within Russian history writing to incorporate visual material.⁶⁵

The depth and breadth of research into visual sources, in the imperial context alone, demonstrates the multiplicity of approaches that can be adopted, from historical anthropology, to analysis of historically-specific scopic regimes, to more micro-level investigations of particular photographers or artists. I use visual culture in a fairly narrow sense as a means of interrogating the relationship between environment and conceptual space, and as such I do not engage to any great extent with more complex issues of vision.⁶⁶ Similarly, while some historians analyse primarily the creation and content of visual material, this thesis takes an alternative approach, considering content in the wider perspective of the context of display. This is to move away from narrow analyses of composition, framing and the notion of 'gaze' towards an inquiry that sees the meaning of images reliant upon the contexts in which they were displayed and viewed.⁶⁷ I very

Orientalism; J. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and empire: The manipulation of British public opinion, 1880-1960*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.

⁶⁴ 'Empire and the visual representation of nature', in Beinart & Hughes, *Environment and empire*, pp. 214-232; P. Landau & D. Kaspin (eds), *Images and empires: Visuality in colonial and postcolonial Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002; K. Morrissey, *Mental territories: Mapping the inland empire*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997; S. Protschky, *Images of the tropics: Environment and visual culture in colonial Indonesia*, Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011; J. Ryan, *Picturing empire: Photography and the visualization of the British empire*, London: Reaktion Books, 1997; S. Sarson, *British America 1500-1800: Creating colonies, imagining an empire*, London: Hodder Arnold, 2005; Schwartz & Ryan, *Picturing place*; K. Thompson, *An eye for the tropics: Tourism, photography and framing the Caribbean picturesque*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

⁶⁵ On this trend in broad terms, see 'Russian history after the "visual turn"', *Kritika*, 2010, 11: 2, pp. 217-220. See also Ely, *This meager nature*; V. Kivelson, *Cartographies of Tsardom: The land and its meanings in seventeenth-century Russia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007; V. Kivelson & J. Neuberger (eds), *Picturing Russia: Explorations in visual culture*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008; S. Norris, *A war of images: Russian popular prints, wartime culture and national identity, 1812-1945*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006; A. Renner, 'Der Visual Turn und die Geschichte der Fotografie im Zarenreich und in der Sowjetunion', *JfGO*, 2014, 62: 3, pp. 401-424; S. Seegel, *Mapping Europe's borderlands: Russian cartography in the age of empire*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012; E. A. Vishlenkova, *Vizual'noe narodovedenie imperii, ili <<uvidet' russkogo dano ne kazhdomu>>*, Moscow: NLO, 2011.

⁶⁶ For several excellent studies in this area, see E. Edwards (ed.), *Anthropology and photography, 1860-1920*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992; H. Foster (ed.), *Vision and visibility*, New York: New Press, 1988; N. Mirzoeff, 'On visibility', *Journal of Visual Culture*, 2006, 5: 1, pp. 53-79; C. Pinney & N. Peterson, *Photography's other histories*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003; D. Poole, *Vision, race and modernity: A visual economy of the Andean image world*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997, and in the Russian case, M. Levitt, *The visual dominant in eighteenth-century Russia*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011, and T. Smoliarova, *Zrimaia lirika. Derzhavin*, Moscow: NLO, 2011.

⁶⁷ For more, see E. Barker (ed.), *Contemporary cultures of display*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999; D. Cherry & F. Cullen (eds), *Spectacle and display*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2008; J. Ryan, *Photography and exploration*, London: Reaktion Books, 2013; Tucker, *Nature exposed*. This approach has close parallels with what Poole describes as a 'visual economy' in Poole, *Vision, race and modernity*, pp. 7-10.

much subscribe to the idea that 'the photograph is in some sense a husk: a carrier of a myriad of [sic] meanings for those who handle and view it', with the context of display 'from the format of the image to the social setting and spatial location ... combined with what the viewer brings with them in terms of their knowledge and cultural assumptions' exercising a powerful force in investing images with meaning.⁶⁸ Thus my interest is less in the initial act of image-making, of photographer or creator, but the ways in which resultant images were *displayed* in monographs, newspapers, scientific treatises, exhibitions and so forth. In this sense, I treat images as one facet of how landscapes were 'seen', with their deployment closely interwoven with parallel textual narratives and commentaries, which are also at the heart of my analysis. In doing this, I aim to use the life of images and the contexts of their display as indicators of *why* certain images were used at particular moments, and to interrogate what kinds of arguments and assumptions they were used to make or support, rather than attempt to reconstruct how images were received.

I adopt this approach partly because of the nature of the source material that constitutes the thesis' foundation - discussed in greater depth below - but also because it provides a more fruitful way of interrogating wider historical issues. Visual and textual ways of seeing are valuable interlocutors, revealing not just how environmental intervention was documented and displayed, but more broadly how such actions could be used to develop new spatial narratives about Turkestan's place within the empire. Considering a range of disparate visual material reveals that the relationship between representation and spatial practice was not a one-directional matter of record: I demonstrate how images could be used to both document and initiate environmental intervention. Photographs could survey land and constitute it 'empty', readying it for repurposing, maps could plot railway lines through deserts and engineering diagrams could predict the diversion of rivers and the creation of dams. Thus images could in some circumstances be drivers of attempts to reshape the landscape, or at the very least, provide insight into aspirations to do so. Images could also be used to invest the mechanics of planting and settlement with aesthetic qualities, linking together geographically-disparate projects into a unified settler world, and sustaining what were often largely false claims to have transformed landscapes into rational, clean towns, watered, green valleys, model estates or other visions of a 'new' Turkestan. Such actions could support a variety of claims that Turkestan was a 'new frontier', 'a bridge to Asia' or 'a settled, agricultural and Russian land'. No less significantly, the creation of these landscapes reveals the centrality of new parts of the empire to the ongoing fashioning of identity and self-image by the imperial state.

In examining images not just on their own terms, in a relatively limited time-frame, or in a largely ethnographic context, as do the main studies of visual culture in tsarist Turkestan,⁶⁹ I attempt to

⁶⁸ Ryan, *Photography and exploration*, p. 18.

⁶⁹ Dikovitskaya, 'Central Asia in early photographs'; B. A. Golender, *Okno v proshloe. Turkestan na starinnykh pochtovykh otkrytkakh*, Tashkent: P. Elinina, 2002; N. Medvedev, 'The contradictions in Vereshchagin's Turkestan series: Visualizing the Russian empire and its others', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2009; D. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, 'Vasilij V. Vereshchagin's canvases of Central Asian conquest', in Gorshenina & Abashin, *Le Turkestan Russe*, pp. 179-209; H. Sonntag, 'Genesis of the Turkestan Album 1871-1872: The role of Russian military photography, mapping, albums and exhibitions

put visual sources in wider perspective, showing how Russian attempts to modify terrain reveal competing desires at state and local levels to reconfigure Turkestan as an integral part of the landscape of empire. Indeed, one benefit of using predominantly visual material is that while the mechanisms of creation were often in the hands of the imperial state - cartographers, irrigation specialists, engineers, photographers - images could be copied, reproduced, modified or referenced by any number of sub-state individuals. My method of enquiry thus provides a means of cutting a cross-section through Russian settler society, and contributes valuable evidence that local actors significantly complicated the state-driven narrative of a new, modern and Russified landscape. As the thesis demonstrates, locals used representations of environmental change for a variety of their own purposes: satirising the state's settlement creation in cartoons in order to campaign for better facilities, using maps of railway lines and irrigation schematics to lobby for private interests, and documenting the region in photographs to articulate new local identities. In participating in such actions, settlers enacted their own nuanced and conflicting spatial conceptions of Turkestan, which at times clashed with those of the central state.

Just as this project suggests that environment, image and conceptual space were intimately connected, so the thesis draws on the collective research of historians working on environmental and visual history in the imperial context. In doing so, I aim to demonstrate that both environmental and visual methodologies can be used as 'middle grounds' that can be productively employed to interrogate imperial spatial practices.⁷⁰ In examining images of the environment as deployed beyond their original contexts of creation, the thesis provides a valuable analysis of how visual culture can be integrated into broader histories of space and environment. To the study of the Russian empire, and of tsarist Central Asia in particular, my research offers new insights into previously un-researched aspects of environmental and visual practices in their own right, while at the same time providing more far-reaching conclusions about how the synthesis of image and environment was at the heart of new ideas about Central Asia as a spatial entity. In a more international sense, I hope to demonstrate the relevance of the specific historic site of Turkestan and the imperial practices of the Russian empire in general to broader research into environmental, spatial and visual practices of empires, and where possible, to underscore the non-particularist nature of the Russian empire in the wider scheme of colonial history.⁷¹

Sources and structure

The quantity of visual material pertaining to Russian Turkestan is vast, from maps, paintings and engravings, to postcards, adverts and photographs. Each has their story to tell, but the peculiarities of images as historical sources, coupled with the focus of my topic, have played an

on Central Asia', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2011. These studies also largely conceive of racial and ethnic themes, rather than dealing overtly with ideas of space or environment.

⁷⁰ I borrow this from 'Environmental history as middle ground', *Ab Imperio*, 2008, 4, pp. 19-26.

⁷¹ Western research has, until recently, focused on the particularities of the Russian empire, yet recent studies such as Morrison's *Russian rule in Samarkand*, have demonstrated that Russian imperial practices in Central Asia can be fruitfully compared with those of other colonial powers. While this study does not claim to engage with a sustained and direct comparison in the model of Morrison, it makes use of a detailed reading of the broader international context to draw wider parallels where possible.

important role in defining the source base of this enquiry. During the course of my research I encountered frustrating glimpses of sources 'that might have been': torn pages where images had been detached from monographs, empty spaces where images had been misplaced or separated from their textual counterparts in archives, or conversely, on several occasions I was met with an embarrassment of riches - thousands of photographs bundled into boxes, but with almost no contextualising information as to date, provenance or subject matter. The conundrum of how to deal with such uncatalogued photographs is one that belongs to a future project.

In order to offset these difficulties, scholars working with Turkestan's visual sources by and large prefer to work with cohesive, named collections of one type of genre, that is to say photographs or maps or postcards, very often already collected into an album or the output of one particular painter or photographer (two instances of which are examined in chapter one). Instead, this thesis considers a synthesis of imagery on a wider scale, examining scenarios where disparate and often anonymous images were disseminated in print, exhibited, or otherwise circulated, in order to demonstrate that in broad perspective, images can be used as sources to understand the mechanisms of underlying historical trends, in this case, the reshaping of space.⁷² Thus as noted above, my focus is largely on the context of display, rather than the individual creator - an actor who is very often missing from the historical record. Photographs reprinted in monographs for instance, were often published without the attribution of their photographer. In some cases, such as the exhibition, this involves an understanding of image reception, yet unless this information is explicit in written sources, I avoid attempting to reconstruct how audiences may or may not have reacted to visual material. Rather, I am interested in what images in different formats were used to do, how they were deployed by various groups within settler society to make different claims, and the processes by which they were invested with value.

Research into a geographical entity that corresponds on today's map to five sovereign states requires careful planning, and the topic of the thesis and the sources used have also to some extent been shaped by the availability of material in Central Asia. Western researchers have in recent years encountered difficulties in obtaining access to archives, particularly in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. It is with great regret that I have been unable to use material from the State Archive in Tashkent, particularly the *fondy* of the Governor General which hold a huge number of significant sources.⁷³ A good deal of material can however be found either in original or copy in Russia, and central to this project have been the Russian State Historical Archive in St Petersburg and the Russian State Military-Historical Archive in Moscow. In Central Asia, the State Archive of Kazakhstan in Almaty provided a substantial number of sources, and has directed my work in, I hope, fortuitous new directions. Several specialist image archives have also been of great use, most notably the Central State Archive of Film, Photo and Sound Recordings in St Petersburg, and

⁷² In this respect, I treat different genres as elements of a broader visual culture, in a fashion similar to Kivelson & Neuberger, *Picturing Russia*, and Vishlenkova, *Vizual'noe narodovedenie imperii*.

⁷³ For an excellent discussion of the contents of this archive, see S. Gorshenina, 'Krupneishie proekty kolonial'nykh arkhivov Rossii: Utopichnost' total'noi Turkestaniki general-gubernatora Konstantin Petrovicha fon Kaufmana', *Ab Imperio*, 2007, 3, pp. 291-354.

the State Historical Museum in Moscow, along with the numerous visual holdings of the National Library of Russia in St Petersburg, the Russian State Library in Moscow and the National Library of Kazakhstan in Almaty.

These sources are diverse in format and disparate in content; while the majority are either photographic or cartographic, I also make use of cartoons, paintings, architectural and engineering diagrams, and also items of material culture, including produce from the land. Such material was used to depict, document or project a variety of environmental intervention: plans for estates, towns and villages; photographs of steppe lands, railways, settlements and irrigation structures; cartoons of segregated urban quarters; maps of projected railway lines, irrigated land and so forth. In order to understand the role that these images played in constructing new spatial narratives about Turkestan, I consider them in a number of display contexts: printed in travel guides, geographical surveys, pamphlets, monographs, the illustrated press and scientific treatises; presented in albums or at exhibitions; or incorporated into archival material and government papers. In almost all of these cases, I consider these images to be inseparable from their accompanying texts, and endeavour to treat the two not as separate genres, but as equal constituents of socially produced content.

As discussed above, one of the advantages that this approach affords is that a broad source base enables the study to consider a more diverse group of actors than usual studies of visual culture. More traditional studies may encompass only the photographer, cartographer or artist, in many cases operating on behalf of, or sponsored by, a government department or the office of the Governor General. Instead, by concentrating on the subsequent *use* of these images, I consider a far wider range of settler society, examining the political, economic and cultural deployment of visual material by actors as disparate as travellers, government administrators, irrigation specialists, disgruntled urban inhabitants, entrepreneurs and explorers. I refer to these people as 'Russians' for the sake of convenience, although many, particularly new peasant settlers, came from the western provinces of the empire. While the label is suggestive of homogeneity, the following chapters lay bare the fact that there was no single 'Russian' idea of Turkestan: different groups within settler society deployed visual material for different purposes.

State actors occupy an important position in the study, given that they very often controlled both the physical transformation of land - three prominent departments are the Main Administration for Land Management and Agriculture, the Appanage Department and the military administration of the Governor Generalship - and its visual documentation, in the form of military cartographers, photographic units, via personal patronage and state publishers. A. V. Krivoshein, head of the Resettlement Administration and later the Minister of Agriculture, is a recurrent figure in several of the chapters, as I investigate his vision for a 'second Turkestan', a new agricultural frontier populated by millions of Russian peasants. At the same time however, I aim to demonstrate that numerous locally-produced and complex spatial imaginaries underlay what one might call these 'state' visions for a new Turkestan. The thesis identifies a number of local inhabitants who used

visual material depicting Turkestan's urban and rural landscapes for their own purposes: urban settlers seeking to remonstrate with the Russian regime, local politicians attempting to attract investment, and members of regional societies, businessmen and city planners endeavouring to construct and communicate more localised ideas of self and region. Together these individuals evoked subtly new and different spatial narratives, and their actions intersect at a number of points across the study.

My investigations are set against an arc of technological innovation.⁷⁴ The Russian conquest of Central Asia coincided almost exactly with seminal developments in photography and methods of image reproduction, meaning that as the period progressed, engravings and paintings gave way to photographs and lithographs as popular means of visual representation.⁷⁵ Although early photographic apparatus had extremely slow shutter speeds and long exposure times, its rapid development enabled the camera to move from the domain of the specialist to widespread popular usage. At the same time, image reproduction became cheaper and easier, allowing photographs, maps and other visual material to be incorporated more freely into printed media. By the turn of the twentieth century, Turkestan was host to numerous professional or semi-professional photographers, including P. P. Rodstvennyi, the Leibin family and I. K. Lozinskii, who set up photographic studios in the region's major towns,⁷⁶ in addition to any number of budding amateurs, who also began to claim a stake in the visual production of Turkestan's landscapes, as will be seen in chapter six.

In using the joint criteria of environment and visual display, this study is at best, a partial investigation into the rich image world of tsarist Central Asia. There are many sources such as postcards and adverts that might have merited inclusion, but which have ultimately fallen outside the remit of the project. Moreover, using material that documented Russian interventions in particular urban and rural environments privileges a study of these sites at the risk of excluding others. While a comprehensive portrait of environmental change and its representation is beyond the scope of the current project, it is the value and importance that Russians attached to these specific actions and sites (and conversely, the denial of value to other places) that lies at the heart of the thesis.

The following chapters are arranged thematically rather than chronologically, yet each retains its own internal chronology. Together they trace Russian attempts to negotiate the 'vast, alien and almost exclusively Muslim' space of Turkestan by transforming its landscapes through irrigation, route planning, afforestation and settlement creation.⁷⁷ The visual representation of these actions

⁷⁴ For a recent exploration of 'technology' as a category in the analysis of Russian history, see S. Palmer, 'Technology defines everything', *Russian Review*, 2011, 70: 3, pp. 371-379.

⁷⁵ D. Elliot, *Photography in Russia, 1840-1940*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1992; S. P. Garanina, *Rossiiskaia imperiia Prokudina-Gorskogo, 1905-1916*, Moscow: Krasivaia strana, 2006; E. E. Koloskova, *Rossiiskaia imperiia v fotografiakh: konets XIX-nachalo XX veka*, SPb: Liki Rossii, 2004.

⁷⁶ The burgeoning number of studios is underscored by the quantity of adverts placed in popular monographs. See for instance I. I. Geier, *Ves' Russkii Turkestan*, Tashkent: S. R. Konopka, 1908, and listings of individual studios, pp. xxii-xxxii.

⁷⁷ Morrison, 'Killing the cotton canard', p. 133.

reveals projections of new model sites and segregated landscapes inscribed with meaning, and conversely, networks of the unseen, all of which were woven into evolving and fragmenting concepts of Turkestan as a spatial entity. Indeed, by 1914, claims emerged that *two* Turkestans now existed: one 'old' and one 'new'.⁷⁸ My research supports this assertion, and demonstrates that the state, particularly in the guise of the Resettlement Administration, was attempting to reframe imperial space, fragmenting Turkestan into an eastern, Russified periphery that could be absorbed into the Siberian frontier, and an Islamic heartland. Yet the dissonance between what images were used to suggest, and the reality on the ground points not only to the ambitions and desires of the state, but also to the fact that a great swathe of Turkestan appeared to be largely unassimilable, condemned to continuing representation as an exotic Orient. The 'second' or 'new' Turkestan was to be found in the predominantly nomadic areas of Semirech'e and Syr-Dar'ia, where landscapes were easier to appropriate. Meanwhile, beneath the state level, Russian settlers used imagery of the environment to articulate their own ideas, providing a counterpoint of different spatial imaginaries that also contributed to the fragmentation of Turkestan as a cohesive unit.

Chapter one sketches the physical and imagined dimensions of Turkestan from its formation in 1867 until the death of its first Governor General in 1881. It discusses the region's history, geography and legal definition, along with the various cultural, scientific and statistical endeavours that documented the new territory, with particular focus on how visual material communicated Russian ideas about Turkestan as a colonial, profoundly Other space. I make the case that while this was the formative period for the material and metaphorical construction of Turkestan, it was only a precursor to the period of accelerating change that is the thesis' primary focus. I briefly outline the social, cultural and economic dynamics post-1881, and place emphasis on quickening Russian settlement and the creation of the Transcaspian railway as interlinked factors in stimulating attempts to transform the local environment, both physically and symbolically. Chapter two examines the spatial significance of railway building and route planning in more detail. It focuses on the creation of the Transcaspian railway, its branch line to the Afghan border, and proposals to divert the course of the Amu-Dar'ia river and to extend the railway into Semirech'e. I argue that the documentation of these projects reveals a significant reorientation of views about Turkestan's isolated location, with images used to make claims that the region was a vital conduit for trade, mobility, and even military action, with India, China and beyond. At the same time, continued lobbying for an extension of the railway to Semirech'e demonstrates a growing renegotiation of the region's place within the empire, with the map hosting both the integrating and disintegrating visions of Turkestan's elites vis-à-vis the imperial metropole.

Chapters three and four consider the effects of travel and mobility on how Turkestan's landscapes were seen, and what images published in a range of popular literature, from travel guides to state-sponsored resettlement material, reveal about how Russians engaged with the environment as both physical and symbolic space. Chapter three investigates the creation and documentation of

⁷⁸ V. P. Voshchinin, *Ocherki novogo Turkestana: Svet i teni russkoi kolonizatsii*, SPb: Tip. "Nash vek", 1914.

urban fabric, focusing on the divided city. It conceives of urban zones as potent spaces that reinforced the view that Turkestan was home to the meeting of two very different civilisations, and discusses how imagery of Russian and 'native' quarters encoded the urban environment with notions of Russia's cultural superiority. Conversely, visual sources reveal profound disquiet about Russia's thin numerical presence, and the chapter uncovers how cities were also sites of fear, contest, and doubt over the imperial civilising mission. Chapter four follows the argument of the preceding chapter by examining the visual symbolism of nature, and its significance in both town and countryside. It discusses Russian discourses about the 'empty' steppe, and the link between a lack of railway in Semirech'e and the region's absence from popular literature. Meanwhile, I demonstrate that the steppe was used as a convenient foil for the visualisation of a very different kind of nature in Semirech'e and Syr-Dar'ia, one which appeared to be a green and agricultural landscape, and which was increasingly favoured over cities by the imperial state as the new embodiment of Russian settlement. I consider the planting of trees, crops and other plants in order to aesthetically domesticate the landscape, and the role of the Resettlement Administration in using photographs to create a vision of a 'second Turkestan'.

Developing a theme common to chapters three and four, chapter five investigates how visual material could be used to designate certain model sites, and the significance of such actions. Alongside the rural settler landscape and the Russian quarter of divided cities, the chapter uses a detailed study of an irrigation project, the Murgab Imperial Estate, to show how the reality of these model landscapes was far from the claims that photographs and maps were used to suggest. Although this dissonance between image and physical reality provides evidence of both the aspirations of the Resettlement Administration and the Appanage Department to refashion Turkestan's environment, and of their inability to enact comprehensive change, the prominence of these show sites demonstrates the primacy of vision as a tool wielded increasingly effectively not only to reorder Turkestan's landscapes but to visually embody Russian notions of state and self in Central Asia. The final chapter examines a specific medium of display, the exhibition, as a site at which the vast majority of the sources utilised in all of the previous chapters appeared. It conceptualises the exhibition as an important discursive event at which new visions of Turkestan could be most clearly articulated, and makes the case that the portrayal of the Murgab Estate, new transport networks and the agricultural east were used to depict Turkestan as a commodity frontier. However, I also suggest that the exhibition was one of the few arenas where competing conceptualisations of Turkestan as a space could be articulated through visual display. I discuss the ongoing reframing of Turkestan as a local as well as imperial territory, and point to a re-working of the *Turkestanskii Al'bom*, discussed in chapter one, as evidence of the significance of visual surveys of landscape in producing new notions of Turkestan as a 'native homeland'.

1. The dimensions of space to 1881

Despite centuries of trade, diplomatic contact and an ever-decreasing geographical proximity, the relationship between the Russian empire and Central Asia was one characterised, from the Russian perspective, by Central Asia's physical, social and cultural alterity. In 1861, with a military pincer movement underway to incorporate the remaining lands of Central Asia into the imperial realm, one observer appositely encapsulated the Russian mind-set:

Until now, Central Asia has been shrouded by a veil of mystery. Despite the close presence of two powerful European states, Russia and England, large parts of it remain inaccessible to European scholarship. Our fellow scholar at the Society, P. P. Semenov, publishing the second volume of his translation of Ritter's 'Erdkunde von Asien', came to the conclusion that Central Asia is no more studied than the interior of Africa. Indeed, the inconsistent and contradictory information provided by our geographical literature makes this country, if not a complete *terra incognita* ... then at the very least a difficult scholarly riddle.¹

The sense that almost nothing was known about Central Asia, particularly the territories south of the Aral Sea that were the object of military action in the 1860s, was highly pervasive. This 'little studied' land was seen as geographically remote, difficult to access, and was evocatively portrayed as a liminal entity on the margins of the known world.² Yet only six years later, successful military operations in the heart of the region facilitated the amalgamation of these lands into the newly-created Governor Generalship of Turkestan, Russia's latest addition to empire. While the conquest was the culmination of processes that had been underway for at least two centuries, the creation of Turkestan on 11 July 1867 was a decisive moment that gave birth to a new political-administrative unit, and was an exercise in artificially generating a new bounded space. 'Turkestan' as conceived by the Russians had never previously existed, yet from this moment on, it was as much a part of the cartography of empire as were Russia's other provinces.³

This chapter traces the evolution of 'Turkestan' as a bounded space, from its conquest and transformation into a *krai* of the Russian empire to subsequent development under its first Governor General. Central to my discussion is the suggestion that the legal delineation of Turkestan as an administrative entity was only the initial enactment of a multi-faceted process to 'make' Turkestan: while the imperial declaration of 1867 at a stroke gave birth to Turkestan, the

¹ Ch. Ch. Valikhanov, 'Ocherki Dzhungarii', in N. I. Veselovskii (ed.), *Sochineniia Chokana Chingisovicha Valikhanova*, SPb: Tip. Glavnogo upravleniia udelov, 1904, p. 41, first published in *Zapiski Imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva*, 1861, vol. 1, pp. 184-200, and vol. 2, pp. 35-58. In mentioning his colleague at the 'Society', Valikhanov was referring to the Imperial Russian Geographic Society, of which both men were members.

² For a detailed discussion of the importance of geographically and culturally liminal places, see R. Shields, *Places on the margin: Alternative geographies of modernity*, London: Routledge, 1991.

³ The term Turkestan as a geographical point of reference had however been used by early Arab geographers to refer to the land beyond the Syr-Dar'ia river, meaning 'the land of the Turkic nomads', S. Soucek, *A history of Inner Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 25.

full development of the region as an imperial space took far longer, and manifested itself in ways more diverse and complex than textual legalese. As Evtuhov demonstrates convincingly in her work on Nizhnii Novgorod, a *krai* or province was much more than a mere ‘technical, administrative designation’. As well as being a political unit, a province was also socially and economically constituted, a ‘porous’ space formed by ‘commercial, intellectual, and political activities’ with borders that did not necessarily match the boundaries marked on the political map.⁴ Thus I conceptualise Turkestan as a spatial entity that was formed not simply by its official geographical demarcation, but also by the actions and imaginations of those living within, and sometimes beyond, its bounds. Of particular interest to this study is how visual representations in printed media contributed to the overall construction of Turkestan as space, and how intriguing intersections were forged between Russian attempts to physically remake space through interventions in the landscape, the visual framing of such actions, and the deployment of this visual material in discourses about Turkestan as a social and political space. This chapter provides a brief overview of the ways in which Russians established their visual and textual representations of Central Asia during the years of conquest, and outlines the importance of looking beyond this period in order to understand the complex and changing nature of Turkestan as a material and cognitive spatial entity.

Following a brief narration of the Russian conquest, and a discussion of Turkestan as a geographic, demographic and administrative space, the chapter focuses primarily on the premiership of Turkestan’s first Governor General, K. P. von Kaufman, from 1867-1881.⁵ While this period directly precedes the main chronological focus of the thesis, I consider it to be a formative era, particularly in terms of cultural patronage, when the foundations of Turkestan, and of Russian attitudes to it, were first clearly articulated. Kaufman’s quest for knowledge and concomitantly, control, of the new region’s lands and population was manifest in a number of textual and visual projects that rendered the territory as a known entity, and which initiated a number of long-standing notions about the region as a remote, archaic and potentially threatening space, in terms of its human and physical landscapes. Finally, the chapter suggests that rather than view the Kaufman era as the period in which Turkestan was ‘made’, it is more instructive to treat it as only the precursor to an age in which more evolved ideas about Turkestan as a spatial entity took shape, catalysed by attempts to reform and infiltrate the physical landscape. It provides a brief overview of the main political and social developments post-1881, sufficient I hope to inform the reader as to the relevant main trends. Subsequent chapters will address certain aspects in more detail, particularly attitudes towards the land, the development of urban and rural settlement, and the role of religion in Russian spatial understandings.

⁴ C. Evtuhov, *Portrait of a Russian province: Economy, society, and civilisation in nineteenth-century Nizhnii Novgorod*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011, pp. 6-7, 247, and also A. Remnev, ‘Siberia and the Russian Far East in the imperial geography of power’, in J. Burbank, M. von Hagen & A. Remnev (eds), *Russian empire: Space, people, power, 1700-1930*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007, pp. 437-438. For more on socially-constructed space, see Shields, *Places on the margin*.

⁵ Prior to Kaufman’s rule, M. G. Chernaiev and D. I. Romanovskii had both been Governors of Turkestan in 1865-1866, but before it acquired the status of a fully-fledged Governor Generalship.

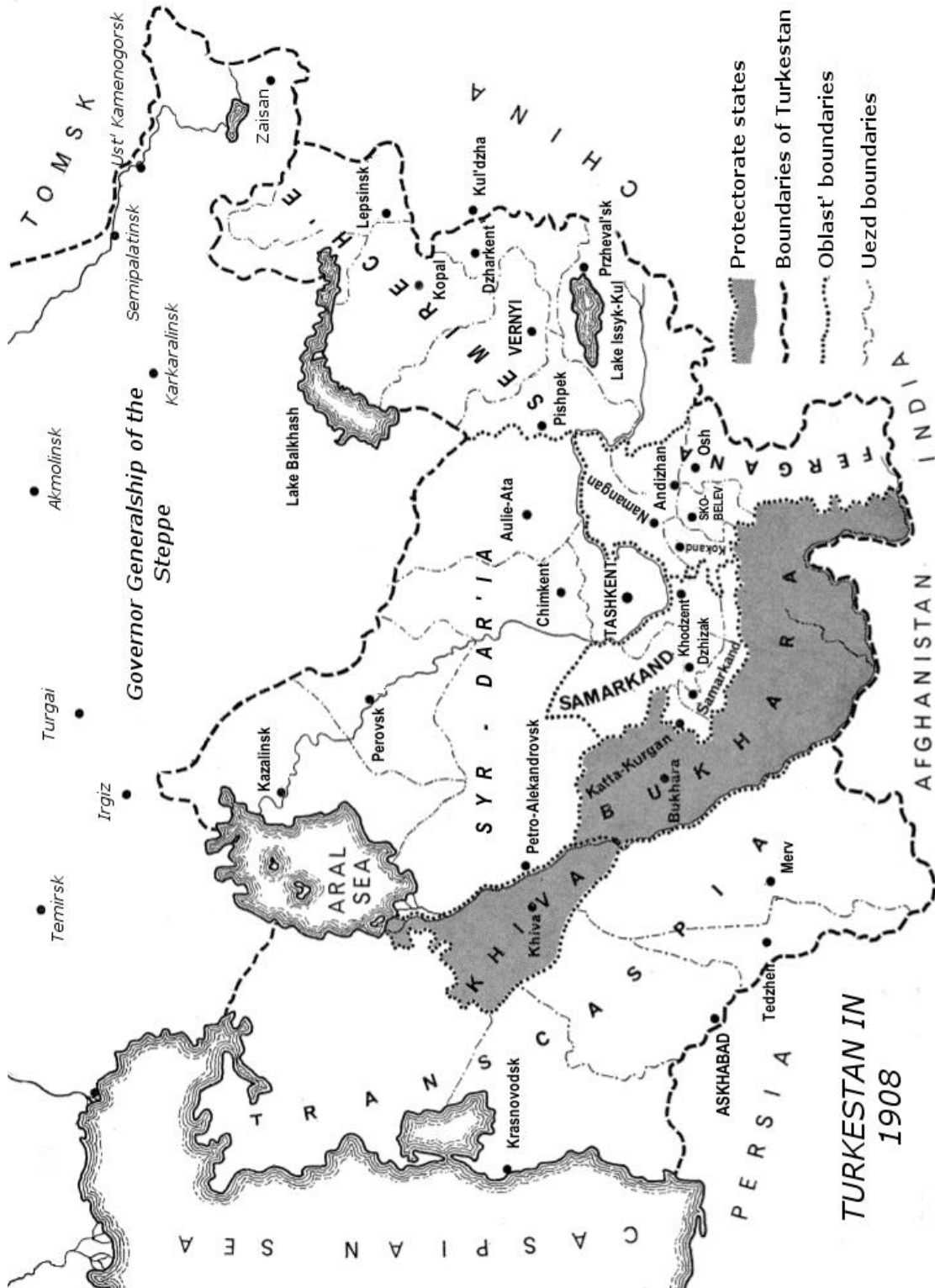


Figure 1. Turkestan in 1908.

Founding Turkestan: Conquest, administration, geography

By the 1850s, the region that would become known as Turkestan in 1867 consisted of fragmented ethnic, sedentary and nomadic groups, predominantly ruled by the Khanates of Kokand and Khiva and the Emirate of Bukhara. These lands took in large parts of the historical region of Transoxania (the 'land beyond the Oxus' - the Amu-Dar'ia river), Bactria and Sogdia, including the historic cities of Samarkand, Bukhara and Merv which had been great centres of civilisation and learning in preceding centuries. Falling to Islamic conquest in the seventh and eighth centuries, the region again succumbed to invasion during the thirteenth century at the hands of the Mongols, and following the brief flourishing of the Timurid empire in the early fifteenth century, by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had entered a period of relative economic and political decline.⁶

The broad strokes of the Russian conquest are well known.⁷ Russian interests in Central Asia extended back for many centuries, developing as the empire expanded towards the south with the incorporation of Kazan (1552), Astrakhan, at the north of the Caspian Sea (1556) and Crimea (1783). As early as the fifteenth century, 'Russians and Central Asian merchants had long been engaged in exchanging goods', while trade and diplomatic ties strengthened during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁸ While Central Asia remained a distant and exotic land, it held particular fascination for its economic possibilities, both in terms of its natural wealth and of its strategic location between Russia and the Indian sub-continent. Peter the Great, Catherine the Great and Paul I all dispatched missions to the region with an eye to exploiting its resources or gaining access to India, resulting perhaps most spectacularly in the failed expedition of Prince A. Bekovich-Cherkasskii in 1717, which ended with the unfortunate Prince's body decapitated, stuffed and put on display in Khiva.⁹ A little over a century later, in 1839, a similar fate befell another campaign against Khiva, led by the Governor General of Orenburg, V. A. Perovskii, although it was the distance to Khiva and the hostile environment that overcame Perovskii and his 5000 men, rather than the Khivan army.

⁶ It remains beyond the confines of this study to discuss the wider history of Central Asia in any depth, but surveys are to be found in S. N. Abashin (ed.), *Tsentrāl'naia Aziia v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii*, Moscow: NLO, 2008, pp. 15-26; C. Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road: A history of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the present*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009; D. Christian, *A history of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, vol. 1, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998; P. Golden, *Central Asia in world history*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011; A. A. Kokoshin (ed.), *Rossiiā – Sredniaia Aziia*, vol. 1, Moscow: Lenand, URSS, 2011, pp. 12-89; L. Kwanten, *Imperial nomads: A history of Central Asia, 500-1500*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979; Soucek, *A history of Inner Asia*; S. F. Starr, *Lost enlightenment: Central Asia's golden age from the Arab conquest to Tamerlane*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

⁷ See detailed accounts in, amongst others, Abashin, *Tsentrāl'naia Aziia v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii*, pp. 31-85; E. Allworth, *Central Asia: A century of Russian rule*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967, pp. 131-150; Kokoshin, *Rossiiā – Sredniaia Aziia*, vol. 1, pp. 96-122; R. Pierce, *Russian Central Asia: A study in colonial rule, 1867-1917*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960, pp. 17-45; A. V. Postnikov, *Stanovlenie rubezhei Rossii v Tsentrāl'noi i Srednei Azii (XVIII-XIX vv.)*, Moscow: Pamiatniki istoricheskoi mysli, 2007, chapters two and four.

⁸ A. Donnelly, 'Peter the Great and Central Asia', *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 1975, 17: 2-3, p. 203.

⁹ Donnelly, 'Peter the Great and Central Asia', pp. 210-212, and D. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, 'Paul's Great Game: Russia's plan to invade British India', *CAS*, 2014, 33: 2, pp. 143-152. For more on the Bekovich-Cherkasskii fiasco, see E. Allworth, *The Modern Uzbeks: From the fourteenth century to the present: A cultural history*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1990, pp. 95-98.

More meaningful territorial expansion followed soon after, as twin offensives from Orenburg and Semipalatinsk began to merge Russia's frontier lines. The imperial border had been advancing into the Kazakh steppe to the north of Turkestan from the mid-eighteenth century, gradually incorporating the lands of the Lesser and Middle Hordes until only the Greater Horde remained in the region known as Zhetysu (what would become Semirech'e).¹⁰ Military posts had been established in the steppe at Akmolinsk, Turgai and Irgiz during the 1830s and 1840s, and inroads further south and east were made into the lands of the Great Horde, at the expense of Kokand, with the capture of Lepsinsk in 1846, Kopal in 1847, the establishment of Vernyi in 1854, and the growth of Cossack villages in the region from 1847 onwards. Despite a hiatus during the Crimean War, a concerted effort to close the established defensive lines at the Syr-Dar'ia river with the eastern Siberian frontier was eventually successful, with Russian troops moving south through the oasis towns of Chimkent and Aulie-Ata in 1864, and finally reaching Tashkent in 1865.¹¹

The better-known Russian advances from 1865 onwards were thus the culmination of the above processes, and marked the final point on the south-eastern trajectory of Russia's expansion into Muslim territory that had begun with the conquest of Kazan in 1552.¹² Cherniaev's storm of Tashkent in 1865 marked the decisive moment of the campaign, and the town fell rapidly, providing Russia with a new base in the heart of what would shortly become Turkestan. Kokand, Bukhara and Khiva were reduced to vassalage with relative speed and minimal loss of life from the Russian perspective: the Khanate of Kokand in 1866, followed by the capitulation of Bukhara in 1868 after the capture of Samarkand. A successful campaign to the oasis of Khiva in 1873 allowed Russia to take control of the lands to the right of the Amu-Dar'ia river, thus controlling the entire region. Both Bukhara and Khiva lost substantial amounts of territory, while their remaining lands became protectorates of the Russian state.¹³ Turkestan's ultimate shape would be confirmed by further developments in the later 1870s and 1880s. An uprising in Kokand in 1875 resulted in the wholesale annexation of the entire protectorate, which became the Fergana *oblast'*. Russian military attention subsequently turned to the west of the Amu-Dar'ia, and skirmishes with nomadic Turkmen tribes continued until 1881, with the decisive battle of Gok-Tepe, after which

¹⁰ As Morrison and others have pointed out, while the steppe had been officially incorporated into the empire, in many social and legal respects it 'remained a foreign territory' until into the 1860s, A. Morrison, 'Russia, Khoqand, and the search for a "natural" frontier, 1863-1865', *Ab Imperio*, 2014, 2, p. 171. See also I. Campbell, 'Knowledge and power on the Kazakh steppe, 1845-1917', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2011, and V. Martin, *Law and custom in the steppe: The Kazakhs of the Middle Horde and Russian colonialism in the nineteenth century*, Richmond: Curzon, 2001.

¹¹ For a detailed contemporary account of these movements, see M. A. Terent'ev, *Istoriia zavoevaniia Srednei Azii*, SPb: Tip. V. V. Komarova, 1903-1906. A full English language re-examination of the conquest is currently being prepared for Cambridge University Press by Alexander Morrison.

¹² For a broad sample of literature that reviews Russia's imperial expansion, see N. Breyfogle, A. Schrader & W. Sunderland (eds), *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland colonization in Eurasian history*, London: Routledge, 2007; M. Khodarkovsky, *Russia's steppe frontier: The making of a colonial empire, 1500-1800*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002; J. Pallot & D. Shaw, *Landscape and settlement in Romanov Russia, 1613-1917*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990; W. Sunderland, *Taming the wild field: Colonization and empire on the Russian steppe*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.

¹³ See S. Becker, *Russia's protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968, for a detailed discussion of the protectorates.

Transcaspia was declared an *oblast'* of the empire. The town of Merv was acquired in 1884, at which point the pacification of the region was almost entirely complete.¹⁴

These years of conquest have recently undergone a degree of re-evaluation.¹⁵ Traditionally regarded as being primarily motivated by a combination of economic factors (the acquisition of raw materials, particularly cotton, and new markets) and Russian expansionist ambition, the conquest has been reinterpreted by Morrison as being far less entangled with the dynamics of the Great Game or the Russian economy than previously thought. Far from being a planned strategy, particularly after the fall of Tashkent, expansion was also inextricably tied to the difficulties of finding a suitable delineating line at which to halt the campaign, and to rising internal instability within the political spheres of Kokand, Khiva and Bukhara, with Russian motives often 'contradictory and unclear'.¹⁶ Certainly the conquest was more complex and less pre-ordained than the triumphalist version of events narrated by Russian contemporaries, who trumpeted their crusading mission to liberate the region from despotism and to challenge British claims to the surrounding lands.¹⁷ As military campaigns drew to a close, the demarcation of the southernmost border of the Russian empire in Turkestan was to many contemporary Russians an understandable consequence of the gradual southern shift of the imperial frontier that had been taking place for four centuries: a move seen as expansion into largely 'empty' space, and one dependent on the discovery of a 'natural' border - a mountain range, river or watershed - that would mark the end of the Russian advance.¹⁸

While the protracted process of conquest and pacification continued into the 1880s, it quickly became limited to Turkestan's contested border regions. By 1875, a substantial Russian core had been established in Central Asia. In order to regulate and rule this expanding heartland, in 1867 the region was formally organised into the Governor Generalship of Turkestan, with its military and administrative seat at Tashkent.¹⁹ Initially, the new region consisted of only two *oblasti*: Syr-Dar'ia and Semirech'e. In the wake of ongoing expansion, Fergana *oblast'* was formed in 1876, Samarkand in 1887 (from the Zeravshan *okrug*, formed in 1868), and Transcaspia in 1881. Thus at its largest extent, Turkestan as a geographic unit consisted of five *oblasti*, from west to east:

¹⁴ Apart from the ceding of Kul'dzha in 1881 and the acquisition of the Pamir region in 1895, Russia's borders in Central Asia remained stable until the collapse of the empire in 1917.

¹⁵ See for instance the recent special issue of *Central Asian Survey*, 2014, 33: 2.

¹⁶ A. Morrison, 'Killing the cotton canard and getting rid of the Great Game: Rewriting the Russian conquest of Central Asia, 1814-1895', *CAS*, 2014, 33: 2, p. 138. Morrison notes the unsatisfactory historiography of the conquest period, with Central Asian accounts 'too nationalistic', Russian accounts relying too much on the notion of '*prisoedinenie*', and little comprehensive coverage in the English language, see pp. 131-132.

¹⁷ For two such accounts, see Terent'ev, *Istoriia zavoevaniia Srednei Azii*, and D. I. Romanovskii, *Zametki po sredneaziatskomu voprosu*, SPb: [n. p.], 1868. A useful collection of relevant military documents can be found in A. G. Serebrennikov, *Turkestanskii krai, sbornik materialov dlia istorii ego zavoevaniia*, Tashkent: Izd. Shtaba Turkestanskogo voennogo okruga, 1914.

¹⁸ For nuanced discussions of this, see S. Gorshenina, *Asie centrale. L'invention des frontières et l'héritage russo-soviétique*, Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2012, pp. 45-70, and Morrison, 'Russia, Khoqand, and the search for a "natural" frontier'.

¹⁹ *PSZ*, second series, vol. 42, 11 July 1867, No. 44831. For an elaboration of Turkestan's initial administrative formation, see D. Mackenzie, 'Kaufman of Turkestan: An assessment of his administration 1867-1881', *SR*, 1967, 26: 2, pp. 266-267, and N. Khalfin, *Politika Rossii v Srednei Azii, 1857-1868*, Moscow: Izd. Vostochnoi literatury, 1960, pp. 191-233.

Transcaspia (regional capital at Askhabad), Syr-Dar'ia (regional capital Tashkent), Samarkand (regional capital Samarkand), Fergana (regional capital Skobelev - initially named Novyi Margelan), and Semirech'e (regional capital Vernyi), with the two dependent protectorates of Bukhara and Khiva located to the east of Transcaspia (figure 1). In turn, these five *oblasti* were bordered to the north by the Governor Generalship of the Steppe (consisting of much of present-day central and northern Kazakhstan, in the form of Ural'sk, Turgai, Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk *oblasti*); the Caspian coastline to the west; and to the south and east, Persia, Afghanistan, British India and the Qing empire. In a similar fashion to other Asiatic regions of the Russian empire, Turkestan remained under military rule until the collapse of the tsarist regime. At its head, the Governor General reported directly to the War Ministry, and combined both civil and military duties in one post. Beneath the Governor General were regional governors, assisted by a provincial board. Individual *oblasti* were subdivided into *uezdy*, each with its own local administration, while major cities retained separate administrations under a City Commandant.²⁰

If this sketches the general form of Turkestan as a political unit, what could be found within its borders? In environmental terms, Turkestan's landscapes were dominated by three main features: steppes and deserts, mountain chains and rivers.²¹ The Pamir, Tian Shan and southern Altai mountain ranges formed a natural border to the south and east, enclosing the otherwise predominantly low-lying Central Asian plains. Water, or the lack thereof, played a dominant role, with the Caspian Sea providing Turkestan's western border, and other notable bodies of water including the Aral Sea, and Lakes Balkhash and Issyk Kul in Semirech'e. Flowing from the mountain ranges in the south, rivers bisected the region, including Central Asia's two mightiest waterways, the Amu-Dar'ia and the Syr-Dar'ia, and the Zeravshan, Chu and Ili towards the east.²² The bulk of the terrain consisted of evocatively-named arid or semi-arid land: the Kyzyl Kum (Red Sands), located between the Amu-Dar'ia and Syr-Dar'ia; the Kara Kum (Black Sands), between the Caspian and the Amu-Dar'ia; the Betpak Dala (the Plain of Misfortune or the 'Hungry Steppe'), south and west of lake Balkhash; and the Ust-Yurt plateau between the Aral and Caspian Seas. These deserts, predominantly sandy in the case of the first two, and clayey or stony in respect of the Betpak Dala and Ust-Yurt plateau, were largely hostile to human settlement, and only sparsely populated. Travelling from west to east, desert terrain gave way to plain lands, particularly east of the Syr-Dar'ia. There, and in the southern foothills of the Fergana valley and the Issyk Kul region, the land was more fertile, yet everywhere, settlement was dependent on the presence of water, or more commonly, on irrigation canals that could carry water from its source to fields and villages.

²⁰ For more on the structure and governance of Turkestan in the early years, see Mackenzie, 'Kaufman of Turkestan', pp. 265-285, and Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, pp. 64-78.

²¹ Detailed geographical descriptions can be found in Allworth, *Central Asia*, pp. 112-130; M. Peterson, 'Technologies of rule: Empire, water, and the modernization of Central Asia, 1867-1941', unpublished PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2011, pp. 9, 39-117; Soucek, *A history of Inner Asia*, pp. 1-29; J. Sparks, *Realms of the Russian bear: A natural history of Russia and the Central Asian republics*, London: BBC Books, 1992, pp. 78-153, as well as contemporary accounts, including N. A. Maev, 'Topograficheskii ocherk Turkestanskogo kraia', in N. A. Maev (ed.), *Materialy dlia statistiki Turkestanskogo kraia. Ezhegodnik*, SPb: Izd. Turkestanskogo statisticheskogo komiteta, 1872, part 1, pp. 7-118, and *RPGONO*, pp. 1-272.

²² The Russian name 'Semirech'e' is a calque derived from the Turkic 'Zhetysu': 'seven rivers'.

The local population living on these lands comprised predominantly Turkic-speaking groups: Kazakhs, Karakalpaks, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Uzbeks, Uighurs, and Persian-speaking Tajiks, to use current national groupings.²³ Russians at the time however rarely made this distinction, using instead the all-encompassing label of *'inorodtsy'* or *'tuzemtsy'*, or *'Sart'* to refer to the Turkic-speaking sedentary population.²⁴ Within these groups, inhabitants conformed to two very distinct ways of life: the settled population, found in urban areas and rural agricultural land across Turkestan, and nomadic peoples, highly mobile, retaining their tribal structures and largely dependent on pastoralism.²⁵ The main pockets of nomadic life were constituted by the Turkmen of Transcaspia and in greater number by the Kazakh and Kyrgyz populations of Semirech'e and eastern Syr-Dar'ia. In contrast, the sedentary population occupied a relatively narrow, horizontal corridor of settlement that cut across the course of various rivers, extending from Merv, through Bukhara, Samarkand and Kokand, to Tashkent, Andizhan and Osh.

As Peterson suggests in her study of Central Asian irrigation, this brief geographic and demographic survey is by no means part of the usual 'background' survey of the region's physical features that is customary in research into Central Asia.²⁶ Rather, the landscapes described here are at the heart of this thesis; they were the raw materials with which Russian incomers sought to reorder and redefine space on physical and cognitive scales. Landscape, in both natural and built guises, was woven into evolving Russian notions of Turkestan as a spatial entity, whether as a distant, barren and uncivilised cul-de-sac at the southern tip of empire, a fertile reservoir of raw materials, a 'Russian-looking' home, or a fragmented vision of all of the above.

Making imperial space: The Kaufman era

Physical conquest and the codification of geographical and administrative limits in Russian law served to establish Turkestan as a political entity within the imperial system. Yet the production of Turkestan as something beyond mere lines on the map of empire was a far more long-term and multi-faceted process. This 'building' process took place textually, in the writing of scientific works, geographies and ethnographies; legally, in attempts to codify important issues such as land tenure and property rights; visually, in the form of photographs, art and cartography; socially, in the interactions between Russians and local inhabitants; and physically, in the creation of Russia's environmental imprint in the shape of new settlements, infrastructure, irrigation and agriculture. All of these endeavours influenced, and were influenced by, contemporary Russian attitudes towards Turkestan as an imperial space.

²³ For a detailed example of Russian knowledge about the ethnic composition of Turkestan in the early 1870s, see A. V. Buniakovskii, 'O prostranstve i naselenii Turkestanskogo kraia', in Maev, *Materialy dlia statistiki Turkestanskogo kraia*, pp. 119-133, and later in *RPGONO*, pp. 273-585. Rather confusingly, Russians referred to Kazakhs as 'Kirgiz', and to Kyrgyz as 'Kara-Kirgiz'.

²⁴ The use of the term 'Sart' had pejorative connotations in this context. The application of these labels will be discussed further in chapter three.

²⁵ Exact figures are difficult to find, but it was estimated that nomads constituted one and a half million out of a total population of six and a half million in 1909 (excluding Bukhara and Khiva), *RPGONO*, p. 352.

²⁶ Peterson, 'Technologies of rule', p. 3.

During the years of conquest, a repeated trope in Russian discourse on Central Asia was that very little was known about the region, and indeed, Morrison attributes Russia's geographical ignorance of the area's topography as a key reason for the continuing advance of the imperial frontier, as military officials searched for a natural border that proved unforthcoming.²⁷ As noted in the introduction to the thesis, the Russian-language newspaper set up in Tashkent acknowledged in 1870 that until recent times, Turkestan was *less* familiar to the Russian observer than the moon. Similar textual claims about Central Asia's status as a 'terra incognita', a 'little-known' and 'little-studied' land, were extremely widespread in the metropolitan and local Russian press and the early monographs on the region.²⁸ Despite claiming to know very little about their newest imperial possession, Russians had an awful lot to say on the topic. The conquest was seen by imperial officials and the press through the lens of Russia's moral superiority and Central Asia's supposed 'backwardness'. A. M. Gorchakov, Russian Foreign Minister in 1864, characterised the relationship as 'that of all civilised states which come into contact with semi-savage and itinerant ethnic groups without a structured social organisation'.²⁹ This depiction of a temporally-distant Other was offset by the empire's 'civilising' abilities, with Russia apparently 'ready to penetrate with her rays the nations now wandering in the darkness of ignorance'.³⁰ Such attitudes were rooted in ongoing debates about Russia's wider oriental heritage and pre-destined expansion into Asia, as part of a turn away from the west towards a new Asiatic future, albeit one that largely sustained notions of Russia's 'difference' from her Asiatic subjects.³¹

Russia's perceived moral and cultural distance from the target of its 'civilising' efforts was matched geographically by parallel impressions of Turkestan's physical liminality, both in terms of the region's location over a thousand miles from the imperial centre, and the peculiarity of its natural environment. Alterity could be found not just in the partially nomadic, Muslim population, but also in the rock, sand and water that they lived amongst: 'here everything is new, everyone lives a distinctive kind of life, in a distinctive atmosphere, the kind of which we do not encounter in any of our other southern and eastern lands'.³² This 'distinctiveness' was in large part acknowledged as being intimately connected to the scale and topography of the Central Asian landscape, which even as late as 1913 continued to impress and intimidate in equal measure:

²⁷ Morrison, 'Russia, Khoqand, and the search for a "natural" frontier', p. 168.

²⁸ See for instance the opening characterisation of Turkestan in N. A. Maev, 'Predislovie', in Maev, *Materialy dlia statistiki Turkestanskogo kraia*, p. 3.

²⁹ 'Gorchakov circular', November 1864, cited in A. Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A multi-ethnic history*, Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001, p. 194.

³⁰ M. A. Terent'ev, *Rossiia i Angliia v Srednei Azii*, SPb: Tip. P. P. Merkul'eva, 1875, p. 354.

³¹ For a more detailed discussion of Russia's turn to the east, see M. Bassin, 'Nationhood, natural regions, *mestorazvitie* – Environmentalist discourses in classical Eurasianism', in M. Bassin, C. Ely & M. Stockdale (eds), *Space, place and power in modern Russia: Issues in the new spatial history*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010, pp. 49-78; M. Bassin, 'Russia between Europe and Asia: The ideological construction of geographic space', *SR*, 1991, 50: 1, pp. 1-17; N. Riasanovsky, 'Asia through Russian eyes', in W. Vucinich, *Russia and Asia: Essays on the influence of Russia on the Asian peoples*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972, pp. 3-29; D. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian mind from Peter the Great to the emigration*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010; V. 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, especially pp. 47-68.

³² Maev, 'Predislovie', p. 3.

'here, everything is not simply distinctive, but also grandiose: The waterless steppes and deserts cover many hundreds of thousands of square miles, lakes are so large that some of them are called seas, rivers rival the largest European waterways in length, depressions lie lower than sea level, and mountain systems are amongst the highest on the planet'.³³

Located within the borders of these deserts and mountains, Turkestan's urban centres could only be reached by an expedition of days through steppe and desert on all sides, an experience that led many travellers in the Kaufman period to inscribe the difficulties of their journey into impressions of Central Asia's geographic location. As will be seen in chapter two, it would not be until the first railway was built that Russian characterisations of their presence 'at the edges of the civilised world', or in the 'depths' of 'isolated' Central Asia, would begin to recede.³⁴ These landscapes were widely conceived as 'empty' and 'lifeless', characterised almost everywhere by deterioration:

Central Asia, in its present stage of social organisation, presents a truly mournful spectacle; her present stage of development being, so to speak, a sort of pathological crisis. The whole country, without exaggeration, is nothing but one vast waste, intersected here and there by abandoned canals and wells. The desolate sandy plains, dotted occasionally with ruins and overgrown with ugly prickly shrubs and tamarisks, are wandered over by herds of wild asses, and hardly less shy and timid saigaks. In the midst of this Sahara, along the banks of the rivers occur small oases, shaded by the poplar, elm, and mulberry; while nothing intervenes to break the monotony of the scene, apart from here and there badly cultivated rice-fields and cotton plantations, diversified by occasional vineyards and orchards, abandoned by the lazy and irresponsible population to the care of Allah.³⁵

As will be discussed in chapters three and four, Russian visitors and inhabitants labelled these rural landscapes as at best in decline, and at worst, openly hostile, while urban zones were decried as squalid and unclean. In very specific cases, such as discussions of cotton cultivation, exceptions to such negative descriptions could be found,³⁶ but by and large, 'everywhere the Russians looked in Central Asia, the physical landscapes - both urban and rural - seemed intimately linked to the backwardness of the people who inhabited them'.³⁷ As will be seen in the following chapters, such discourses made convenient foils for the elaboration of Russia's proclaimed civilising mission, both in terms of reforming the indigenous population, and of particular interest here, in improving the land by 'fertilise[ing] this huge and hitherto unproductive space'.³⁸

It was against this rhetorical backdrop that the process of making the region into an imperial space began in 1867, under the leadership of Governor General Konstantin von Kaufman. The

³³ *RPGONO*, p. 2.

³⁴ *Niva*, 1872, No. 38, pp. 597-601, and Maev, 'Topograficheskii ocherk', p. 7.

³⁵ Valikhanov, 'Ocherki Dzhungarii', p. 41.

³⁶ See for instance Central Asia described as 'richly endowed with the gifts of nature' in *TV*, 1870, No. 1, p. 2.

³⁷ Peterson, 'Technologies of rule', p. 15.

³⁸ *Sredniaia Aziia i ee prigodnost' dlia vodvorenii russkoi zhizni*, SPb: Tip. S. Muller & I. Bogel'man, 1889, p. 49.

framework of Kaufman's governance continued to dominate Russian policy on Turkestan for almost the entire tsarist period, and was one predicated on 'mechanisms of exclusion' that could uphold colonial difference.³⁹ Underlying this notion of alterity was the understanding that the native population was under the influence of 'fanatical Islam', and from the outset, religion assumed a dominant role in political administration. Kaufman instituted a policy of '*ignorirovanie*' or 'disregard', under which Islam was isolated from the public sphere in the anticipation that it would wither and die.⁴⁰ Direct intervention in Muslim affairs was seen as risking inflaming deep-seated 'fanaticism', and thus the decades that followed the conquest were characterised to a large extent by religious toleration, as Russian administrative rule and Islamic Sharia law became entangled in an often uneasy relationship. Although much work has been done recently to underscore the level of contact between indigenous and Russian populations, for instance the role of local intermediaries as a 'living wall' in the colonial administration,⁴¹ or the inter-mingling of groups in urban zones,⁴² '*ignorirovanie*' was in no small part central to the political codification of alterity that reinforced the divide between Russians and local people. Under Kaufman's leadership, Turkestan was ruled under its own legal statute, separate from the rest of empire, while locals were deliberately isolated from the Muslim spiritual assembly in Orenburg, were unable to gain access to the imperial system of ranks, were exempt from military conscription, and were allowed leeway to retain many aspects of their existing educational, social and legal systems. In this sense, while Russian policies of colonial rule may not have been particularly pernicious in comparison to forced conversion and Russification elsewhere, the population was largely kept at arm's length, with the implicit recognition on the part of their Russian rulers that a prolonged period under the influence of a 'civilised', 'European' power would eventually reform local society.

Kaufman's work to construct Turkestan as an imperial space was also articulated via culture, the arts and sciences.⁴³ Indeed, his era is particularly distinctive as an extensive period of cultural patronage, due both to its chronological position as Turkestan's formative two decades, and to the character of Kaufman himself. As such, the years from 1867 to the early 1880s have attracted the lion's share of work undertaken by cultural historians working on the region. Svetlana Gorshenina in particular has done much to uncover the cultural dimensions of Kaufman's Governorship and

³⁹ A. Khalid, 'Culture and power in colonial Turkestan', in S. Gorshenina & S. Abashin (eds), *Le Turkestan Russe: Une colonie comme les autres?* [Cahiers d'Asie Centrale No. 17-18], Tashkent, Paris: IFÉAC, 2009, p. 415.

⁴⁰ Two concise explications of Russian rule and Islam can be found in D. Brower, *Turkestan and the fate of the Russian empire*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, chapter four, and A. Morrison, *Russian rule in Samarkand 1868-1910: A comparison with British India*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, chapter two. For more detail on the dynamics of religion, see M. A. Batunskii, *Rossii i Islam*, Moscow: Progress-Traditsiia, 2003, particularly vol. 2; R. Crews, *For prophet and tsar: Islam and politics in Russia and Central Asia*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006, chapter five; A. Khalid, *The politics of Muslim cultural reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998; Kokoshin, *Rossii - Sredniaia Aziia*, vol. 1, particularly pp. 123-133; T. Uyama (ed.), *Empire, Islam and politics in Central Eurasia*, Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2007. For non-tsarist-centric approaches, see J. Thrower, *The religious history of Central Asia from the earliest times to the present day*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004, and A. C. Van Gorder, *Muslim-Christian relations in Central Asia*, London: Routledge, 2008.

⁴¹ Morrison, *Russian rule in Samarkand*, chapter five.

⁴² J. Sahadeo, *Russian colonial society in Tashkent, 1865-1923*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.

⁴³ For more, see S. Zenkovsky, 'Kulturkampf in pre-revolutionary Central Asia', *American Slavic and East European Review*, 1955, 14: 1, pp. 15-41, and Brower, *Turkestan and the fate of the Russian empire*, pp. 26-56.

his role in 'inventing' and 'crafting' Turkestan, pointing to Kaufman's part in shaping 'the very contours of Russian Central Asia' through projects that included 'archaeology, museology, documentation and photography'.⁴⁴

As Governor General, Kaufman wielded a good deal of autonomous power. Keen to banish ideas of Turkestan as an unknown, distant and mysterious land, he personally patronised projects and institutions that would enshrine and advance Russian knowledge of the region. Following the installation of a printing press in Tashkent, the newspaper industry flourished, as did locally-printed journals, pamphlets and monographs.⁴⁵ Libraries, theatres and museums opened, along with regional branches of imperial societies devoted to the study of local history, geology, geography, agriculture, ethnography and archaeology.⁴⁶ As Bradley notes, these societies were important crucibles for the collection, preservation and inculcation of scientific, technical and geographic knowledge, and as will be seen in chapter six, also had an important role to play in bridging the gap between imperial and local social groups.⁴⁷ Kaufman's quest for 'total knowledge' took physical form most strikingly in his commissioning of the *Turkestanskii Sbornik*, a collection containing copies of all newspaper and journal articles pertaining to Turkestan, along with innumerate sections from other printed texts, in Russian, French, German, Italian, Spanish and English, that extended in its final form to 594 volumes, along with detailed indexes.⁴⁸

As Gorshenina suggests, these projects were as much a quest to present an image of *Kaufman's* Turkestan as they were of Russian Turkestan.⁴⁹ Indeed, so central was Kaufman's personal vision to Turkestan's formative years that his memorial in Tashkent's cathedral labelled him the region's 'builder' and 'protector'.⁵⁰ Beyond personal hubris however, the significance of cultural patronage under Kaufman was its exercise of knowledge as a tool of colonial rule, by which land and people could be controlled via the production and dissemination of scholarship.⁵¹ Knowledge legitimised

⁴⁴ S. Gorshenina, 'Kaufmann at the interface between imperial Russia and the Persianate world', paper given at the University of Manchester, April 2015.

⁴⁵ N. A. Abduazizova, *Pechat' i stroitel'stvo sotsializma*, Tashkent: "Uzbekistan", 1977, chapter one, and M. B. Babakhanov, *Iz istorii periodicheskoi pechati Turkestana*, Dushanbe: Donish, 1987.

⁴⁶ B. V. Lunin, *Nauchnye obshchestva Turkestana i ikh progressivnaia deiatel'nost'*. *Konets XIX-nachalo XX v.*, Tashkent: Izd. Akademii nauk UzSSR, 1962, particularly pp. 1-33. See also 'Epokha Turkestanskogo kruzha liubitelei arkeologii: Primat nauki ili geopolitiki?', in Kokoshin, *Rossia - Sredniaia Aziia*, vol. 1, pp. 171-196.

⁴⁷ J. Bradley, *Voluntary associations in tsarist Russia: Science, patriotism, and civil society*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 122-124.

⁴⁸ S. Gorshenina, 'Krupneishie proekty kolonial'nykh arkhivov Rossii: Utopichnost' total'noi Turkestaniki general-gubernatora Konstantin Petrovicha fon Kaufmana', *Ab Imperio*, 2007, 3, p. 301. For more detail on the *Sbornik*, see pp. 296-321 of Gorshenina's article, and 'Epizod iz istorii Turkestanskoi publichnoi biblioteki, osnovannoi K. P. Kaufmanom', in *Kaufmanskii sbornik, izdannyi v pamiat 25 let, istekshikh so dnia smerti pokoritelia i ustroitelia Turkestanskogo kraia general-ad'iutanta K. P. fon-Kaufmana 1-ogo*, Moscow: Tip. N. I. Kushnerev, 1910, pp. 129-138.

⁴⁹ Gorshenina, 'Krupneishie proekty', pp. 323, 334.

⁵⁰ *Kaufmanskii sbornik*, pp. i-lxxxiv. For an account of the man, his ambitions and record, see Mackenzie, 'Kaufman of Turkestan'.

⁵¹ This process is one of the basic tenets of Said's discussion of western Orientalising practices in E. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978, and E. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, London: Vintage, 1993. For international parallels, see Z. Baber, *The science of empire: Scientific knowledge, civilisation and colonial rule in India*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996; B. Cohn, *Colonialism and its forms of knowledge: The British in India*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996; G. Trumbull, *An empire of facts: Colonial power, cultural knowledge, and Islam in Algeria, 1870-1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. For explorations of the use of knowledge, facts and science as instruments of power in Russia, see

annexation, allowing Russians to portray themselves as the rightful owners of a new land that they had ‘discovered’, a new Orient full of intriguing ethnic groups, Islamic architecture and strange landscapes to be documented and possessed through textual and visual production. This in turn, in Russian eyes, allowed for a systematic demonstration of ‘the establishment of civic order, civilisation and security in a country that has for so long stagnated under the yoke of Islam and Asiatic despotism’.⁵²

Nowhere was this clearer than in the huge growth of Russian interest in local archaeology, ethnography, botany and geography that had the effect of textually producing Turkestan. A glut of scientific and geographic expeditions, many of them sponsored by Kaufman or commonly under the auspices of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, fanned out across Turkestan and surrounding territories, resulting in a wealth of textual descriptions of these ‘newly-discovered lands’ by some of the empire’s most eminent geographers and explorers.⁵³ Detailed surveys of the region produced a whole array of cartographic material, lithographed by Turkestan’s military-topographical unit, which confidently delineated the region’s geographic limits, and provided an increasingly sophisticated picture of terrain and settlement.⁵⁴ This process of exploring and mapping the landscape was far from an exact science, with mistakes in the attribution of place names or location of geographic features gradually reported, corrected and refined.⁵⁵

Such activities produced an enormous amount of knowledge about Turkestan’s climate, geography, history and population, housed in innumerate volumes, edited collections and statistical yearbooks.⁵⁶ Indeed, so much knowledge had been ‘created’ under Kaufman’s leadership, that by the final year of his Governorship, *Turkestanskije vedomosti* could claim that, in striking opposition to the opening of this chapter from 1861:

Today, Turkestan no longer has the status of a “terra incognita”, about which there are still all kinds of mythical stories, on the contrary, this land has [now] been so studied, that for those wishing to learn more about it there is [no longer] any need to undertake a long

Campbell, ‘Knowledge and power on the Kazakh steppe, 1845-1917’; F. Hirsch, *Empire of nations: Ethnographic knowledge and the making of the Soviet Union*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005, particularly pp. 10-15, 30-45; Remnev, ‘Siberia and the Russian Far East’; Tolz, *Russia’s own Orient*, particularly chapter three.

⁵² *TV*, 1870, No. 1, p. 1.

⁵³ The Imperial Russian Geographical Society had a particularly important role to play in both undertaking explorations and publishing their findings, and opened a local branch in Tashkent in 1897. Details of the Turkestan section’s publications can be found in A. A. Dostoevskii (ed.), *Ukazatel’ k izdaniiam imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva i ego otdelov s 1896 po 1905 god*, SPb: Tip. M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1910, pp. 246-250. For individual expedition accounts, see A. P. Fedchenko, *Puteshestvie v Turkestan chlenosnovatelja Obshchestva A. P. Fedchenko, sovershennoe ot Obshchestva liubitelei estestvoznaniia po porucheniiu Turkestanskogo general-gubernatora K. P. fon-Kaufmana*, SPb: Tip. M. Stasiulevicha, 1874-1888; N. A. Severtsov, *Puteshestviia po Turkestanskomu kraiu*, Moscow: OGIZ, 1947 [originally published 1873]; M. I. Veniukov, *Puteshestviia po okrainam russkoi Azii i zapiski o nikh*, SPb: Tip. Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, 1868. For an overview of the activities of Fedchenko, I. V. Mushketov, N. M. Przheval’skii, P. P. Semenov-Tian-Shanskii and Severtsov, see E. M. Murzaev, *V dalekoi Azii. Ocherki po istorii izucheniia Srednei i Tsentral’noi Azii v XIX-XX vekakh*, Moscow: Izd. Akademii nauk SSSR, 1956.

⁵⁴ ‘Topograficheskie raboty v Turkestanskom krae’, *TV*, 1870, No. 1, p. 5.

⁵⁵ ‘Materialy o netochnostiakh v karte Aziatskoi Rossii’, RGVA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 1215, for instance ll. 46, 64.

⁵⁶ See Maev, *Materialy dlia statistiki Turkestanskogo kraia*, and A. P. Khoroshkhin, *Sbornik statei kasaiushchikhsia do Turkestanskogo kraia*, SPb: Tip. A. Transhelja, 1876.

journey, but it is enough to read only the wide literature on the topic. This literature contains works about the country's physical geography and its geological composition, about its flora and fauna, about the tribal and social peculiarities of its peoples, their history, culture and trade operations, and also about the history of Russia's colonisation of the province.⁵⁷

Cultural patronage rendered Turkestan knowable, transforming it from a *terra incognita* to a recognisable spatial entity. The production of this new Turkestan privileged a Russian vision of the region: a land 'discovered', brought into existence through the appliance of scholarship, and home to environments and peoples who, when subject to such endeavours, could be described and classified. In this sense, the creation of knowledge as a form of cultural narrative was an exercise in colonial power, and did much to appropriate Central Asia's natural and historic landscapes into an ordered imperial world.⁵⁸

Space as image under Kaufman

The Kaufman era thus witnessed something of a golden age of scholarly and scientific ventures, and no less important than the evolving textual production of Turkestan were parallel attempts to visually describe the region. Visual material was a valued element of Kaufman's quest for 'total knowledge', and encompassed a range of different media, from cartography, which rendered Turkestan visible from above, fixing its borders and populating it with towns, villages, mountain ranges, rivers and plains, to art, photography and exhibitions. These early visualisations of Turkestan were dominated by two creations that are quite probably the most well-known visual works of pre-revolutionary Turkestan. The *Turkestanskii Al'bom* and Vereshchagin's Turkestan canvases were both commissioned by Kaufman, and have much to reveal about Russian attitudes towards their colonial possessions. Each has been the subject of a good deal of scholarly attention, which bears brief recap in order to place these projects, most commonly examined individually, into a single visual context. These are valuable early examples of how Turkestan as a social and geographical entity existed in image as well as text, and existing scholarship references their broadly Orientalising nature, incorporating ideas of the 'backwardness' and 'savagery' of local populations and creating a hierarchy of self and Other that mirrored the visual treatment of Muslim minorities in other regions of the Russian empire and beyond. No less informative in reconstructing the early visual imaginary of Turkestan however, are engravings published in the Russian illustrated press that provide a number of striking intersections in the portrayal of Turkestan with that of their more illustrious counterparts.

V. V. Vereshchagin's Turkestan canvases constitute a much-used source of illustration for scholarship on Central Asia, and are considered to be representative of the quintessential Russian

⁵⁷ *TV*, 1881, No. 1, page unknown. Quote from Lunin, *Nauchnye obshchestva*, p. 28.

⁵⁸ See also for instance Gorshenina's discussion of the preservation of historic monuments under Kaufman as an exercise in 'patrimonialization', that turned 'monuments of the Other' into 'historical monuments of the empire', in S. Gorshenina, 'Samarkand and its cultural heritage: Perceptions and persistence of the Russian colonial construction of monuments', *CAS*, 2014, 33: 2, pp. 246-269. For further details of preservation see also S. Gorshenina, *The private collections of Russian Turkestan in the second half of the 19th and early 20th century*, Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2004.

vision of the region.⁵⁹ His work has been subject to plentiful academic interpretation, both in a biographical or art-historical sense,⁶⁰ and in broader perspective,⁶¹ and is of value to the present study in demonstrating the pervasive visual representation of Turkestan's human and environmental alterity. As a decorated soldier in the Turkestan campaigns, Vereshchagin's experiences afforded him direct insight into the physical realities of life in Turkestan. Having received a commission from Kaufman, he arrived in the region in 1867 and produced what would become known as the 'Turkestan Series', comprising thirteen canvases and 133 drawings. In part, the major canvases spoke to Vereshchagin's ambivalence about the morality of war, and about Russian military action in Turkestan in particular: the main series framed Turkestan as a place of death for both Russian and local forces, and strikingly depicted the fate of a Russian regiment, surrounded and slaughtered by Bukharan troops.⁶² This visceral evidence of Russian mortality presented a deeply unsettling impression of the conflict, and when exhibited in Russia evoked a maelstrom of scandal. Perhaps unsurprisingly, his work was greeted with considerable negativity, with a twenty-year ban imposed on the sale or reproduction of *'Zabytyi'*, a canvas that depicted the body of a fallen Russian soldier, abandoned in the steppe. By 1874 however, large sections of the 'Turkestan Series' had been exhibited in St Petersburg, Moscow and London, to 'huge throngs' of visitors, while over forty exhibitions would take place in Russia by Vereshchagin's death in 1904.⁶³ Judging by the quantity of reviews in the press and of exhibition catalogues sold, these events were both enduringly popular and the subject of heated debate, heightened still further by Vereshchagin's destruction of several of the most critically-received canvases.⁶⁴

While Vereshchagin's images were as much a reflection on the horrors of war in the abstract as they were on Central Asia in particular, they had an important role to play in providing the foundations of Turkestan's visual image. Despite the canvases' clear contradictions (castigating the morality of *both* sides can hardly have been what Kaufman had in mind in his commission!), it has been acknowledged broadly that the artist employed key Orientalist tropes - particularly the portrayal of cruelty, fanaticism and vice - in his work.⁶⁵ The main cycle of canvases played on the symbolic repetition of decapitated heads and skulls; heads delivered to the Bukharan Emir or

⁵⁹ See for instance the covers of Abashin, *Tsentral'naia Aziia v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii*; Brower, *Turkestan and the fate of the Russian empire*; Schimmelpenninck, *Russian Orientalism*; P. Wageman & I. Kouteinikova (eds), *Russia's unknown Orient: Orientalist painting 1850-1920*, Rotterdam: NAI publishers, 2010.

⁶⁰ I. Kouteinikova, 'Vasily Vereshchagin's war and peace', in Wageman & Kouteinikova, *Russia's unknown Orient*, pp. 87-131; A. I. Kudria, *Vereshchagin*, Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2010; A. K. Lebedev, *V. V. Vereshchagin. Zhizn' i tvorchestvo, 1842-1904*, Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1972; E. V. Zavadskaiia, *Vasilii Vasil'evich Vereshchagin*, Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1986.

⁶¹ N. Medvedev, 'The contradictions in Vereshchagin's Turkestan series: Visualizing the Russian empire and its others', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2009, and D. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, 'Vasilij V. Vereshchagin's canvases of Central Asian conquest', in Gorshenina & Abashin, *Le Turkestan Russe*, pp. 179-209.

⁶² See for instance V. V. Vereshchagin, 'Zabytyi', 1871, and 'Smertel'no ranennyi', 1873.

⁶³ Letter from V. V. Stasov to Vereshchagin, September 1874, in A. K. Lebedev (ed.), *Perepiska V. V. Vereshchagina i V. V. Stasova*, Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1951, pp. 22-25.

⁶⁴ For a sample of these reviews, see *Golos*, 27 March 1869; *Novoe vremia*, 9 March 1874; *Peterburgskii listok*, 19 March 1874; *Russkii invalid*, 15 April 1869. Over 30,000 copies of the exhibition catalogue were sold for the 1874 St Petersburg event alone, Kudria, *Vereshchagin*, p. 99. Lebedev speculates that Vereshchagin's popularity may be due to the humanism in his canvases and the wider social situation, particularly the rise of the 'To The People' movement in the mid-1870s, in Lebedev, *Vereshchagin*, pp. 122-123.

⁶⁵ Schimmelpenninck, 'Vereshchagin's canvases', and Medvedev, 'Contradictions'.

displayed on stakes as the trophies of war,⁶⁶ and skulls piled in the steppe, an action that Vereshchagin noted was a genuine local practice.⁶⁷ The wider body of Vereshchagin's work on Turkestan made frequent reference to images of 'vividly coloured exotic savagery', encompassing opium smoking, dancing boys, slaves, prisons, beggars, Islamic architecture and dervishes, all of which were common subjects found in contemporary European Orientalist painting.⁶⁸ These visual representations of alterity were echoes of contemporary Russian discourses of 'barbarism' and 'savagery' in the region, and the artist admitted as such in his correspondence.⁶⁹

Vereshchagin's visual portrayal of Turkestan as an alien, exotic and savage place was echoed by the content of a much overlooked source of early imagery of Turkestan: the Russian illustrated press. This news medium began to flourish at almost exactly the same time as the Central Asian conquest, and in the form of initial market leaders *Niva* and *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, these richly illustrated newsheets prospered into a spectacularly successful industry, covering a panoply of topics from current events to art, literature and travel.⁷⁰ The ongoing annexation of Turkestan featured prominently in both titles, particularly during the 1870s, and the printed page acted as a distinct discursive space in which a very similar visual characterisation developed to that of Vereshchagin's. The illustrated press catered predominantly to metropolitan readers, and discussions of Turkestan were framed by repeated notions of its remoteness from the imperial centre: an 'unknown country', distant in time and space.⁷¹ Visual depictions remained in an equally liminal zone between the real and the imagined, referencing many similar visual motifs to those of Vereshchagin, and appealed largely to the visceral rather than the cerebral.⁷² In the many

⁶⁶ V. V. Vereshchagin, 'Predstavliaiut trofei', 1872, and 'Torzhestvuiut', 1871-1872.

⁶⁷ 'This picture is not the creation of the artist's imagination ... not very long ago ... the celebrated German scientist Schlagintweit ... was murdered ... and his head was thrown on a similar, though smaller pyramid, which it was the Khan's amusement to watch growing daily bigger', *Exhibition of the works of Vassili Vereshchagin. Illustrated descriptive catalogue*, London: Grosvenor Gallery, 1887, pp. 65-67. The canvas itself is titled 'Apofeoz voiny', 1871.

⁶⁸ Schimmelpenninck, 'Vereshchagin's canvases', p. 181. See for instance V. V. Vereshchagin, 'Dervishi v prazdnichnikh nariadakh', 1870; 'Nishchie v Samarkande', 1869-1870; 'Opiumoedy', 1868; 'Prodazha rebenka-nevol'nika', 1871-1872; 'Samarkandskii zindan', 1873. Schimmelpenninck notes that Vereshchagin studied in Paris under Gérôme, a painter well known for his Orientalising images of the Middle East. On Orientalism in art more broadly, see G. Lemaire, *The Orient in western art*, Cologne: Könemann, 2001; J. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, theory and the arts*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995, particularly pp. 43-70; M. Stevens, *The Orientalists: Delacroix to Matisse, European painters in north Africa and the Near East*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1984.

⁶⁹ Vereshchagin aimed to 'characterise the barbarism, which until now has saturated all areas of life in Central Asia'. Letter from Vereshchagin to Stasov, March 1874, in Lebedev, *Perepiska V. V. Vereshchagina*, p. 13.

⁷⁰ For a general introduction to Russia's illustrated press, see J. Brooks, *When Russia learned to read: Literacy and popular culture, 1861-1917*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, and L. McReynolds, *The news under Russia's old regime: The development of a mass-circulation press*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991. For later developments in photographic journalism, see C. Stolarski, 'Another way of telling the news: The rise of photojournalism in Russia, 1900-1914', *Kritika*, 2011, 12: 3, pp. 561-590. By 1905, titles could boast circulation figures of over 200,000, circulating predominantly in the Moscow and St Petersburg regions, Y. Tatsumi, 'Russian illustrated journals in the late nineteenth century: The dual image of readers', *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, 2009, 26, pp. 159-176. Meanwhile, Brooks estimates that the circulation of *Niva* was around 9000 copies when first published, Brooks, *When Russia learned to read*, p. 113.

⁷¹ *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, 1874 (II), p. 167.

⁷² For an interesting comparison of the press and images of conflict, see M. Martin, *Images at war: Illustrated periodicals and constructed nations*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2006.

hundreds of drawings and engravings that were reproduced, content in the 1870s was dominated by one artist, N. N. Karazin, another former soldier and a prolific contributor to the press.⁷³

The artist's documentation of Central Asia revealed a world dominated by the savagery of local peoples and customs. Images frequently depicted decapitations, the display of heads on stakes, the treatment of slaves and the ramshackle appearance of local towns.⁷⁴ Military action was couched in melodramatic terms, which echoed Karazin's own writings on the supposed 'backwardness' and 'savagery' of the enemy.⁷⁵ Tropes of good versus evil, and modernity versus antiquity were as readily apparent in the contrast between the 'heroic' Russian soldier and 'marauding' Kyrgyz horsemen, as they were in the disparity between the modern uniforms and weaponry of the Russians and the appearance of Khivan troops, armed with sabres and axes.⁷⁶ This melodramatic record was particularly effective in contexts where images frequently needed to tell a story without text, and did so by fixing alterity in easily recognisable stereotypes, which themselves referenced both existing debates in Russian society about Russia's 'civilising' role in Turkestan, and far wider ideas about the Islamic world as a whole, developed over preceding decades.⁷⁷

The depiction of Turkestan on the pages of the press also had a good deal to say about how the Central Asian landscape was visualised. Considering over one hundred of Karazin's images published during the 1870s, it is striking that the artist developed an interconnected set of motifs to characterise the natural world in the most pejorative of senses. One of his earliest contributions to *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia* captured these elements very clearly: a caravan of Russian migrants travelling to Tashkent was pictured in the steppe, with the landscape completely empty apart from three notable objects - a group of circling eagles, the carcass of a camel, and the outline of a local graveyard (figure 2).⁷⁸ Taken individually, each component was symbolic of death, and when put together they were clearly intended to underscore the hostility of the environment by imbuing the landscape with spectacles of morbidity. What is remarkable is that the use of these elements is evident in almost all of Karazin's illustrations: skeletons and skulls litter the desert, carriages

⁷³ As well as contributing many images to the press, Karazin also produced a number of canvases, illustrations to monographs, including his own and that of E. E. Ukhtomskii, *Puteshestvie Gosudaria imperatora Nikolaiia II na Vostok*, SPb: F. A. Brokgauz, 1893-1897, and images for military-geographic surveys in Turkestan. A good number of his original works can be found at GIM, d. 552, 83773/2799.

⁷⁴ For instance N. N. Karazin, 'Vystavka golov voennoplennykh', *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, 1872, p. 85; 'Kazn' prestupnikov v Bukhare', *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, 1872, p. 84; 'Plennyi persiianin v Khive', *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, 1873 (II), p. 36.

⁷⁵ N. N. Karazin, *Pogonia za nazhivoi*, SPb: Tip. V. Tushnova, 1876. The collection of stories recounted Karazin's experiences in Central Asia, including 'Gorod mertvykh' and 'Katastrofa na Kasteksom perevale'.

⁷⁶ N. N. Karazin, 'Strashnoe mgnovenie', *Niva*, 1873, Nos. 32-3, pp. 497-502, 513-516, and 'Khivinskii pokhod – srazhenie 15 iulia', *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, 1873 (II), p. 321.

⁷⁷ For melodrama in the Russian context, see L. McReynolds & J. Neuberger (eds), *Imitations of life: Two centuries of melodrama in Russia*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2002. The content and structure of Karazin's compositions bore great similarity to images of Turks from the Crimean war and the later Russo-Turkish war analysed in S. Norris, *A war of images: Russian popular prints, wartime culture and national identity, 1812-1945*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006. Norris notes that Turks were portrayed as 'savage, inferior people', who were 'weak', 'cowardly' and committed 'vicious atrocities', and that this stereotype became the standard depiction of Islamic peoples in Russian popular culture, p. 61. See also depictions of Turks in the Russo-Turkish war, pp. 80-106. For similar imagery of the Slavic self and Muslim Other, see D. Vovchenko, 'Gendering irredentism? Self and other in Russian pan-Orthodoxy and pan-Slavism', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2011, 34, pp. 248-274.

⁷⁸ N. N. Karazin, 'Karavan plotnich'ei arteli v stepi', *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, 1872, p. 45.

plunge over the edges of mountain passes, soldiers camp for the night in graveyards and vultures patrol the skies.⁷⁹ While Karazin's work relied on the use of stylistic devices to exaggerate human and natural features in melodramatic style, the perceived hostility of the local environment, with nature the battleground for Russian supremacy, was a running theme in the textual and visual content of the illustrated press as a whole. One author went so far as to conclude that 'the main difficulties of the [military] campaign arise from the struggle against nature'.⁸⁰ Articles cited excessive heat, towering sand dunes, and lack of provisions as thwarting Russia's southern progression.⁸¹ Such descriptions strengthened Karazin's melodramatic depiction of Central Asia's intimidating landscapes, while other images in the press referenced efforts to overcome this hostile nature, depicting troops in the desert, foraging for supplies and digging wells.⁸²

Thus the content of the press presented a largely one-dimensional image of Turkestan, one which was defined by the region's location 'at the edge of the civilised world', the savagery of its inhabitants and its strange, dangerous landscapes, all of which threatened to overwhelm the Russian traveller, soldier or inhabitant.⁸³ These visual signifiers of place were most readily communicated in Karazin's images, but could be found in the majority of all images published. On the pages of illustrated newspapers this version of Central Asia was welcomed. One editor wrote in *Niva*, 'some reproach the author [Karazin] for the excessively dramatic nature of his work, but this drama adds interest for them [the reader] and satisfies the demands of the majority of our educated public. Although he is occasionally guilty of an excessively lively imagination, on the other hand the ... pictures of particular places are drawn "artistically"'.⁸⁴ Evidence of this 'artistic' license, in the form of stereotyped and hyperbolic imagery, provides a valuable window onto the type of visual depiction common in Russian society, and while it is by no means an indication that all Russians thought that way, this visual portrayal of Turkestan is broadly congruent with other rhetorical statements on the region, from Gorchakov's image of 'semi-savage tribes', and Kaufman's desire to see 'fanatical Islam' wither and die, to the common environmental trope of Central Asia's 'desolate sandy plains'.

⁷⁹ Amongst others, N. N. Karazin, 'Katastrofa na Kasteksom perevale', *Niva*, 1873, No. 24, pp. 373-376; 'Pereval Saur-billi', *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, 1872, p. 100; 'Stantsiia Kara-Sai', *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, 1873, p. 288; Karazin, *Pogonia za nazhivoi*, frontispiece and p. 488.

⁸⁰ *Niva*, 1873, No. 15, pp. 237-240.

⁸¹ *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, 1876, p. 30.

⁸² Alakhanov, 'Lager' Mangishlanskogo otriada', and Otriad u kolodtsev Senski', *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, 1873, p. 413; 'Khivinskii pokhod', *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, 1874, pp. 76-77; Dikgof, 'Vnutrennost' kolodtsa Dzhary-Kuduk', *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, 1873 (II), p. 296.

⁸³ N. N. Karazin, 'Ataka sobak pod Urgutom', *Niva*, 1872, No. 38, p. 597.

⁸⁴ *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, 1878 (II), p. 319.



Figure 2. N. N. Karazin, 'Karavan plotnich'ei arteli v stepi'.

Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia, 1872, p. 45.

National Art Library, V&A Museum, pressmark PP.400.R.



Figure 3. 'Syr-Dar'inskaia oblast'. Pravoslavnaia tserkov v tsitadeli g. Ura-Tiube'.

Turkestanskii Al'bom, 1871-1872, part 4, plate 37.

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As discussed in the introduction, the formation of Turkestan also coincided with the rise of a very different kind of visual media from the painting or engraving: the photograph. Technological advances in photography and in mechanisms of reproduction gradually resulted in a wholesale shift away from the artistic towards what was perceived as a more documentary approach to representing spaces and places. In this respect, Turkestan was at the very forefront of Russian photographic innovation, in the form of the *Turkestanskii Al'bom*, one of the most well-known visual descriptions of Turkestan in the entire pre-revolutionary era. The album was an ambitious project, commissioned by Kaufman in 1868, and overseen by the Orientalist A. L. Kun. While there had been other smaller scale photographic projects to depict Russia's new Central Asian possessions, this has been widely acknowledged as the first such album 'to comprehensively document Turkestan'.⁸⁵ The album consisted of over 1200 photographs, along with maps, architectural plans and diagrams, housed in six volumes in four parts - archaeology, ethnography, trades and industry, and history - with the explicit aim of 'satisfying the public's general interest' and to aid 'the rapid familiarisation of the reading public with our newly occupied land'.⁸⁶ To achieve this end, each volume was designed to showcase respectively 'the past life of the region in preserved ancient monuments', 'the contemporary life of the population', 'industry and technical relations', and 'the advance of Russians into these new lands'.⁸⁷ In terms of scale, aims and patronage, the album project had no equal, and its ambitious dimensions have made it a prized source for historians of Russian Turkestan, both for the un-paralleled insights that it offers into contemporary life, local architecture and social, legal, commercial and religious practices, and for what it reveals about how the imperial administration envisaged conquest, terrain, self and Other.

As Sonntag notes, the finished album was an 'object of material complexity and visual splendour ... treasured in succeeding years for its exquisite compilation, exceptional detail and encyclopedic scope'.⁸⁸ Copies were retained in Turkestan, and others were gifted to the Tsar and his ministers as a record of Russia's newest addition to empire, while the album also had value as a travelling exhibit, making frequent appearances at national and international exhibitions. Thus as both Gorshenina and Sonntag discuss in detail, the project was a kind of 'photographic panopticon',⁸⁹ an exercise in the construction of colonial knowledge and rationality, designed to emulate the actions of European colonial powers in constructing an image of their own overseas colonies. Indeed,

⁸⁵ H. Sonntag, 'Albums as visual technologies of empire: Kaufman's "Turkestan Album" and Napoleon's "Description of Egypt"', paper given at the *Picturing Empires: Photography and social change in nineteenth-century multi-ethnic environments conference*, University of Basel, 27-29 August 2014, p. 1. Unfortunately I have been unable to read Sonntag's thesis on the subject, H. Sonntag, 'Genesis of the Turkestan Album 1871-1872: The role of Russian military photography, mapping, albums and exhibitions on Central Asia', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2011. Beyond Sonntag's thesis, a number of other scholars have analysed the album, including Gorshenina, 'Krupneishie proekty', pp. 321-337, and M. Dikovitskaya, 'Central Asia in early photographs: Russian colonial attitudes and visual culture', in Uyama, *Empire, Islam, and politics*, pp. 99-134.

⁸⁶ 'Predislovie k Turkestanskomu Al'bomu', *Turkestanskii Al'bom*, 1871-1872, vol. 1, p. 1. The entire album has been digitised by the Library of Congress and is available online at http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/coll/287_turkestan.html [accessed 10 July 2015].

⁸⁷ 'Predislovie k Turkestanskomu Al'bomu', p. 1. For an excellent discussion of the practicalities of how the album was conceived and compiled, see Gorshenina, 'Krupneishie proekty', particularly pp. 321-337.

⁸⁸ Sonntag, 'Albums as visual technologies', p. 1.

⁸⁹ Gorshenina, 'Krupneishie proekty', p. 336.

Sonntag's extensive research makes a convincing case that the project was directly modelled on Napoleon's *Description de l'Égypte*.⁹⁰ The album's imperial overtones can be seen most clearly in the military-historical section, which presented the Russian conquest as a sequence of landscape panoramas of new Russian fortresses, ruined citadels, portraits of Russian soldiers, and schematics of key battles. The visual narrative largely erased the drama of conquest, sanitising its violence by displaying only teleological maps of conflict, and entirely obscuring the shadowy 'enemy' against whom Russian forces were arrayed. At the same time, these images introduced a new symbol into the landscape iconography of the region, by repeatedly framing newly-created Orthodox churches at Russian fortresses (figure 4). As will be discussed further in chapter four, churches were recognisable symbols of the Russian presence and of the absorption of the land into Russia's cultural and religious world, and as such, were valued components in the visual appropriation of land.⁹¹

The visual survey of Turkestan was thus both a production and demonstration of knowledge, designed to be viewed and admired in local, national and international circles. Its luxurious form acted as an ostentatious projection of power; legitimising Russian rule and rendering the visible landscape available for appropriation. Meanwhile, the album's ethnographic images produced clear ethnic 'types' that could be used to label and categorise the local population and were, in the words of one historian, instrumental in the creation of an ethnic Other, whom Russia's presence would eventually 'civilise'.⁹² In this sense, the album is an important source not only of how the colonial administration 'saw' Turkestan, but how Russians conceptualised themselves. The project was a very visual exercise in 'imperial spectacle and European emulation',⁹³ aspiring to place Kaufman and his Turkestan on a par with other colonial rulers and states, while instituting rigid hierarchies of racial and cultural difference that helped Russians 'to visualize the existent conditions in a remote colony and to realize a new obligation – "the white man's burden"'.⁹⁴

The ambitions of the album's compilers and its use in creating and sustaining ethnic profiles have been well documented by Sonntag, Gorshenina and Dikovitskaya, among others. Yet to shift the focus slightly, the album quite clearly also had significant value in the production of Turkestan as a geographic, as well as an ethnic space. Intriguingly, the physical land that it represented was far from the sum of the Turkestan that could be found on a map in 1870, with the predominate focus on the Syr-Dar'ia region, Samarkand and the Zaravshan *okrug*. Transcaspia, the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva were understandably lacking from the project, as at this stage

⁹⁰ Sonntag, 'Albums as visual technologies'.

⁹¹ For more on churches as symbols of national narratives, see K. O'Neill, 'Constructing imperial identity in the borderland: Architecture, Islam, and the renovation of the Crimean landscape', *Ab Imperio*, 2006, 2, p. 189; R. Wortman, *Scenarios of power: Myth and ceremony in Russian monarchy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, vol. 1, pp. 381-386; R. Wortman, 'The "Russian style" in church architecture as imperial symbol after 1881', in J. Cracraft & D. Rowland (eds), *Architectures of Russian identity: 1500 to the present*, Ithaca: University of Cornell Press, 2003, pp. 101-116.

⁹² Dikovitskaya, 'Central Asia in early photographs'. Dikovitskaya singles out the *Turkestanskii Al'bom* as the most ambitious of a number of photographic projects that created ethnic Others, and notes the slightly later album, *Tipy narodnostei Srednei Azii*, as another prime example.

⁹³ Sonntag, 'Albums as visual technologies', p. 5.

⁹⁴ Dikovitskaya, 'Central Asia in early photographs', p. 106.

they largely remained contested territory. Yet Semirech'e, one of the two core provinces of Turkestan in 1867, was notably missing: not a single photograph of the 1200 in the album is specifically annotated as being taken in the *oblast'*. Images of Semirech'e's ethnic Kazakh and Kyrgyz population, where geographically labelled, were all taken in Syr-Dar'ia. There are a number of possible explanations for this absence. The album's compilers privileged images of settled life, which contributed to the overwhelming emphasis on the buildings, antiquities and peoples of towns and villages in Tashkent, Samarkand and the Zaravshan okrug, at the expense of Semirech'e which had a large nomadic population. Similarly, the region had seen little resistance during the period of conquest in the 1850s-1860s, which may illuminate its absence from the album's military-historical section. Perhaps too, an answer may be found in questions of access; the project was directed from Tashkent, and so photographers may have found little need to venture further afield. While all of these reasons seem plausible, none is satisfactory in validating the absence of one of Turkestan's two constituent provinces, and I have found little other suggestion as to why this might be the case. Certainly to probe more would require access to the archives in Tashkent. What is clear is that whether this was an intentional framing or not, the visual was being used to designate certain sites of value, and to exclude other locations. Already in 1870 a very particular Turkestan, with a very specific geography, had been created, which privileged the visualisation of a geographic core at the expense of an unseen periphery.

As visual representations, these three examples were rather different in material form: Vereshchagin's images painted in oil and watercolour, the illustrations of the press rendered by pencil and engraving, and the *Turkestanskii Al'bom* predominantly photographic. Yet all were integral components, on a visual level, of the broader Russian 'invention' of Turkestan, and were similar expressions of the exercise of colonial authority through knowledge. All three featured in major exhibitions, such as the 1872 All-Russian Polytechnical exhibition in Moscow, which enabled the land and its peoples to be visualised by the wider public and which served to fix the image of Turkestan as a 'colonised space'.⁹⁵ A good deal of commonality of vision extended between the three, in terms of how land and people were envisaged. Indigenous Central Asians were largely Orientalised, either depicted as axe-wielding decapitators, or subject to ethnographic ordering and typing. Such visions generated an alternately barbaric or submissive Other, in both cases, one that was set in opposition to the Russian 'civilised' self. An equivalent, but largely overlooked form of Othering also materialised in depictions of the land, which was portrayed as at once threatening, dangerous and alien, but also open to control and appropriation by Russian forces. What is perhaps more significant in terms of spatial production is that in all of these cases, the image of the land was highly selective: what was discussed in relation to the *Turkestanskii Al'bom* holds true to a large degree for the illustrated press and Vereshchagin's canvases. Urban imagery predominated, and favoured the 'colourful' cities of Bukhara, Samarkand and Khiva, with

⁹⁵ S. Gorshenina, 'La construction d'une image «savante» du Turkestan russe lors des premières expositions «coloniales» dans l'Empire russe: analyse d'une technologie culturelle du pouvoir', in Gorshenina & Abashin, *Le Turkestan Russe*, p. 133. The role of the exhibition as a medium of display will be discussed further in chapter six.

their ancient Islamic edifices and crenelated walls. Early visualisations of Turkestan were at best only a partial rendering of the region, perhaps chosen because they better embodied existing Russian notions of the alien and archaic nature of Central Asia's landscapes and inhabitants than the rural, nomadic land of Semirech'e.

1881 and beyond

In March 1881, Kaufman suffered a debilitating stroke. Authority passed to G. A. Kolpakovskii, Governor of Semirech'e, before M. G. Cherniaev was appointed Governor General in the following year. The Turkestan that Kaufman left behind was in many ways an entirely different place than the one he had inherited in 1867. The region had evolved as a geographical space; no longer composed merely of Syr-Dar'ia and Semirech'e, but now encompassing all of the land previously under the suzerainty of the Khanate of Kokand, while Bukhara and Khiva had been reduced to vassalage and Transcaspia was on the verge of pacification. In parallel to military action, a huge amount of other work had also gone in to constructing Turkestan, with scientists, explorers and ethnographers feverishly 'discovering', documenting and ordering the peoples and geographies of the region in various textual and visual media. From a *terra incognita* in the early years of conquest, Turkestan now existed to some degree as a known entity, geographically and ethnographically described, its statutes and boundaries fixed in law, its landscapes and peoples (at least partially) visualised.

Indeed, so confident was Kaufman of the transformation that had taken place, that before his death he requested that he be buried in Tashkent, rather than metropolitan Russia, 'so that everyone will know that here is true Russian ground where it is no dishonour for a Russian to lie'.⁹⁶ His appeal underscored the significance of the political, cultural and scientific processes underway since the formation of the Governor Generalship to convert what was commonly seen as a distant, alien land into 'true Russian ground'. Nevertheless, contrary to Kaufman's statement, I contend that the quest to make Turkestan a 'Russian' space had only just begun in 1881, and circumstances in the decades following Kaufman's death would greatly alter conceptions of space. Ideas of '*rusaskaia zemlia*' and '*russkii tyl*' would resurface on numerous occasions until 1917, in contexts far beyond those envisaged in the 1870s. Most importantly, Russian conceptions of space were fundamentally transformed by their physical encounters with the land itself, and by and large, it was not until after the Kaufman era and the completion of conquest in the mid-1880s that sustained material interventions in the Central Asian environment began.

The period from 1881 to 1914 was a time of accelerating change. The development of infrastructure, most notably railways and the telegraph, allowed Turkestan to evolve both socially and economically. The completion of the Transcaspian railway in 1888, followed by a link to the Trans-Siberian mainline via Tashkent and Orenburg in 1906 provided means for the increased import and export of goods, people and ideas. The region's main towns grew rapidly, with the Russian population expanding to include an ever-increasing mix beyond that of military men,

⁹⁶ Mackenzie, 'Kaufman of Turkestan', p. 276.

administrators and their families. Railway workers, exiles, vagrants, merchants and businessmen swelled local populations, while in the countryside, growing numbers of Russian peasant settlers could be found, particularly in designated zones of resettlement in Semirech'e and Syr-Dar'ia, managed by the Russian Resettlement Administration. The Russian element in urban and rural zones formed an 'entrenched Russian constituency ... who considered the colony their home and indeed had no other home elsewhere',⁹⁷ and whose presence had profound implications for the use and representation of space as the tsarist era progressed. These new groups of settlers further complicated social relations within Turkestan. Tensions between incomers and nomads in the east increased as Kazakh and Kyrgyz land was confiscated and allotted to Russian peasants, while in urban areas, particularly in Tashkent, the growth of dissent amongst the settler population and the spread of drunkenness and prostitution blurred Russian concepts of their own superiority.⁹⁸

Despite these simmering tensions, the post-Kaufman years were largely peaceful, punctuated only by moments of anti-colonial unrest, most notably the 1898 Andizhan uprising and the 1892 cholera riot in Tashkent. While the effects of 1905 were not felt to any great degree, the easing of censorship resulted in an explosion of new publications, many of them largely ephemeral, but nevertheless increasingly representative of the diversifying social fabric of settler and Muslim societies.⁹⁹ Within the latter, a limited number of local elites prospered, working within the Russian administration as translators and advisors and sending their children to Russo-native schools, while growing economic prosperity filtered gradually through society, benefiting established merchant families the most. Perhaps more significantly, Muslim society was evolving on its own terms. The rise of Jadidism, with its emphasis on new method schooling and embrace of more liberal thinking towards society and politics proved a dynamic force in the later years of tsarist rule, provoking Russian fears of a popular pan-Turk movement.¹⁰⁰ The threat of the Jadid's calls for modernisation also stirred more conservative local elements: Central Asian society was as internally divided as was its Russian equivalent.

Within the imperial administration, there was palpable concern that Russia's grip on Central Asia remained at best only partial. While the Russian incomers were increasing in number, they remained dwarfed by the indigenous population. Sizeable pockets of Russian settlement could be found in major towns, but in the rural regions that composed the bulk of Turkestan's territory, the Russian element was thinly spread and unevenly located. Indeed, even as late as 1914, it was regularly acknowledged that swathes of Turkestan remained almost entirely unexplored and relatively untouched by Russian rule, particularly in the peripheries of Semirech'e and

⁹⁷ Soucek, *A history of Inner Asia*, p. 207.

⁹⁸ Two good overviews of these social phenomena can be found in Brower, *Turkestan and the fate of the Russian empire*, and Sahadeo, *Russian colonial society in Tashkent*.

⁹⁹ Indeed, unrest in 1905 was almost entirely the result of agitation by Russian railway workers and soldiers, rather than the native population.

¹⁰⁰ For one of the best discussions of the evolving nature of Muslim society in the period, see Khalid, *Politics of Muslim cultural reform*.

Transcaspia.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, in the aftermath of the Andizhan episode, opinion diverged as to whether the policy of *ignorirovanie* could ever be successful, and more broadly, whether Russia had anything to 'teach' the local population at all. Still further, some, such as S. M. Dukhovskoi, Governor General from 1898-1901, advocated a far tougher line on Islam, with the Russian administration torn on whether to abandon Kaufman's policy in favour of more stringent Russification measures, calls that were tempered by the continuing numerical paucity of the ethnic Russian population. Indeed, the question of how best to accommodate Islam and Orthodoxy remained a fraught issue until the breakdown of tsarist authority in 1916, kept alive by the depth of religious ties that suffused all aspects of society and culture. The provisions of Sharia law continued to influence a great deal of everyday life, which in many cases lay entirely beyond imperial control.¹⁰²

Debates also raged as to Turkestan's future within the wider empire. As Brower discusses at length, tensions grew between those who advocated continued military rule and those who foresaw the need to integrate Turkestan into the civilian politics of empire.¹⁰³ Ultimately, such debates within the Russian military administration remained in the abstract, their implementation constrained by inactivity and confusion. Russia's mission in Central Asia was 'always long on rhetoric and short on action', as successive Governors General grappled with seemingly intractable problems.¹⁰⁴ Attempts to codify land tenure and property rights became entangled in the web of centuries-old Islamic law, while the ongoing quest to provide Turkestan with a unified ruling statute also proved insurmountable. Emblematic of the failure to enact political reform was the fate of a revisorial inspection made by Count K. K. Pahlen in 1908-1910, commissioned by the Tsar. Pahlen's detailed recommendations for Turkestan's future - which included advice to slow the rate of rural colonisation, to introduce the *zemstvo* system for the settled population and to increase civilian elements in the military administration - totalling twenty-one volumes, were quietly shelved.¹⁰⁵

Against this broad portrait of demographic, social and political change were two other processes that are of fundamental importance to this thesis: Turkestan's shifting spatial boundaries, and the gradual reshaping of urban and rural land. Firstly, as previously discussed, the formation of Transcaspia in 1881 provided Turkestan's final *oblast'*, and for many historians, little more need be said about the physical form of the region. Yet the realities were considerably more complicated: Turkestan was by no means a static entity. Indeed, the question of borders,

¹⁰¹ V. N. Shnitnikov, *Marshruty poezdok po Semirechenskoi oblasti, 1907-1915*, Petrograd: Tip. Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, [1915], p. 1, and A. A. Andrievskii, 'Les Semirech'ia i ikh znachenie v zhizni kraia', *Lesnoi zhurnal*, 1914, 3, p. 390.

¹⁰² Russian efforts to regulate key areas of local life, for instance waqf provision (property endowments contributing income to religious institutions) and land redistribution, proved to be largely ineffective. For more, see Morrison, *Russian rule in Samarkand*, particularly chapters three, six and seven.

¹⁰³ Brower, *Turkestan and the fate of the Russian empire*.

¹⁰⁴ Khalid, 'Culture and power', p. 443.

¹⁰⁵ For an overview of Pahlen's trip, see the foreword to K. K. Pahlen, *Mission to Turkestan: Being the memoirs of Count K. K. Pahlen, 1908-1909*, London: Oxford University Press, 1964 [ed. R. Pierce, transl. N. Couriss]. Pahlen's recommendations can be found in K. K. Palen, *Otchet po revizii Turkestanskogo kraia, proizvedennoi po Vysochaishemu poveleniiu senatorom gofmeisterom K. K. Palenom*, SPb: Senatskaia tipografiia, 1910-1911.

boundedness and where Turkestan *actually* was proved to be caught up in a complex tangle of administrative reordering and phraseological confusion. Transcaspia, despite having Turkestan's only rail link until 1906, was administered as part of the Governor Generalship of the Caucasus until 1890, and from then until 1899 as an independent military district. Meanwhile, in 1882, Semirech'e was removed from Turkestan and placed under the care of the Governor Generalship of the Steppe, until both it and Transcaspia were united with Turkestan again in 1899.¹⁰⁶ Further muddying the waters was the fact that after 1899, Semirech'e continued to be governed by the revised Steppe Statute of 1891 and Transcaspia by separate legislation of 1890, while Syr-Dar'ia, Fergana and Samarkand had their own statute of 1886.¹⁰⁷ Thus Turkestan as a political space underwent considerable change over time, and fluctuated in size, population and legal status so much that it seems impossible to speak confidently of Turkestan having a 'specific administrative and geographical unity', as does Soucek.¹⁰⁸

Despite little academic interest, the 1899 unification was a noteworthy event, conceived of by *Turkestanskije vedomosti* as a 'long-awaited ... new phase of development' that would propel Turkestan to 'shine yet brighter' as the 'diamond in the crown of the Russian empire'.¹⁰⁹ In terms of size, the addition of Transcaspia and Semirech'e almost doubled the territory of Turkestan, and added over one million new subjects. While Transcaspia was noted as being the less developed of the two provinces, the reintegration of one of the founding constituents of Turkestan was recognised as significant. The newspaper remarked that although Semirech'e was economically underdeveloped and lacking a railway, it had an abundance of empty land and natural resources, and a good number of rural Russian communities that 'serve as excellent examples for such settlements in the remaining provinces of Turkestan'.¹¹⁰ This 'Russian population' formed a 'sturdy core', capable of further development, and a symbolic 'link to the rest of Russia'.¹¹¹

The changing nature of administrative space is important to this thesis. The slippery concept of where Turkestan was affected both contemporary and present-day approaches to the region. Few at the time acknowledged that Transcaspia was officially a separate entity prior to 1899, while Semirech'e retained a more liminal role, sometimes popularly seen as a part of Turkestan, and sometimes not, which often did not reflect the current administrative arrangements, as will be discussed further in chapter four. These practices of dealing with the shifting boundaries of Turkestan have also infiltrated the ways in which modern scholars study the region. The notion of a 'core' Turkestan, consisting of Syr-Dar'ia, Samarkand and Fergana has been replicated to some

¹⁰⁶ *PSZ*, third series, vol. 17, 26 December 1897, No. 14818, and *PSZ*, third series, vol. 19, 11 June 1899, No. 17177.

¹⁰⁷ 'Vremennoe polozenie ob upravlenii Zakaspijskoi oblasti', *PSZ*, third series, vol. 10, 6 February 1890, No. 6576; 'Polozenie ob upravlenii Akmolinskoi, Semipalatinskoi, Semirechenskoi, Ural'skoi i Turgaiskoi oblastiami' ['Stepnoe polozenie'], *PSZ*, third series, vol. 11, 25 March 1891, No. 7574; 'Polozenie ob upravlenii Turkestanskogo kraia', *PSZ*, third series, vol. 6, 12 June 1886, No. 3814. Although work continued on the production of a unified statute for the whole of Turkestan, results were not forthcoming.

¹⁰⁸ Soucek, *A history of Inner Asia*, p. 201.

¹⁰⁹ *TV*, 1899, No. 49, p. 290.

¹¹⁰ *TV*, 1899, No. 49, p. 290.

¹¹¹ *TV*, 1899, No. 50, pp. 303-304.

degree by academics who favour these regions in their studies of Turkestan, no doubt in part due to the ease of dealing with an administrative unit governed by the same ruling statute, and because these regions were home to the overwhelming majority of the settled Muslim population.¹¹²

The following chapters take a more holistic approach and consider Turkestan as a whole, including Transcaspia and Semirech'e. In fact, the thesis argues that these provinces had a pivotal role to play in the evolution of Russian notions about Turkestan as a space. In administrative terms both were unquestioningly more peripheral than the core provinces of Fergana, Syr-Dar'ia and Samarkand, but this element of being set apart, or distinctive, was also replicated in numerous other ways. Not entirely coincidentally, they were spatially liminal, positioned at Turkestan's borders (which partially enabled their temporary administrative separation). Their populations accounted for the majority of Turkestan's nomadic inhabitants, while their environments were predominantly rural, far less urbanised than the other three *oblasti*. What will become apparent during the subsequent chapters is that it was very often in precisely these regions that Russian attempts to alter the land were at their most intense, and where visions of a 'new' Turkestan were enacted most powerfully. I argue in part that the spatial and administrative distinctiveness of Transcaspia and Semirech'e was mirrored by Russian relationships with the terrain of both regions, particularly in the case of the latter. The idea that Semirech'e was somehow 'different', particularly in demographic terms but also on an environmental level - concepts that had enabled the division of 1882 - can be seen to resonate profoundly in Russian interventions in the land and their visual representations of such actions. I contend that Semirech'e cannot be separated from a study of Turkestan, because it was a central site for the visual construction of a 'new' Turkestan, a green, Russified frontier, rooted in irrigated, agricultural land.

1881 thus marked only the beginning of a period that saw revisions to Turkestan's spatial boundaries and a good deal of momentous social, cultural and economic change. The broad dimensions of this change - infrastructure development, economic expansion and population growth - drove and were driven by new projects to reform and renew the region's landscapes of steppes, rivers, hills and oases, actions that had barely begun to take shape under Kaufman. Agricultural colonisation resulted in afforestation and the sowing of fields, population growth stimulated the building of divided cities and peasant villages, the evolution of infrastructure was hastened by the surveying of land and building of railways, and economic development was prompted by irrigation, the planting of cotton crops, route planning, and prospecting for minerals. It is these physical activities and their visual representations that the following chapters investigate.

Inseparable from the gradual Russian infiltration of the landscape was the creation of the Transcaspian railway, construction of which began in the same year as Kaufman's stroke, 1881.

¹¹² Consider for instance the geographic focus of Khalid, *Politics of Muslim cultural reform*; Morrison, *Russian rule in Samarkand*; Sahadeo, *Russian colonial society in Tashkent*, amongst others.

While it arguably had more strategic than economic significance in its early years, the genesis of the railway heralded the gradual evolution of ideas about Turkestan as a distant and cut-off region, enabling industry to develop, settlement to increase, branch-lines to be created and the very way that territory was traversed to change. Conversely, as will be seen in subsequent chapters, those parts of Turkestan that remained outside the railway network themselves became liminal regions in relation to the Central Asian 'core'. Railways were the first fundamental step in changing how the region as a space was viewed – no longer simply archaic, isolated and at the 'edge of the civilised world', as this chapter has outlined, but increasingly also conceived of as a well-connected conduit between Russia, India, China and Siberia – and it is to this subject that the next chapter now turns.

2. Routes

On the fifth anniversary of Tsar Alexander III's coronation, 27 May 1888, large crowds gathered in Samarkand to celebrate the official inauguration of the Transcaspian railway, an event construed as heralding a 'new era in the life of Central Asia'.¹ While the Kaufman years had seen abundant developments in the legal, social and cultural fabric of the new Russian Turkestan, the region remained physically and conceptually removed from the imperial metropole, isolated by deserts and steppes that necessitated an arduous and slow journey from any direction of approach. The opening of Turkestan's first railway promised a revolution in access and mobility, a moment recognised in a congratulatory telegram to Turkestan's Governor General from Tashkent City Commandant S. R. Putintsev as a 'momentous day for Central Asia - her unification by the railway with the lands of the native Russian people and with the civilised European world'.² As alluded to by Putintsev, the Russian narrative of the episode was couched in strongly imperial terms which envisaged the railway as a means to transform Turkestan from an isolated and supposedly unenlightened 'old world' into a connected part of the empire, with all of the 'benefits' that this link would bring.³ New routes were to modernise and civilise by binding Turkestan closer to the imperial heartland.⁴

This chapter analyses the planning and creation of new transport routes as some of the first sustained attempts to transform the Central Asian environment by the Russian state. Although land and water ways had been long established in Turkestan, a region home to part of the famous Silk Road, the onset of Russian rule marked a new period where considerable attempts were made to re-navigate the region's landscapes.⁵ Environmental obstacles - steppe, river, desert and mountain - that had governed the pace and direction of travel for centuries, creating the caravan routes that had formed the 'sinews of the great Mongol empire that preceded Russian power', were gradually surmounted by a combination of Russian military manpower, investment and the application of new technologies.⁶ Railways became the new 'arteries' of travel and trade, while

¹ *TV*, 1888, No. 19, pages unknown, reprinted as N. M., *Torzhestvennoe otkrytie Samarkandskogo uchastka Zakaspiiskoi zheleznoi dorogi*, Tashkent: [n. p.], 1888, p. 1.

² *Torzhestvennoe otkrytie*, p. 2.

³ *Torzhestvennoe otkrytie*, p. 6.

⁴ RGVIA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 1622, l. 229.

⁵ A significant part of the Silk Road connecting China to the Mediterranean had passed through Central Asia for at least 1500 years. Meanwhile, the Amu-Dar'ia - known as the Oxus in antiquity - had been noted as a major trading waterway by the ancient Greeks, Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, and reputedly, Marco Polo.

⁶ J. Randolph & E. Avrutin (eds), *Russia in motion: Cultures of human mobility since 1850*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012, p. 3. For more on the use of routes to impose new systems of movement and circulation in Central Asia, see F. Lantz, 'Mouvement et voies de communication en Asie centrale. L'avènement d'une colonie', in S. Gorshenina & S. Abashin (eds), *Le Turkestan Russe: Une colonie comme les autres?* [*Cahiers d'Asie Centrale* No. 17-18], Tashkent, Paris: IFÉAC, 2009, pp. 288-317, although the author makes no use of Russian-language sources.

engineers planned how to divert the course of Central Asia's main river to better fit Russia's needs.⁷

The following discussion investigates the role of these new routes in shaping and reflecting Russian conceptions of Turkestan as an isolated space. New transport routes quite clearly had profound spatial implications, as rail transit expedited the movement of people, goods and information not only within Turkestan, but between imperial centre and periphery. In turn, narrowing the perceived distance between the two served as a tool of governance, managing and controlling mobility in much the same way as Marks describes the Trans-Siberian railway as a product of the Russian government's 'longstanding urge to control its border territories'.⁸ While texts and images of the Transcaspian line certainly do attest to the fact that the railway was seen as a means of making Turkestan more 'civilised' by providing a closer connection to the metropole, I suggest that the documentation of new transport routes in fact reveals a whole host of other designs on space. By returning the Transcaspian line to its original context as one facet of many interrelated plans to facilitate transit across the region, I argue that more nuanced concepts of Turkestan's place within the empire become apparent, exposing the region as an increasingly dynamic arena where local, military and international interests were played out in the planning of new routes.

These attempts to manage movement by land or water speak to a process whereby Russian administrators, explorers and settlers sought to renegotiate geographic space by enacting their visions of Turkestan as a connected region, not only seeking closer links to the imperial centre, but also thinking in more trans-national terms. Photographs, technical drawings and cartography provided vital material to support such arguments, in many cases constituting the only surviving documentation of schemes and projects that were never implemented. Such unrealised plans have significant value, demonstrating the range of intentions, if not actions, that were projected onto Turkestan's landscapes. Maps in particular form an important source base for the chapter, and I conceive of them as a detailed 'cultural texts', full of meaning, not only as invocations of authority over territory, but also as material available for the elaboration of numerous different spatial imaginaries.⁹ Indeed, although map-making and map distribution in Russia were largely

⁷ A. Heywood, 'The most catastrophic question: Railway development and military strategy in late imperial Russia', in T. Otte & K. Neilson (eds), *Railways and international politics: Paths of empire 1848-1945*, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 45.

⁸ S. Marks, *Road to power: The Trans-Siberian railroad and the colonization of Asian Russia, 1850-1917*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, p. 220. For recent studies of the effects of new transport infrastructure in the Russian empire, see Randolph & Avrutin, *Russia in motion*, and F. Schenk, *Russlands Fahrt in die Moderne: Mobilität und sozialer Raum im Eisenbahnzeitalter*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014. Examinations of railways as tools of imperialism can be found in C. Davis & K. Wilburn, *Railway imperialism*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1991; D. Headrick, *The tools of empire: Technology and European imperialism in the nineteenth century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981; L. Symons & C. White, *Russian transport. An historical and geographical survey*, London: G. Bell & Sons, 1975, particularly chapter two; J. Westwood, *A history of Russian railways*, London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1964.

⁹ The analysis of cartographic material has greatly evolved in recent years, no longer seen only in terms of its 'objective' representation of land, but particularly in the field of imperial history as a vital instrument of colonial power, J. B. Harley, 'Deconstructing the map', *Cartographica*, 1989, 26: 2, pp. 1-20, quote p. 7. For other works that discuss the imperial use of cartography in more detail, see J. Akerman, (ed.), *The imperial*

controlled by the state - and thus in Turkestan by the military – my research indicates that the visual material associated with route planning projected a multitude of different intentions, assumptions and motivations.¹⁰ As Sperling argues convincingly, the creation of new transport links was a process that drew a range of local actors to lobby for the extension of railways or roads to their localities, in doing so articulating new ideas about the value and place of their region within the imperial community.¹¹

In the case of Turkestan, beyond the notion that railways would tie the region closer to the imperial centre, the planning of potential lines into Afghanistan and beyond, schemes to re-route the Amu-Dar'ia, the possibility of a continuous rail link between Calais and Calcutta, and dreams to extend the Central Asian railway to Semirech'e all attest to the existence of multifarious subtle, strategic and at times conflicting conceptualisations of Turkestan as a space at the edge of empire. Cartography was a medium through which the visualisation of topography could be used to articulate competing claims to Central Asia's geography. Instead of describing a static, isolated periphery that was 'the southern cul-de-sac of the Russian empire',¹² the evidence of mapping practices points to the conceptual emergence of Central Asia as a 'strategic cockpit of the continent',¹³ and to tensions between those who saw Turkestan as a profitable source of raw materials or as leverage in the Great Game, and local elites who realised the potential of looking not to European Russia, but to the south and east.

A link to 'civilisation'

The first railway to be built in Central Asia, and in many ways the most symbolic of Russia's newly acquired sway over the region, was the Transcaspian line, linking ports on the Caspian Sea to Samarkand, and eventually to Tashkent.¹⁴ Built ostensibly to aid Skobelev's Turkmen campaign in 1880, the railway began in Transcaspia, traced the route of the Persian border, and then passed through the Emirate of Bukhara and into Samarkand *oblast'*, traversing 900 miles of some of the least hospitable terrain in the Russian empire. The first section of track was laid between the new port of Uzun-Ada on the Caspian Sea and Kizil'-Arvat, but although the 145-mile-stretch was covered in a mere ten months, opening in September 1881, it was of little use to Skobelev, who by the end of January 1881 had already defeated the Turkmen of Gok-Tepe and largely put to rest the last traces of resistance to Russian rule in Central Asia. The remainder of the line was built rapidly,

map: Cartography and the mastery of empire, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009; D. Cosgrove, *Geography and vision: Seeing, imagining and representing the world*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2008; J. Hansen, *Mapping the Germans: Statistical science, cartography, and the visualisation of the German nation, 1848-1914*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015; R. Paulett, *An empire of small places: Mapping the southeastern Anglo-Indian trade, 1732-1795*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012; S. Seegel, *Mapping Europe's borderlands: Russian cartography in the age of empire*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

¹⁰ V. Bulatov, 'Russian Orientalism – Geographical aspects', in P. Wageman & I. Kouteinikova (eds), *Russia's unknown Orient: Orientalist painting 1850-1920*, Rotterdam: NAI publishers, 2010, p. 44.

¹¹ W. Sperling, 'Stroit' zheleznuiu dorogu, sozdavat' imperskoe prostranstvo: "Mestnost", "krai", "Rossiia", "imperiiia" kak politicheskie argumenty v poreformennoi Rossii', *Ab Imperio*, 2006, 2, pp. 101-134.

¹² M. Laruelle & S. Peyrouse (eds), *Mapping Central Asia: Indian perceptions and strategies*, Ashgate: MPG Books Group, 2011, p. 16.

¹³ W. Wheeler, 'The control of land routes: Russian railways in Central Asia', *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 1934, 21: 4, p. 596.

¹⁴ The line was later renamed the 'Central Asian Railway'.

reaching Askhabad in 1885, Merv in 1886, Bukhara in February 1888 and Samarkand later in the same year, greatly aided by the fact that its passage across the flat Central Asian deserts and plains required little in the way of tunnels or cuttings.¹⁵ The project was a profoundly military venture, spearheaded by the 'Russian Lesseps', General M. A. Annenkov, and built by two specially formed railway battalions, supplemented by over 10,000 Persian, Turkmen, Bukharan and Uzbek labourers.¹⁶ Indeed, the line remained under military control until 1899, when it passed into the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transport.¹⁷ Following the railway's inauguration, further improvements were implemented: in 1894 the line was re-routed from Uzun-Ada to reach Krasnovodsk, which was deemed to have a deeper harbour and a more favourable approach for trains. Meanwhile, from Samarkand, extensions of the line were built to Andizhan and to Tashkent, reaching the latter in 1899, and in the absence of a northerly railway running to Orenburg, served to connect Turkestan's administrative and financial heart to the Russian railway network.¹⁸

As Russia's first foray into a far-reaching transformation of the Central Asian landscape, the railway was framed by commentators such as Putintsev in self-congratulatory tones, conveying the line as a force that would transport Russian civilisation into the very heart of Turkestan, and in doing so, modernise a distant colonial outpost.¹⁹ Visual material very much supported such claims, as artists, photographers and the illustrated press combined imagery of the line with the visual rhetoric of imperialism. A particularly potent example of the line's symbolism was to be found in a lavishly-illustrated album of watercolours produced by N. N. Karazin, as discussed in the previous chapter, an omnipresent figure in the artistic world of early Russian Turkestan. Karazin's *Zakaspiiskii Al'bom*, quite possibly the product of an official commission, took the viewer on a journey along the line that was suffused with imperial overtone.²⁰

¹⁵ While the final section of the line at Samarkand opened in 1888, a hiatus from 1881 to 1884 meant that the total distance had been covered in only four years. For a good account of the line, see E. P. Tsimmerman, *Po Zakaspiiskoi zheleznoi doroge*, Moscow: Tip. I. N. Kushnerev, 1889.

¹⁶ G. Dobson, *Russia's railway advance into Central Asia: Notes of a journey from St. Petersburg to Samarkand*, London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1890, p. 2.

¹⁷ Passenger usage of the line remained a secondary concern to military and freight needs, attested to by the fact that as late as 1897, the route had more steam engines than passenger carriages! RGI, f. 350, op. 1, d. 277, ll. 65 ob-71 ob. In subsequent years, the line's usage was dominated by the transport of cotton to ports on the Caspian Sea for transit to the factories of western Russia.

¹⁸ This northern route had been under discussion since 1874, but would not be opened until 1906. The existing Transcaspia-Russia route involved crossing the Caspian Sea to reach Russia's mainline rail network.

¹⁹ S. Gorshenina, 'Zakaspiiskaia zheleznaia doroga: Standartizatsiia istoriko-literaturnykh i ikonograficheskikh reprezentatsii russkogo Turkestana', in Sh. Mustafaev, M. Espagne, S. Gorshenina, C. Rapin, A. Berdimuradov, F. Grenet (eds), *Cultural transfers in Central Asia: Before, during and after the Silk Road*, Paris-Samarkand: PCAS, 2013, pp. 258-273, although Gorshenina uses predominantly French accounts of the line.

²⁰ Little is known about the provenance of the album or the number of copies made. Although it seems likely that Karazin was invited to the official opening of the line, given his interests in Central Asia, it is unclear whether he received a commission to produce the album, a version of which can be found in the archive of the State Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow.

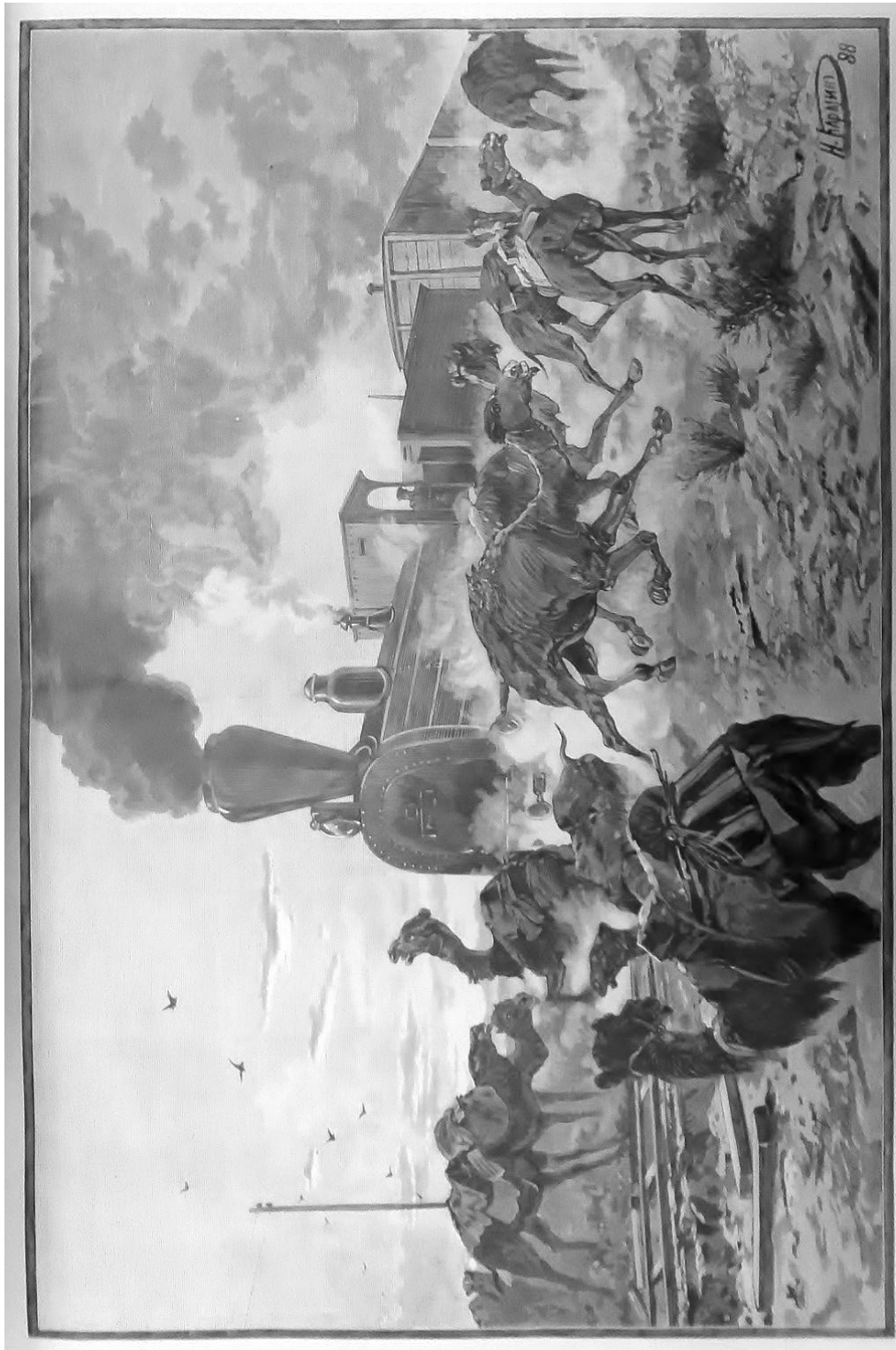
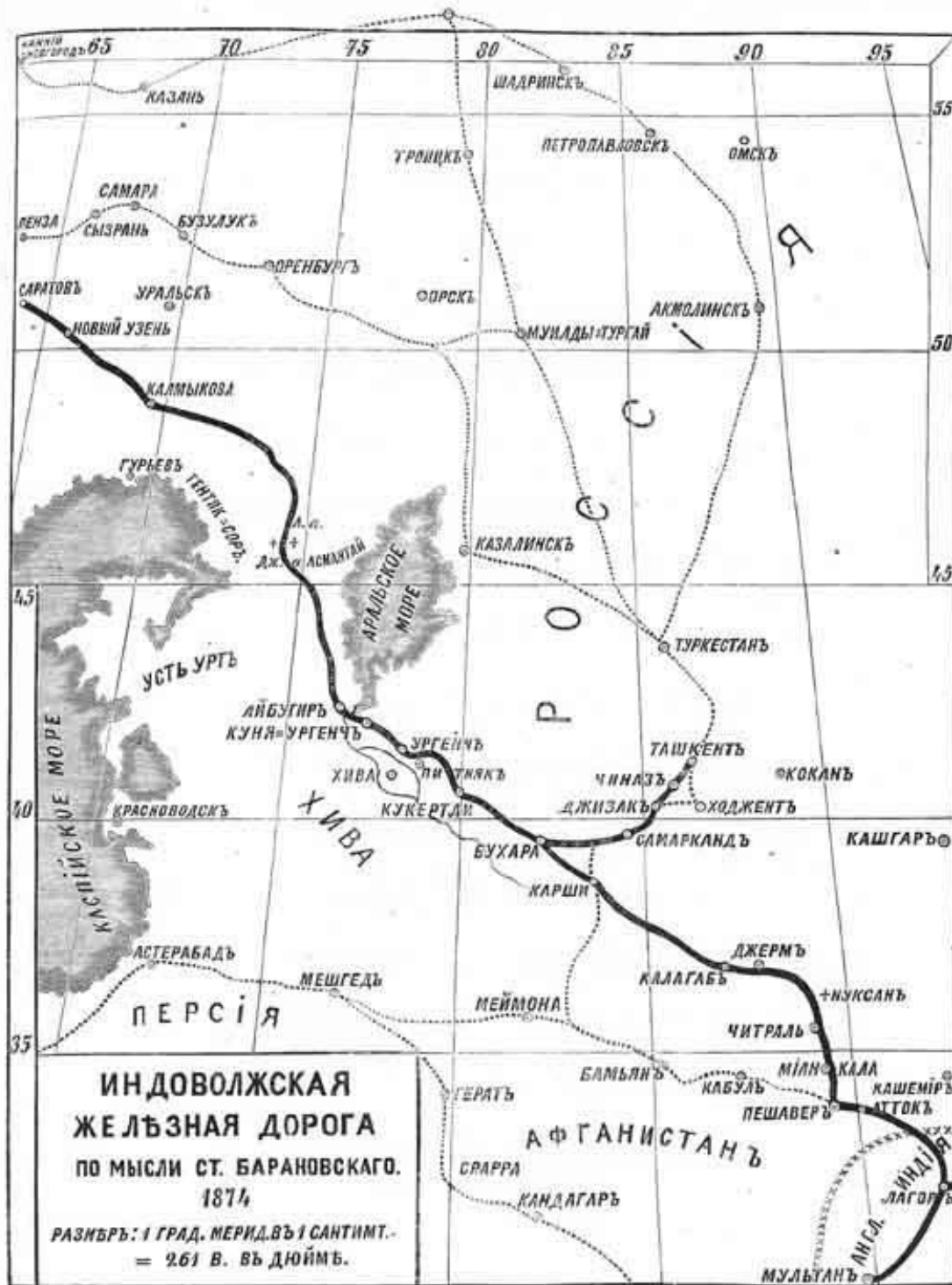


Figure 4. N. N. Karazin, 'Zakaspiiskaia zheleznaia doroga'.

Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia, 1888 (II), p. 181.

National Art Library, V&A Museum, pressmark PP.400.R.



Карта Индо-волжской желѣзной дороги. Проектъ Ст. Барановскаго.

Figure 5. 'Indovolzhskaia zheleznaia doroga'.

Niva, 1874, No. 34, pp. 536-539.

<http://zerrspiegel.orientphil.uni-halle.de/i53.html>.

The album's cover depicted a steam engine flanked to the left by Russian soldiers and to the right by the two-headed imperial eagle.²¹ The railway was thus portrayed as a direct manifestation of Russian imperial power, transporting the very symbol of sovereignty and empire into Central Asia. Equally, the image acknowledged the line's military significance, and offered a clear suggestion that the railway was a tool of imperial rule. In contrast, the 'subjects' of Russia's railway imperialism were placed towards the bottom of the scene, in the path of the oncoming train. The native Central Asians were surrounded by items representing the riches of the region - maize, wheat, cotton and golden vessels - highly suggestive of the economic potential of the line in shipping the riches of the land back to the Russian metropole, via the Caspian Sea, which was shown to the left. Subsequent plates followed a formulaic and hyperbolic style of composition, reminiscent of Karazin's earlier work, discussed in chapter one. Each image juxtaposed an element of local life with a scene from along the line: tracks next to ruined mausoleums,²² a busy station with smoking chimneys paired with vignettes of camels, and huddles of local people watching goods trains move through the steppe.²³ This strongly comparative style was clearly popular, and could be found not only in Karazin's images which were re-worked for the illustrated press and monographs,²⁴ but in images of the railway produced by other artists. The Russian illustrated newspaper *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia* serialised a set of images entitled *Vidy Zakaspiiskoi oblasti*, which used almost identical compositions to those in Karazin's album to juxtapose scenes of trains and track with those of the 'empty', 'featureless' steppe and traditional ways of life.²⁵

This type of illustration was not simply the result of a quest for artistic contrast, but was a visual comment on Russia's presence in Central Asia. The comparative element set up a number of reductive tropes: the railway stood in opposition to the inhospitable sandy expanses of the Transcaspian steppe; its technological modernity contrasted with the ruined traces of past civilisations; its mechanical speed was compared to the traditional propulsion of camel or horse. Indeed, the camel was used as a repeated figurative device to symbolise the undeveloped nature of Central Asia (figure 4).²⁶ The newspaper *Iskry* went so far as to supply helpfully labelled 'before' and 'after' images of a camel and a train to reiterate the idea of Russia as the harbinger of transformative modernity.²⁷ Thus visual material was used to evoke very similar spatial and temporal ideas to those articulated by Putintsev: the line was a symbolic extension of the modern and civilised Russian empire into the distant and antiquated lands of Central Asia.

²¹ N. N. Karazin, frontispiece of *Transcaspian Railway Album*, 1888, in Wageman & Kouteinikova, *Russia's unknown Orient*, p. 56.

²² N. N. Karazin, 'The ruins of Annau', *Transcaspian Railway Album*, plate 6, in Wageman & Kouteinikova, *Russia's unknown Orient*, p. 58.

²³ N. N. Karazin, 'Sands and oases', and 'Untitled', *Transcaspian Railway Album*, plates 3, 7, in Wageman & Kouteinikova, *Russia's unknown Orient*, pp. 57-58.

²⁴ See for instance, N. N. Karazin, 'The Transcaspian railway - the nomad and the locomotive', in C. Marvin, *Reconnoitring Central Asia: Adventures in the region between Russia and India*, London: [n. p.], 1884, frontispiece.

²⁵ 'Vidy Zakaspiiskoi oblasti - Ot Krasnovodska do Kizil'-Arvata', *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, 1887, pp. 260-261. For repeated instances of this type of juxtaposition, see the Transcaspian series published in *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, 1888 (II), pp. 76, 89, 90, 108, 116, 136-137, 156-157, 181, 204-205, 217, 233, 236-237, 284, and *Iskry*, 1901, No. 25, pp. 11-12.

²⁶ See for instance *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, 1888 (II) pp. 181, 205, and *Iskry*, 1904, No. 37, p. 294.

²⁷ *Iskry*, 1904, No. 37, p. 294.

Such contrasts and notions of the railway's transformative impact were invoked across Russian society. Even the Russophobic Hungarian writer A. Vambéry could not fail to be impressed by the new line, recounting the difference it had made in comparison to his journey through the region twenty-five years earlier:

To-day all is changed as if by enchantment. There, where my camel, coughing as he went, once dragged his weary limbs through the deep sand, and shook every bone in my body with his abrupt movement, now rushes the steam-horse, snorting and puffing. Shifting sands, and shifty Turkomans, have either disappeared or been forcibly fastened to the ground. A magical iron band bridges over all difficulties, all irregularities, and where distances used to be measured by the months of the camel-driver they are now measured by the hours of the engine-driver.²⁸

This imagery of the railway as a conduit between the old world and the new, binding Central Asia to Russia, was a popular device used in textual descriptions of the line. Echoing Putintsev's thoughts, the writer I. Ia. Vatslik commented that Annenkov's railway had 'opened the way to civilisation in the most remote region of the populated world'.²⁹ Moreover, he noted that travelling on the line would transport the traveller to a temporally distant land, as in only 'ten days from St Petersburg the traveller can reach that mighty river, the ancient Oxus, and can be carried away to the times of Zoroaster and dream of prehistoric Bactria'.³⁰ Thus the binaries that both words and images constructed of past and present, modernity and antiquity, and inferred civilisation and backwardness very much resonated with the pre-existing common idea that Central Asia was a backward region 'at the edges of the civilised world', as discussed in chapter one.

Indistinguishable from the fact that the Transcaspian line was seen as a means to link metropole and colony closer together, were notions of the railway's technological significance. As a product of the latest industrial innovation, the line was not only a means of modernising Central Asia's landscapes and expediting movement, but was a vehicle for the reflection of the Russian state's capacity to control nature through modern technology. Indeed, as discussed with reference to the dominance of environmental themes in descriptions of the conquest, the 'battle' against nature again surfaced as a key motif in Russian descriptions of the line, which emphasised the empire's remarkable achievements in creating the 'latest word in civilisation' in a country whose environmental conditions 'were considered wholly unsuitable for the life and work of cultured man'.³¹ The superheated environment of Transcaspia certainly posed a huge challenge to the railway's planners, engineers and builders. A report into the condition of the line carried out by the Ministry of Transport in 1899 lamented the great fluctuations in climate, lack of supplies, and

²⁸ A. Vambéry, 'The Transcaspian railway', *Fortnightly Review*, February 1887, pp. 294-295.

²⁹ I. Ia. Vatslik, *Zakaspiiskaia zheleznaia doroga, ee znachenie i budushchnost'*, SPb: Iablonskii & Perott, 1888, p. 11.

³⁰ Vatslik, *Zakaspiiskaia zheleznaia doroga*, p. 14.

³¹ A. I. Rodzevich, *Ocherk postroiki Zakaspiiskoi voennoi zheleznoi dorogi i ee znachenie dlia russko-sredneaziatskoi promyshlennosti i torgovli*, SPb: Tip. Muller & Bogel'man, 1891, p. 9.

the prevalence of disease among workers.³² Of sixty-five stations along the line, thirty-two had no water supply and had to be provided for by means of imported or desalinated water.³³ Sleepers and other building supplies warped under the heat of the sun,³⁴ while scorpions, tarantulas and termites conspired to destroy buildings and telegraph poles.³⁵ As the report's author concluded, the line had been built in 'thoroughly unfavourable circumstances ... through deserts, without maps ... with little knowledge of the future direction of the line ... in this unattractive land with its heat, lack of water and vegetation, fevers, destructive downpours, wild beasts and entirely alien, if not openly hostile, population'.³⁶

To accommodate the climate and landscape, engineers first sketched and then implemented novel ways to cope with the sandy steppe in 'the first attempt in history to lay track over shifting sand'.³⁷ Strategic embankments were created and a network of windshields and newly-planted shrubs positioned close to the track in an attempt to prevent the onslaught of the desert, while a vast bridge of over one mile long was designed to surmount the problem of crossing the mighty Amu-Dar'ia river, with its rapidly shifting channels.³⁸ Such efforts produced a vast quantity of visual material, from blueprints, maps and technical drawings, to models and photographs of the line's stations, bridges and rolling stock.³⁹ Strikingly, instead of disappearing into the obscurity of the military archive after construction had been completed, these models and images enjoyed a second life, making frequent appearances at a variety of local, national and international exhibitions. In this sense, visual material was at the heart of underpinning wider Russian claims about the empire's technological prowess, forming not only a visual record of the new railway's design and planning, but in the context of public exhibitions gaining symbolism as a testament to Russian innovation and to the triumph over nature that such proficiency had enabled. While the exhibition as a site of public display will be discussed in more detail in chapter six, its importance to the specific narrative of the railway is readily evident. A whole pavilion dedicated to the new line appeared in Tashkent at the Turkestan Exhibition of 1890, inside which were a variety of 'state-of-the-art' exhibits, which evoked 'great interest' from visitors.⁴⁰ On display were photographs, technical drawings, maps and models of station buildings, telegraph equipment, steam engines, and of the Amu-Dar'ia bridge, all faithfully recreated from the original designs.⁴¹ The majority of these exhibits then travelled to Moscow for the 1891 Central Asian Exhibition, held in the Imperial Historical Museum, where again, working drawings and scale models took

³² RGIA, f. 350, op. 1, d. 277, l. 5 ob.

³³ RGIA, f. 350, op. 1, d. 277, l. 6 ob.

³⁴ RGIA, f. 350, op. 1, d. 277, l. 6.

³⁵ RGIA, f. 350, op. 1, d. 277, l. 5 ob.

³⁶ RGIA, f. 350, op. 1, d. 277, l. 4 ob.

³⁷ Z. K. Akhmedzhanova, *Zheleznodorozhnoe stroitel'stvo v Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane, konets XIX-nachalo XX v.*, Tashkent: Izd. "FAN", 1984, p. 17.

³⁸ RGIA, f. 350, op. 1, d. 277, l. 26 ob.

³⁹ See for instance RGVIA, f.789, op. 1, d. 153; f. 789, op. 1, d. 282; f. 789, op. 1, d. 322, and RGIA, f. 350, op. 1, d. 2; f. 350, op. 1, d. 277.

⁴⁰ N. A. Maev, *Turkestanskaia vystavka 1890g. Putevoditel' po vystavke i ee otdelam*, Tashkent: Tip. S. I. Lakhtina, 1890, p. 83. A pavilion also appeared at the 1909 Tashkent exhibition, and included numerous diagrams illustrating how planting had shored up the sand.

⁴¹ Maev, *Turkestanskaia vystavka 1890*, p. 88.

central billing.⁴² Meanwhile the visual record of the line achieved international prominence as material was dispatched by the railway's military administration to both the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago and the 1900 Fair in Paris. At the latter, engineering diagrams were displayed to illustrate the 'battle of the Central Asian railway against sand-drifts', along with examples of the plants used to protect the line.⁴³ Observers drew particular attention to diagrams of fuel injectors used to power the trains by oil, a method 'still little used for this purpose on the railways of other European countries'.⁴⁴

Visual material thus had a use beyond its initial purpose, and through public display was used to represent the Transcaspian line as a major technological accomplishment. Innovation - the use of sand-shields, new fuel technologies, the length of the Amu-Dar'ia bridge - was the over-riding theme that emerged from this curated display,⁴⁵ and was particularly emphasised at the international fairs where Russia openly vaunted the railway as technologically superior to others around the globe.⁴⁶ Thus interwoven in visual and textual representations of the line were two closely-related notions: the line brought Central Asia 'closer' to the imperial centre, and also reflected positively on the empire's self-image as confidently executing a purportedly world-leading project in difficult environmental conditions.

Rails, rivers and the bridge to Asia

Connecting Turkestan's oasis towns and arid steppes to the imperial centre via rail was very much portrayed as a vital means of bringing an isolated region closer - both conceptually and in terms of journey times - to the heart of Russian civilisation. As will be seen in subsequent chapters, the Transcaspian line greatly aided the Russian quest to populate the region with new settlers, and to develop new industrial and urban sites. Yet the remainder of this chapter contends that looking only at this single project in isolation is to sacrifice a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which route planning and construction were used to negotiate ideas about Turkestan's place at the edge of empire. Indeed, considering the visual and textual descriptions of a range of projects, the majority of which were never realised, reveals that such actions projected a range of subtly different and evolving notions about Turkestan, not all of which envisaged routes primarily as a way to integrate the region into the imperial community. Although the visual representation of the Transcaspian line speaks to the Russian belief that the railway could bind a place at the geographic limits of the empire closer to the imperial centre, an examination of related projects demonstrates the existence of rather different ambitions to reconceptualise Turkestan as a bridging point to the rest of Asia - a far cry from the notion of a dead-end periphery invoked by

⁴² *Katalog Sredne-Aziatskoi vystavki v Moskve*, Moscow: Tip. N. I. Kumanina, 1891, p. 140.

⁴³ V. M. Verkhovskii, *VI gruppa Russkogo otdela na Vsemirnoi 1900 vystavke v Parizhe*, SPb: Tip. br. Panteleevykh, 1902, p. 8.

⁴⁴ Verkhovskii, *VI gruppa Russkogo otdela*, p. 8.

⁴⁵ There is little mention of the curators of these pavilions, but all exhibits were supplied directly from the Transcaspian military administration.

⁴⁶ In many respects however, the line had been comparatively simple to build - covering largely flat ground and with not a single tunnel in the entire 900-mile-stretch - a point not missed by Curzon in G. Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia in 1889 and the Anglo-Russian question*, London: Frank Cass & Co., 1967 [originally published 1889], p. 53.

Putintsev, Karazin and others. In this sense, the visual planning, if not implementation, of new routes reveals attempts not only to link centre and periphery more closely, but to redefine and expand imperial borders, to demarcate the ownership of space, and to articulate aspirations for future scenarios that looked outward towards the south and east, as well as inwards towards the heart of empire.

The creation of the Murgab branch-line is an instructive example of how cartography in particular served as a medium through which route planners could blur the distinction between the 'real' and the 'projected', erasing, moving and re-defining international borders according to the route of the line. The 200-mile-long Murgab line, built between 1895 and 1898, connected the town of Merv on the Transcaspien mainline, to the settlement of Kushka, the very southern-most point of the entire empire, close to the Afghan border.⁴⁷ The line had little economic importance, passing through sparsely-populated hills, and had only six stations.⁴⁸ Rather, its significance was to be found in its geography: the line navigated formerly contested land along the Murgab river valley, claimed by both Russia and Britain. Kushka, originally part of Afghan territory, had been at the centre of a major Anglo-Russian crisis in 1885, and the railway's route took in several monuments to battles between Russian and Afghan forces.⁴⁹ Even after the Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission resolved the dispute in 1887, the region remained a diplomatic flashpoint. The Murgab line was thus purely strategic, and A. N. Kuropatkin, Governor of Transcaspien until 1898, made no bones about the matter, noting that as Russian forces could only reach Central Asia's southern border with Afghanistan 'extremely slowly' by travelling 200 miles from the main Transcaspien line on foot with numerous camel convoys, 'only the building of the railway to the Kushka fortress would be able to convey troops to the Afghan border for the successful defence of our territory against Afghan or Anglo-Afghan forces'.⁵⁰

Cartographic material reveals still further the spatial implications of the line's existence. Mapping, as a demonstration of knowledge and ownership of land, was a fundamental method of incorporating new territory into the Russian imperial domain, and survey maps of the Murgab valley did much to enshrine what was an extremely porous, contested and at times unstable border as a fixed point, cementing Russia's new southern frontier on paper.⁵¹ The maps used by the line's planners, printed by the military lithography department in St Petersburg, recorded both the route of the railway itself and highly detailed observations of the river valley which

⁴⁷ Like the Transcaspien mainline, the Murgab branch was constructed almost exclusively by a military regiment, supplemented by 2000 Persian labourers. For more detail see RGVIA, f. 789, op. 1, d. 281, l. 8.

⁴⁸ For an excellent map of the line see RGVIA, f. 789, op. 1, d. 282, l. 6.

⁴⁹ The settlement had originally been part of Afghan territory but was annexed by Russia as part of a new sphere of influence around the Merv oasis, an action that took Britain and Russia to the brink of war, exacerbated by an Anglo-Afghan defence agreement. This escalating crisis over the Afghan frontier came in the context of existing tensions surrounding Russia's creeping southern border, particularly since the 1884 capture of Merv. Arbitration eventually won the day, and the 1887 Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission resolved the geography of the disputed border, permitting Russia to retain Kushka. Despite numerous flashpoints in subsequent decades, the frontier remained inviolate for the next ninety years.

⁵⁰ RGVIA, f. 789, op. 2, d. 40, l. 57 ob.

⁵¹ See the collection of maps and working drawings in *Al'bom ispolnitel'nykh chertezhei 1897 & 1900*, in RGVIA, f. 789, op. 1, d. 282.

would take on new strategic significance, were Russian troops to be sent to the Afghan border.⁵² Visually at least, the route of the new railway served as a signifier of Russia's acquisition of the valley, while cartographic material provided substantial support to Russia's claims on the land.

Alongside formalising the contested landscape of the Murgab valley as a definitively 'Russian' zone, these maps were used to conceive new designs on spaces which were completely outside the empire's borders. Secret military correspondence reveals the ulterior motives that lay behind the mapping of the valley and the creation of the branch-line:

In the opinion of General-Lieutenant Kuropatkin ... in order to prevent England from destroying our interests across the whole region from the Pacific to the Black Sea and the Baltic, we must be prepared not only for the defence of the Afghan border, but also for an *offensive* towards the borders of India: via Herat, Kandahar and Quetta. In preparation for the first phase of this plan to Herat, it is essential to gather supplies of railway building materials at Kushka, for the rapid construction of a line to Herat as our troops move forward.⁵³

There is significant evidence that the Russian military command was indeed considering a further advance into Afghanistan. Notes on the secret preparation of a field railway at Kushka contained a hand-drawn map of the Murgab branch-line on which such ambitions were abundantly clear.⁵⁴ The map displayed two dotted red lines, one to Kushka and one branching off before the terminus and ending instead at Herat, in Afghanistan. Terrain and river systems were carefully drawn in, showing the most favourable route for what seemed to be an extension of the Murgab railway to negotiate the mountainous border region, while the international border itself was conspicuously absent. The map is undated, but almost certainly not made after 1898, which suggests that even at the planning stage of the Murgab branch-line, contingencies were being considered to extend the railway into Afghanistan. An accompanying report by a military engineer, one Staff-Captain Butuzov, put forward the case for building the Murgab line, with an interesting passing comparison to railways in the 'English colonies of New Zealand'.⁵⁵ Reaching the Afghan border was not to mark the end of the project, but rather the beginning of a plan to use Kushka as a staging post from which to launch an assault into Afghan territory: 'As Kushka is our forward point on the Afghan border, who can guarantee that we will not go further, beyond Kushka, extending the railway into Afghanistan, possibly to Herat'.⁵⁶

This map provides powerful evidence of aspirations to permanently reshape the political geography of the entire region: had Russia pushed on towards Herat, she would almost certainly have come to blows with Britain. The significance of Herat as the goal of any planned railway was

⁵² RGVIA, f. 789, op. 1, d. 282, l. 6, and f. 789, op. 1, d. 355.

⁵³ RGVIA, f. 789, op. 2, d. 40, ll. 58-58 ob.

⁵⁴ RGVIA, f. 789, op. 2, d. 52, l. 33. Since the Russian markings in red ink are overlaid on top of Latin-script place names, it is possible that the map was copied by hand from a British source.

⁵⁵ RGVIA, f. 789, op. 2, d. 52, l. 6.

⁵⁶ RGVIA, f. 789, op. 2, d. 52, l. 11.

noted by a range of popular British and Russian sources, which conceptualised the ‘race for Herat’ as a fight for ‘the key to India’.⁵⁷ Both sides noted that at Kushka, Russia was already within seventy miles of Herat, while the end of the British empire’s railway network was more distant, some 500 miles away at Quetta. Moreover, in Britain it was unclear whether Russia had actual intentions of advancing on India, or was simply posturing to achieve acquiescence to her demands in Europe. Anti-Russian sentiment reached fever pitch, with the publication of numerous polemical pamphlets on the topic. Prolific Russophobe Charles Marvin sold upwards of 65,000 copies of his work *The Russians at the gates of Herat*,⁵⁸ and various opinions were hotly debated as to whether Britain should actively defend Herat itself,⁵⁹ or cede the town and then ‘knock them [the Russians] on the head as they attempt to crawl through the passes into India’.⁶⁰ Maps were central to British attempts to illustrate the dangers of their predicament, with the lines of non-existent Russian railways inked in to underscore the threat.⁶¹ Besides projected incursions to Herat, this cartography rather fancifully depicted the tentacles of Russia’s border reaching far into India and to the Persian gulf, ‘distant only a few days’ sail from Bombay and the Suez canal route’.⁶² The medium of the map was ideal to demonstrate to the public the scope and threat of Russia’s railway expansion, and to visualise future alarming scenarios.

In this context, maps and associated texts were an important means of expressing imperial ambition - and fear - and from the Russian perspective, supply evidence of the blatant military-strategic motivations behind the creation of both the Murgab branch and the Transcaspian mainline. More broadly, such material underscores not only the diplomatic vicissitudes of the Great Game, but the transitive nature of geography in Turkestan’s contested border zones. It remains difficult to assess whether Russian designs on India were ever more than a pipe-dream, popular in warmongering circles.⁶³ Nevertheless, as late as 1898, some continued to discuss the form in which an invasion might take place, and did so quite openly. Captain V. Lebedev put forward detailed contingencies for the complete occupation of Afghanistan, ‘needed for the profit of Russia’, with the possibility of a final step ‘to penetrate into the heart of India’.⁶⁴ Likewise, General L. N. Sobolev published an article in *Ruskaia starina* which foresaw the Hindu Kush as a part of the Russian empire, with the possibility of the Tsar as emperor of over 400 million

⁵⁷ See for instance C. Macgregor, *The defence of India: A strategical study*, Simla: Government Central Branch Press, 1884; C. Marvin, *The Russians at the gates of Herat*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Son, 1885; L. N. Sobolev, ‘Rossiia i Angliia na dal’nem vostokey’, *Ruskaia starina*, 1888, vol. 58, April-May, pp. 505-520; A. Vambéry, *The coming struggle for India*, London: Cassell & Co., 1885; Vatslik, *Zakapskaia zheleznaia doroga*.
⁵⁸ P. Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On secret service in high Asia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 419.

⁵⁹ Macgregor, *The defence of India*.

⁶⁰ C. Marvin, *Russia’s power of attacking India*, London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1885, p. 15.

⁶¹ For instance ‘Map illustrating the Great Camping Ground of Herat’, in Marvin, *Russia’s power of attacking India*, between pp. vi-vii. Marvin’s projected route of the Transcaspian line appears completely mis-informed.

⁶² See the position of the Russian border between Herat and Kandahar in ‘Map to illustrate Russian designs on Afghanistan, Persia and Persian Gulf’, before title page in Marvin, *Russia’s power of attacking India*. Quote p. 21.

⁶³ In fact, notions of this type were far from new, as detailed in D. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, ‘Paul’s Great Game: Russia’s plan to invade British India’, *CAS*, 2014, 33: 2, pp. 143-152.

⁶⁴ W. Lebedeff, *To India: A military, statistical and strategical sketch*, SPb: [n. p.], 1898, excerpts reprinted in M. Ewans (ed.), *Britain and Russia in Central Asia 1880-1907*, London: Routledge, 2008, vol. 1, document 22, pp. 1-2.

subjects, were Russia to continue on to India.⁶⁵ Such plans were largely ‘inappropriate dreams’ than likely outcome.⁶⁶ More probable was that Russia intended to ‘extract the utmost value’ from her ‘present situation’ on the frontier, most likely in the form of concessions in the Black Sea region.⁶⁷ Calm heads ultimately prevailed. Count Muraviev, in a note to the Tsar, advised to refrain from ‘expansionist schemes and to establish completely friendly, trusting relations with the ruler of Afghanistan’, in order to gain political and economic influence and to avoid ‘an unpleasant, dispiriting impression of Russia throughout Central Asia’.⁶⁸ Ultimately the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 confirmed that Afghanistan remained firmly outside Russia’s sphere of influence.⁶⁹ In the light of this outcome, Russian mapping of the sensitive Afghan border region although very much rooted in geographic reality, was inscribed with the aspirational, and at times entirely implausible, designs of international politics which envisaged Turkestan not as a land that delineated the edge of the tsarist state’s borders, but as an important, if opportune, staging post for further expansion.

The completion of the Transcaspian line and its branch to the Afghan border had other less overtly aggressive connotations. The idea of Indo-European railway transit was raised as a serious possibility in both Britain and Russia, and marked an alternative to the highly territorialised two-power discussions over the Afghan border in favour of a more trans-national conceptualisation of space and movement. The prospect of a giant, unified rail network stretching from Europe to India via Central Asia had been suggested as early as 1873 by Ferdinand de Lesseps, builder of the Suez, and later the Panama, Canal.⁷⁰ According to Pierce, Lesseps had approached the Russian government with a project to connect Calais to Calcutta, by means of a Russian line from Orenburg to Samarkand, and a British-built line from Samarkand to Peshawar. The scheme, perhaps unsurprisingly, was not received favourably by the British, who quashed any attempts to put it into practice.⁷¹ Nevertheless, the allure of Indo-European transit proved enduring, both before and after the Transcaspian line had been built. As early as 1874, discussions of the project reached the Russian press, with the illustrated newspaper *Niva* publishing an article detailing the benefits of an Indo-Volga railway, at the centre of which was a map to illustrate what such a scenario

⁶⁵ Sobolev, ‘Rossiia i Angliia’.

⁶⁶ A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov, ‘Iz zapiski komanduiushchego voiskami Kavkazkogo voennogo okruga voennomu ministru o khode prisoedineniia doliny Murgaba k Rossii’, in A. Iliasov (ed.), *Prisoedinenie Turkmenii k Rossii: Sbornik arkhivnykh dokumentov*, Ashkhabad: Izd. Akademii nauk Turkmenskoi SSR, 1960, p. 756. Dondukov-Korsakov was military commander of the Governor Generalship of the Caucasus, with administrative oversight of Transcaspia until 1890.

⁶⁷ Dondukov-Korsakov, ‘Iz zapiski’, p. 756.

⁶⁸ M. A. Muraviev, ‘Russian policy in Central Asia’, 1900, excerpts from a diplomatic note reprinted in Ewans, *Britain and Russia in Central Asia*, vol. 1, document 23, p. 433.

⁶⁹ Despite appearing to be a significant step towards rapprochement, recent research has underplayed the significance of the 1907 agreement, which was ‘a temporary bridge over the gaping divide that separated British and Russian aims and desires in Central Asia’, and marked not the end of the Great Game, but the beginning of a new phase of tension. See J. Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the final struggle for Central Asia*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2002, p. 197. For more on the final years of the Great Game, see E. Iu. Sergeev, *Bol'shaia igra, 1856-1907: Mify i realii rossiisko-britanskikh otnoshenii v Tsentral'noi i Vostochnoi Azii*, Moscow: Tovarishestvo nauchnykh izdaniy KMK, 2012, chapters five and six.

⁷⁰ For more on Lesseps in Russian eyes, see M. V. Barro, *F. Lesseps, ego zhizn' i deiatel'nost'*, SPb: Tip. ‘Obshchestvennaia pol'za’, 1893.

⁷¹ R. Pierce, *Russian Central Asia: A study in colonial rule, 1867-1917*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960, p. 184.

would look like (figure 5).⁷² The proposed line, as detailed on the map, was to connect Saratov, on the Volga, with Bukhara, travelling through the steppes of Ural'sk *oblast'* and then south, past the Aral Sea. From Bukhara, the line continued to Peshawar, and on into India via the British railway network. The plan was undoubtedly ambitious, encapsulated in the snappy synopsis of '3000 *versti* [around 2000 miles] of railway to connect 300 million Europeans with 300 million Asiatics', and would boost 'transit trade from all over Europe and large parts of Asia, via Russia'.⁷³ Meanwhile, the idea found currency in other more specialised discussions of Central Asia's railway dilemmas, with engineers imagining a time when 200 million Indians would be able to travel to, and through, Russia.⁷⁴

Although the identification of Central Asia as a lynchpin connecting European and Asian markets remained predominantly outside official circles of discussion at the Russian Ministry of Transport, by the late 1890s the desirability of a direct connection with Europe played a major part in the creation of a new railway in Turkestan, connecting Tashkent to Orenburg, and beyond to the Trans-Siberian mainline. While the Transcaspian had proved successful in expediting the export of cotton and in establishing military supremacy along Russia's southern borders, it retained a number of deficiencies. Above all, it did not provide an efficient transport route: goods had to be moved by ship across the Caspian Sea, and then overland by train, or by boat along the Volga. A railway connection to the main Trans-Siberian line via Orenburg would hugely speed up the transport process and provide an unbroken rail connection with Moscow, St Petersburg and Europe. Two rival solutions to the problem emerged, with cartographic material at the heart of articulating the competing plans; the first a line from Aleksandrov-Gai, via Khiva to Chardzhui, and the second running further east, from Orenburg to Tashkent. As well as providing faster transport to the Russian centre, both lines would theoretically be able to access the Indian rail network via the Murgab branch to Kushka, and eventually to Quetta. The problem was discussed at length by the Ministry of Transport, in lively debates in local and national newspapers, and illustrated rather appositely in a large map accompanying the monograph *Zadachi Rossii v Srednei Azii*.⁷⁵

The map neatly encapsulated an altogether different approach to the landscape of empire than the rivalries of the Great Game. Here, Europe and Asia were seen as one entity, with continuous and unified transport routes running from Calais, St Petersburg and Cheliabinsk to Constantinople, Basra and Lahore. Faint, dotted borders between countries and empires gave way to the heavy, bold lines of the railway network. Central Asia lay at the heart of the proposition, with the two most likely routes from Calais to Quetta both hinging on transit through Turkestan, either via

⁷² 'Indovolzhskaiia zheleznaia doroga', *Niva*, 1874, No. 34, pp. 536-539.

⁷³ 'Indovolzhskaiia zheleznaia doroga', *Niva*, 1874, No. 34, p. 539.

⁷⁴ Vatslik, *Zakaspiiskaia zheleznaia doroga*, p. 47.

⁷⁵ *Zadachi Rossii v Srednei Azii v sviazi s voprosom o provedenii Sredne-aziatskoi zheleznoi dorogi*, SPb: Tip. N. Ia. Stoikovoii, 1900. For a small sample of other discussions, see Ia. Poroshin, *K voprosu o zheleznoi doroge "Tashkent-Rossia"*, Vernyi: Tip. Semirechenskogo oblastnogo pravleniia, [1897]; Protsenko, 'O luchshem napravlenii magistral'noi zheleznoi dorogi v Sredniuu Aziiu', in TsGARK, f. 44, op. 1, d. 954; RGVIA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 1622; *TV*, 1890, No. 31, p. 183; No. 32, pp. 184, 189; No. 47, pp. 283-284; No. 51, pp. 292-293; *TV*, 1900, No. 15, pp. 99-100; No. 32, pp. 207-208.

Chardzhui or Tashkent.⁷⁶ Despite the latter line being slightly longer, the Orenburg-Tashkent solution won the day, thanks to its 'numerous superiorities' which included passing through several large population centres, one of which was Turkestan's largest city.⁷⁷ Of course, the immediate objectives for those building the line were a little closer to home than creating a trans-national railway network, which was dismissed by the former Governor of the nearby Turgai *oblast'* as a 'question for the future'.⁷⁸ The Tashkent line primarily served the interests of the state, 'uniting our rich Central Asian lands with the centre of the empire', stimulating the economy and aiding settlement.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, the persistence of the Indo-European transit question, and its debate during the late 1890s, suggests that although the practicalities of railway building remained firmly predicated around the proposed benefit to the Russian state and local economy, alternative visions of trade and travel were evolving which emphasised the interconnectedness of regions and empires. Central Asia was not necessarily the terminus of a railway, but an as-yet-uncompleted bridge between Europe and Asia, which could only be visualised through the medium of the map. If Russia 'should not close her eyes to the future' of Central Asia's role in 'this great Indo-European transit route', then the map offered a convenient way to envisage this putative future.⁸⁰ Perhaps more importantly, the production and publication of maps that showed Central Asia's railways connecting to others beyond the empire's borders demonstrates that the dominant centre-periphery relationship of imperial geography was subject to negotiation. In fact, plans that envisaged Central Asia at the heart of inter-continental connectivity were very much of their time, dovetailing with other international, long-distance rail projects.⁸¹

In some cases, projects for new routes that crossed international boundaries called for a radical recalibration of Central Asia's geography. Perhaps unsurprisingly, such schemes never left the drawing board, a fact that makes the evidence of maps and other diagrams even more valuable as sources of how imperial space was subject to (often failed) negotiation. As one of the two main rivers in Central Asia, the Amu-Dar'ia was intensively mapped from source to mouth during the first decades of Russian rule, a process that involved highly detailed land surveys not only of the river itself, but of surrounding local irrigation networks and dried up canals.⁸² The river's contemporary route, flowing from the Hindu Kush into the Aral Sea, was not the sole focus; during the early 1870s, surveys of the Uzboi, the old bed of the Amu-Dar'ia, were undertaken, producing

⁷⁶ A third route, via Constantinople and Basra, seemed by far the least likely, given the amount of track to be built and terrain to be crossed. Nevertheless, discussions between Russia and Britain over a Trans-Persian railway continued until well after the outbreak of the First World War. See J. Fisher, 'Lord Curzon and British strategic railways in Central Asia before, during and after the First World War', in Otte & Neilson, *Railways and international politics*, pp. 137-155.

⁷⁷ TsGARK, f. 44, op. 1, d. 954, l. 71.

⁷⁸ TsGARK, f. 44, op. 1, d. 954, l. 69.

⁷⁹ TsGARK, f. 44, op. 1, d. 954, l. 69.

⁸⁰ *Zadachi Rossii v Srednei Azii*, p. 45.

⁸¹ For instance the proposed Berlin-Baghdad line and the Trans-Persian railway in Fisher, 'Lord Curzon and British strategic railways', and even a scheme to create a Siberia-Alaska line via a tunnel under the Bering Straits. For the latter see Marks, *Road to power*, p. 206.

⁸² See for instance *Karta Khivinskogo Khanstva i nizov'ev Amu-Dar'i*, 1873; *Karta verkhov'ev Amu-Dar'i*, 1886; RGIA, f. 183, op. 1, d. 2.

some of the first detailed maps of the river's old course.⁸³ The very existence of the Uzboi was hotly debated amongst the engineers and scientists who explored the region in the 1870s and 1880s, and amongst the circle who believed that it was indeed a former route of the Amu-Dar'ia, plans emerged to divert the river back to its former course, leading to the Caspian, rather than the Aral, Sea.⁸⁴ The plan was not new; it had been sporadically discussed since the time of Peter the Great, who 'sent an envoy to examine the former channel, and to report upon the feasibility of the project, with a view to opening up a new waterway into the heart of Asia', while Grand Prince Nikolai Konstantinovich had also championed the idea, to little effect in the 1870s.⁸⁵ The scheme's latest incarnation was supervised by General A. I. Glukhovskoi, who, backed by the Ministry of Transport, undertook several fieldtrips in the area between 1873 and 1883. Initial surveys proved not only the existence of the Amu-Dar'ia's old bed, branching off to the east before the river's delta, but that water had flowed in it in the recent past, while a further expedition from 1879-1883 outlined two possible routes for the river to take on its new course to the Caspian, the most favoured being through the Sarakamysh basin.

The mapping of the Uzboi was not simply an exercise in historical geography. Glukhovskoi's team put forward a complete scheme of maps, diagrams, hydrotechnical profiles and explanatory texts to propagate a scheme that would revolutionise travel into Central Asia.⁸⁶ The diversion of the river would allow direct passage from the Volga, through the Caspian and to the heart of Central Asia, 'enriching this southern land and having a thoroughly favourable effect on trade across Russia'.⁸⁷ Moreover, the redirection away from Khiva would ensure Russian control of the river, and offer the potential to irrigate vast swathes of previously unused land.⁸⁸ Maps produced by the expedition's cartographers charted the old river bed in previously unseen detail, tracing its course from the present river delta near the Aral Sea to its former outlet, far to the west on the shores of the Caspian. Superimposed onto such material were two suggested new courses that the river could take once it had been diverted, largely following the existing old bed. Thus what was

⁸³ For a selection, see 'Karta starogo rusla r. Amu-Dar'i', in A. I. Glukhovskoi, *Propusk vod r. Amu-Dar'i po staromu ee ruslu v Kaspiiskoe more i obrazovanie nepreryvnogo vodnogo Amu-Dar'insko-Kaspiiskogo puti ot granits Afganistana po Amu-Dar'e, Kaspiiu, Volge i Mariinskoi sisteme do Peterburga i Baltiiskogo moria*, SPb: Tip. M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1893, appendix 3, and A. I. Svintsov, *Reka Amu-Dar'ia i drevnee soedinenie ee s Kaspiiskim morem (Uzboi)*, SPb: Tip. D. I. Shemetkina, 1884, untitled map after last page. Related surveys of the Uzboi in the early 1870s can be found in N. G. Petrusevitch & A. V. Kaul'bars, *Drevneishie rusla Amu-Dar'i*, SPb: Tip. Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, 1887. See also the selection of 'Plany rusla vostochnogo Uzboia' from 1874 and 1884, in A. M. Konshin, *Raz'iasnenie voprosa o drevnem techenii Amu-Dar'i*, SPb: Tip. Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, 1897, table IV.

⁸⁴ Some were highly sceptical of the feasibility of a reroute. Konshin in particular maintained that the Uzboi was not a former river bed, but that the Caspian Sea had once extended much further eastwards, meaning that the Kara-Kum sands were in fact a marine formation, the former bottom 'of a gulf of the Caspian', Konshin, *Raz'iasnenie voprosa*, p. 70.

⁸⁵ Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia*, p. 404, and A. Donnelly, 'Peter the Great and Central Asia', *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 1975, 17: 2-3, pp. 202-217. For details of the Grand Prince's proposals, see N. K. Romanov, *Amu i Uzboi*, Samara: [n. p.], 1879, and E. Pravilova, 'River of empire: Geopolitics, irrigation, and the Amu-Darya in the late XIXth century', in Gorshenina & Abashin, *Le Turkestan Russe*, pp. 263-275. A fascinating map of what seems likely to be the Prince's schemes for re-routing the river, along with a proposed new railway line leading to Kabul can be found in *Issledovanie napravleniia Sredneaziatskoi zheleznoi dorogi mezhdu Uralom i Syr-Dar'ei*, Samara: [n. p.], 1878, loose-leaf appendix.

⁸⁶ RGIA, f. 183, op. 1, d. 3-7.

⁸⁷ RGIA, f. 183, op. 1, d. 68, l. 6 ob.

⁸⁸ The implications of this plan for the Khivans do not appear to have weighed heavily on Glukhovskoi's mind.

pictured in the engineers' technical drawings and maps was a vision that would reshape nature, aided by a complex network of canals, sluices and dams. The ambition of this 'gigantic engineering scheme', readily apparent from its projected visualisations, quickly attracted debate.⁸⁹ A. I. Svintsov, a member of Glukhovskoi's expedition team, presented the idea to a meeting of engineers at the Ministry of Transport in St Petersburg in 1884. Apart from the obvious technical reasons for interest in the project, Svintsov drew the engineers' attention to the practical importance of creating a new trade route into the heart of Asia, which would unite 'St Petersburg with the Afghan border, and the upper reaches of the Indus'.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, those present at the meeting voiced scepticism as to the project's feasibility, and the plan attracted little more interest from the Ministry of Transport or Glukhovskoi's military supervisors.⁹¹

Despite the Transcaspiian railway largely negating the need for a new transport connection with the Volga via the Caspian, Glukhovskoi continued to press the advantages of the river as a cheaper form of transport, unlikely to be requisitioned by the military and unthreatened by possible border conflicts.⁹² Undeterred by a lack of support, Glukhovskoi continued his investigations for several further years, drawing sustained scepticism in the Russian press over the project's expense and dubious practicality.⁹³ Countering what he labelled as the press' 'incorrect information', he reiterated that the old bed of the Uzboi did indeed exist, and that his expedition had found evidence of ruined settlements nearby (logically, he argued, these settlements had been founded near water).⁹⁴ Yet he was forced to defend what appeared to be a glaring discrepancy between the carefully drawn siphons, regulators and sluices in the plans and the simple fact that the difference in water level between the Caspian Sea and the lake system through which the new route would pass meant that it was likely that the new river would stagnate.⁹⁵ Perhaps anticipating such criticisms, both Glukhovskoi and Svintsov took care to reference the plan's historical pedigree, citing previous Russian surveys of the Uzboi riverbed in their comments on the project. Both men incorporated a nostalgic evocation of river's former route, when 'the Greeks ... Alexander the Great ... Marco Polo ... all saw the mighty Amu-Dar'ia on its old course',⁹⁶ and when the ancient states of Bactria, Sogdia and Khorazm had been at their apogee.⁹⁷ The introduction of this temporal aspect to what had predominantly been a discussion of how to expedite movement across the region alluded to a further dimension of the mapping project. The new route offered an implicit sense of unity with previous golden ages and a promise of an era that could once again witness the flowering of Central Asia. This visualisation of the 'second' Uzboi

⁸⁹ Dobson, *Russia's railway advance*, p. 116.

⁹⁰ Svintsov, *Reka Amu-Dar'ia*, p. 3.

⁹¹ Privilova, 'River of empire', p. 278.

⁹² A. I. Glukhovskoi, *Amu-Dar'insko-Kaspiiskii vodnyi put' i ego znachenie dlia Rossii*, SPb: Tip. Ministerstva vnutrennikh del, [1889], pp. 8-9.

⁹³ Glukhovskoi's notes on his response to articles appearing in *Novoe vremia*, No. 2882, 7 March [1889] and *Russkie vedomosti*, No. 123, 6 May 1889 can be found in RGIA, f. 183, op. 1, d.71, and f. 183, op. 1, d. 75.

⁹⁴ RGIA, f. 183, op. 1, d. 71, ll. 5-5 ob.

⁹⁵ Curzon estimated that it would take forty years 'before the idea could be entertained of taking the overflow into the Caspian', in Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia*, p. 404. This was disputed by those taking part in the expedition, see RGIA, f. 183, op. 1, d. 68, ll. 6-6 ob.

⁹⁶ Svintsov, *Reka Amu-Dar'ia*, pp. 4-6.

⁹⁷ Glukhovskoi, *Amu-Dar'insko-Kaspiiskii vodnyi put'*, p. 2.

thus projected a new linkage between Russia and India, and also between past and present, fused together by maps that predicted a significant intervention into Turkestan's natural geography.

The use of the Amu-Dar'ia's historic context as a means to legitimise the scheme's overtly ambitious nature was further developed in public displays of the expedition's work. Topographical maps, detailed schematics and photographs of engineers and surveyors in the field were displayed at the Moscow Central Asian exhibition in 1891,⁹⁸ and were prominent in the Russian section of the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, where several maps were exhibited of 'the delta and the old river beds of the Amu-Dar'ia, with lines marked on to demonstrate the two new projected routes'.⁹⁹ One such map published in the accompanying printed material produced for the Fair (and most likely displayed in larger format at the exhibition itself), demonstrated not only the strategic significance of Glukhovskoi's scheme, but the potential of cartographic material to convey profound shifts in the changing conceptual usage of space.¹⁰⁰ Superimposed onto a map of Russia, Central Asia and India were existing water routes, marked in blue ink. The proposed new route of the Amu-Dar'ia was marked with a broken blue line, while a route of red dots represented an unbuilt rail line linking Peshawar to Kabul to the Amu-Dar'ia. Thus, the route picked out in red and blue described a journey from the Baltic Sea to Peshawar; in Glukhovskoi's own words, 'an international Indo-Amu-Dar'ia route, uniting the populations of India and Europe, a route which would link the Indian ocean with the Black and Baltic Seas, would open new markets in India for Russian manufacturing and channel through Russia and Central Asia a part of India's trade with Europe'.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, the accompanying text reused much of Glukhovskoi's earlier description of the project, written in 1889, with the interesting modification of the book's last line, 'and channel through Russia and Central Asia a part of India's trade with Europe, *just as it was in ancient times*'.¹⁰² Thus in a public setting, the mapping project offered visitors a snapshot of what was billed as an innovative, modern project, augmented by points of historical reference, with the map itself acting as a link between the predicted future and the historic past. The scheme had obvious parallels with other plans for Indo-European rail transit, and once again placed Central Asia as a bridge linking different national and imperial spaces.

Rethinking isolation

Such a prospect was particularly championed by influential local elites in Semirech'e, by 1906 the only *oblast'* of Turkestan not to be connected by a railway. Settlers in the predominantly rural region noted that Semirech'e was effectively 'cut off from Turkestan', and that 'thanks to the remoteness of its geographic position' and the 'pitiful lack of a railway', the region had been

⁹⁸ *Doklad obshchemu sobraniuu uchreditelei Sredne-aziatskoi vystavki v Moskve 1891g.*, Moscow: Tip. M. G. Volchaninova, 1893, p. 11.

⁹⁹ *Vsemirnaia Kolumbova vystavka 1893g. v Chikago. Ukazatel' Russkogo otdela*, SPb: Tip. E. Evdokimova, 1893, p. 438.

¹⁰⁰ 'Obshchaia karta Indo-Amu-Dar'insko-Kaspiiskogo puti', in Glukhovskoi, *Propusk vod r. Amu-Dar'i*, appendix 1.

¹⁰¹ Glukhovskoi, *Amu-Dar'insko-Kaspiiskii vodnyi put'*, p. 16.

¹⁰² Glukhovskoi, *Propusk vod r. Amu-Dar'i*, p. 259. My italics mark the additional text.

condemned to ‘a life of isolation’.¹⁰³ A range of ideas was floated for how to provide Semirech’e with new or improved road, river and rail routes, with the schemes used to very clearly articulate new visions for the region’s future place within the empire. I. I. Poklevskii-Kozell, an engineer and architect who contributed to the design of Vernyi and Kul’dzha, before the latter was ceded to the Chinese, mapped a hybrid rail and water route that would connect Vernyi to Semipalatinsk in the north, via the river Ili and Lake Balkhash.¹⁰⁴ In his notes on the project, he boasted that the new route, while passing through a region with few rural settlements, would facilitate the development of irrigation, the cultivation of forests, and the gradual improvement of the climate, so much so that the land would ‘turn into a wonderful place where millions of Russian colonists could settle’.¹⁰⁵ Rather more concerted efforts were made to lobby for a simpler rail-only route, and a committee convened in 1897 in Vernyi to discuss the merits of a Semirech’e railway, but progress was delayed as the new Tashkent-Orenburg line received priority.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, a circle of local writers, industrialists and administrators continued to campaign vigorously for a railway that would connect Semirech’e’s capital to Turkestan’s existing railway network,¹⁰⁷ an event deemed to be of ‘huge political significance’ by the head of Semirech’e’s Resettlement Administration.¹⁰⁸ The plan was discussed at length in local newspapers, and at meetings of regional agricultural and industrial societies.¹⁰⁹ Several propositions were put forward for the existing line at Tashkent to be extended to Semirech’e, continuing through Semipalatinsk and on to Siberia, a plan which, although discounted in some quarters as a fantastical ‘stork in the sky’ scheme, was mooted locally as a preferable alternative to the as-yet-unbuilt line travelling north from Tashkent to Orenburg.¹¹⁰

Despite the lack of progress, the local railway committee continued to develop the plan. During 1906 and 1907, land surveys were completed for a line that would run in parallel with the Trans-Siberian route, extending the existing Transcaspian through Semirech’e and eventually to Vladivostok. Maps charted how from Tashkent, the railway would traverse the fertile valleys and lowlands of Semirech’e, close to the Chinese border, across Semipalatinsk *oblast’* and through the Altai hills, connecting to the Trans-Siberian mainline near Mariinsk.¹¹¹ Given the vast scope and expense of the line dubbed the ‘Turkestan-Siberian route’, it was quickly decided that the

¹⁰³ *SOV*, 1899, No. 63, p. 413.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Karta Semirechenskoi oblasti i doliny reki Ili’, in I. I. Poklevskii-Kozell, *Novyi torgovyi put’ ot Irtysha v Vernyi i Kul’dzhu i issledovanie reki Ili na parokhode “Kolpakovskii”*, SPb: Tip. D. I. Shemetkina, 1885, appendix.

¹⁰⁵ Poklevskii-Kozell, *Novyi torgovyi put’*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁶ See TsGARK, f. 44, op. 1, d. 954, for initial local attempts, convened by the office of Vernyi’s City Commandant, to put together a request to send on to higher government regarding a new railway.

¹⁰⁷ The circle included P. V. Gurde (Vernyi city planner), Ia. Poroshin (a local civil engineer), A. I. Putolov (Vernyi City Commandant, 1898-1909), Ia. S. Shchepkin (Vernyi City Commandant, 1909-1913), and S. N. Veletskii (Head of the Semirech’e Resettlement Administration).

¹⁰⁸ S. N. Veletskii, *Zheleznaia doroga v Semirech’e*, [Vernyi]: Tip. Semirechenskogo oblastnogo pravleniia, 1910, p. 30.

¹⁰⁹ See for instance the speech on 6 March 1910 to members of the Semirech’e Agricultural Society, in Veletskii, *Zheleznaia doroga v Semirech’e*.

¹¹⁰ Poroshin, *K voprosu o zheleznoi doroge “Tashkent-Rossii”*, p. 12. See also Anosov, *Kratkii ocherk ekonomicheskogo znacheniiia zheleznodorozhnoi linii Tashkent-Chimkent*, in TsGARK, f. 44, op. 1, d. 954, ll. 51-59, and P. V. Gurde, *Zapiska o Sredne-Aziatskoi zheleznoi doroge*, Vernyi: Tip. Semirechenskogo oblastnogo pravleniia, 1898, pp. 27-28.

¹¹¹ RGIA, f. 350, op. 48, d. 658, ll. 1-7. See also RGIA, f. 350, op. 48, d. 703, and f. 350, op. 96, d. 295.

northern and southern ends of the line (from Tashkent to Vernyi and Semipalatinsk to Mariinsk) should be prioritised, and the long middle section from Semipalatinsk to Vernyi be postponed to an unspecified date.¹¹² Even the question of whether the railway could reach Vernyi seemed in doubt, as the planning committee in St Petersburg recommended that the line travel from Tashkent only as far as Pishpek in the first instance.¹¹³ Progress was laborious, exacerbated by the problem of how to fund the grandiose construction project. By 1912 a concession of St Petersburg banks had been formed to supply the necessary capital for the first section between Arys and Pishpek. Work began in July 1914, with the first portion of track open the following year, yet barely two years later work halted indefinitely, with the future continuation of the line to Vernyi and beyond 'unclear'.¹¹⁴

Notwithstanding the almost complete absence of any tangible progress, two decades of planning produced a significant body of visual and textual material, created by those lobbying for the railway. Its local supporters claimed that economically, the new line would encourage industrial development and the growth of urban centres in Semirech'e. A still greater boon would be that the rail link could promote the continued growth of Turkestan as a cotton-producing nexus by importing grain and meat - both in surplus in Semirech'e - to the rest of Turkestan, enabling more land to be given over in cotton-growing regions to cultivating the crop. At the same time, by strengthening links with the imperial centre, improved accessibility would open the region to Russian settlers, and would allow troops to move quickly, if necessary, to the disputed Ili river valley on the Chinese border.¹¹⁵ While the scheme was thus weighted in favour of Turkestan's use to the Russian centre, maps show how local interests could at times mediate debate. The Tashkent City Commandant, N. G. Mallitskii, sent five pages of maps to Pahlen during his inspection of Turkestan, that showed his newly-proposed route for the line which included a change of direction in order to expedite the import of Semirech'e's grain directly to Fergana and southern Turkestan.¹¹⁶ In Mallitskii's opinion, the railway should be less about connecting Semirech'e to the Russian rail network and more a means of using the region as a supply depot for Tashkent and the surrounding cotton-producing land. Similarly, local industrial entrepreneurs superimposed the railway onto geological maps, highlighting deposits of iron, coal, gold, silver, marble and other valuable commodities that were within close distance of the proposed route, and to which they had an eye to develop.¹¹⁷ In general, these local campaigners favoured the development of strong

¹¹² *Otchet o rekognostirovochnykh izyskaniakh zheleznodorozhnoi linii Semipalatinsk-Vernyi (Iliiskii pos.) protiazheniem 980.79 verst proizvedennykh osen'iu 1907 goda ekspeditsiei inzhenera Glezera*, SPb: Tip. Golike & Vil'borg, 1908, p. iii. The Committee set up by the Ministry of Transport to investigate the feasibility of the line estimated that its total cost would be upwards of 160 million rubles.

¹¹³ *Trudy Komissii po issledovaniiu raiona Turkestan-Sibirskoi zheleznoi dorogi*, SPb: Tip. Ts. Kraiz, 1909, pp. 6-7. See also RGIA, f. 350, op. 96, d. 295 for previous plans to reach Vernyi.

¹¹⁴ RGIA, f. 350, op. 48, d. 703.

¹¹⁵ RGIA, f. 350, op. 96, d. 295, l. 1 ob.

¹¹⁶ RGIA, f. 1396, op. 1, d. 233, ll. 15-16.

¹¹⁷ See for instance, Gurde's mineralogical map in appendix one of *Trudy Komissii po issledovaniiu raiona Turkestan-Sibirskoi zheleznoi dorogi*. For the wider connection between the railway and the exploitation of natural resources, see P. V. Gurde, *Mineral'nye bogatstva Semirechenskoi oblasti, v sviazi s voprosom o provedenii zheleznoi dorogi Tashkent-Sibir', cherez Semirechenskuiu, Semipalatinskuiu oblasti i Altaiskii okrug, Vernyi*: Tip. Semirechenskogo oblastnogo pravleniia, 1898.

regional and trans-national routes, and heavily emphasised connectivity between Turkestan, Siberia and China, rather than simply between Turkestan and the industrial heartland of European Russia. As one prominent local writer, architect and entrepreneur noted, 'Turkestan, as an outpost of Russia in Central Asia must look forward, rather than back, and our political and economic direction of travel is to the south, and not the north. Turkestan is no longer a weak child ... but a powerful adult'.¹¹⁸ The railway was to act as a catalyst for the emergence of Turkestan from Russia's shadow.

For all the talk of economic development, at its heart the mapping of the proposed line revealed the evolution of ideas about imperial space. New visions, largely initiated from within Turkestan, conceived of new routes as means to strengthen the region in its own right, rather than simply in terms of how Turkestan could be tied closer to the imperial centre. Moreover, as discussed with reference to ideas for Indo-European rail and river routes earlier in the chapter, the implications of route planning were no longer seen necessarily through the lens of an imperial centre-periphery relationship, but also as having significance in transforming Turkestan from a disconnected backwater into a region that looked outwards towards Asia. Maps rarely pictured the Semirech'e railway in isolation, but instead, the dotted stripe of the embryonic line, which on most maps stretched from Tashkent to Mariinsk, was joined by the dark ink of existing branches of the Transcaspian and the Trans-Siberian lines, along with towns beyond Russia's borders in China, Persia and Afghanistan.¹¹⁹ Semirech'e was increasingly placed at the *centre* of these maps, with European Russia relegated to the borders of the page. Thus the visual qualities of the map were a way in which the railway's proponents could physically see Semirech'e and Turkestan redefined as a centre of trade, transport and movement, overlaid by the route of the railway.

This reconceptualisation of Central Asia's geographic place within the empire received plenty of support. *Turkestanskii vedomosti* discussed the issue enthusiastically, noting that as soon as Tashkent was 'united by rail with the Great Siberian Railway, then for Siberia, our region will be transformed into a southern land of plenty'.¹²⁰ Vernyi's mayor demonstrated a similar grasp of the railway's spatial implications, and was keen to look not only to central Russia, but to strengthen regional trade routes.¹²¹ In opening 'a new route for world trade', he cited increased trade with Western China as a key advantage, along with providing cheap grain and meat not only to Turkestan, but eventually to Siberia as well.¹²² If the short-term goal was a railway connection to the Russian heartland, without which Semirech'e, 'this jewel in the crown of the Russian Emperor'

¹¹⁸ Gurde, *Zapiska o Sredne-Aziatskoi zheleznoi doroge*, p. 23.

¹¹⁹ See for instance A. S. Stetkevich, *Po voprosu o prodolzhenii Sredneaziatskoi zheleznoi dorogi ot Tashkenta na Chimkent i Vernyi*, SPb: Tip. E. Arngol'da, 1899, map after p. 26.

¹²⁰ *TV*, 1895, No. 84, page unknown. Cited in A. I. Putolov, *Kak mozhnet razvit'sia obrabotyvaiushchaia i dobyvaiushchaia promyshlennost' v g. Vernom i ego uezdy v sluchae soedinenie zheleznoi dorogoiu Sredne-aziatskikh vladanii s Velikim Sibirskim putem chrez Semirech'e i Altai*, Vernyi: Tip. Semirechenskogo oblastnogo pravleniia, 1898, p. 10.

¹²¹ RGIA, f. 1396, op. 1, d. 223, l. 2 ob.

¹²² RGIA, f. 1396, op. 1, d. 223, ll. 1 ob-2 ob.

would be 'dealt a death blow',¹²³ then the longer-term aim of many supporters of the railway was a turn towards neighbouring China and Siberia.¹²⁴

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In broader terms, the legacy of tsarist route planning merits brief further comment. The visual material left behind from abandoned projects would be resurrected in new form during the Soviet period.¹²⁵ Bending the fabric of nature was a repeated motif in Soviet environmental policy, with plans to reverse the flow of Siberian rivers and to artificially redirect water to the Caspian.¹²⁶ The tsarist plan to divert the Amu-Dar'ia was itself a prototype, laying a comprehensive foundation for the Main Turkmen Canal Project of the 1950s.¹²⁷ An even closer parallel could be found in Semirech'e, where the embryonic railway became the focus of Stalin's first five-year-plan. Built from 1926-1931, the Turk-Sib successfully revived the vision to connect Semipalatinsk to Turkestan, continuing where imperial engineers had abandoned the track in Pishpek (later renamed Frunze). Indeed, many similarities existed between the two schemes: both were driven by the imperative of economic integration and development, both characterised by tensions between local and central elites.¹²⁸

In the tsarist context, Russian land and water routes provided new - and sometimes novel - ways to circumvent local geography, partially tracking the pre-existing routes of Central Asia's heyday, and partly forming new directions of travel. These routes served their Russian masters, both within the empire and beyond its borders, and offered a way to shrink time and space, binding Central Asia closer to the Russian heartland. This benefited primarily the central Russian state, which could import raw materials, chiefly cotton, to the industrial heartland of western Russia. Speed of transit vastly improved communications, and meant that Russian troops and settlers could move into and around the region with far greater ease. The mapping of these attempts to re-navigate Turkestan's landscapes by rail or river reveals inter-related desires to both formalise and renegotiate geographic space. Cartography cemented ownership of land, and acted as a medium to project future military strategy, in doing so, denying local Central Asians any agency over their own geography. As demonstrated by the mapping of the Murgab line, future ambitions could be overlaid onto local topography, borders erased and redrawn, and Central Asia repositioned as a strategic link to Afghanistan and India.

¹²³ RGIA, f. 1396, op. 1, d. 233, l. 1.

¹²⁴ Poroshin, *K voprosu o zheleznoi doroge "Tashkent-Rossia"*, pp. 13-14.

¹²⁵ There are also parallels between tsarist schemes for Indo-European transit and present-day proposals for other long-distance routes: The North-South corridor linking Moscow to Mumbai, and the New Eurasian Continental Bridge linking Liyanyungang to Rotterdam. For more, see S. Ganguli, 'The revival of the Silk Road topic: A contemporary analysis', in Laruelle & Peyrouse (eds), *Mapping Central Asia*, pp. 61-72.

¹²⁶ See D. Vorobyev, 'Ruling rivers: Discussions on the river diversion project in the Soviet Union', in A. Rosenholm & S. Autio-Sarasmo (eds), *Understanding Russian nature: Representations, values and concepts*, Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute, 2005, pp. 177-203.

¹²⁷ Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, p. 180, and Pravilova, 'River of empire', pp. 282-285.

¹²⁸ M. Payne, *Stalin's railroad: Turksib and the building of socialism*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001, p. 15. Marks makes a related case for the similarities between Soviet industrial enterprise and the construction of the Trans-Siberian line, in Marks, *Road to power*, pp. 224-225.

The malleability of maps to project a range of outcomes somewhat complicates the picture of imperial geography. As well as reinforcing the ownership of new land within the imperial realm, maps were employed as devices to examine the possibilities of trans-national networks, stretching from Calais to Calcutta. This visual evidence supplies a crucial counter-balance to the dominant interpretation of routes (mainly railways) as tools primarily of imperial control. Rather, mapping offered a way to negotiate established relationships between centre and periphery. While new routes did clearly bind Central Asia closer to the imperial centre, their planning also had the capacity to foster new, multifarious connections outside Central Asia's borders, and in doing so, enabled new spatial imaginaries of the region as a link between Europe and the Asian sub-continent; not as a dependent colony but as a market rival to Britain and neighbouring states in the economies of Persia, Afghanistan, China and India. Maps were a medium through which local elites and administrators could lobby for their own political and entrepreneurial interests, and were clear evidence that in Semirech'e in particular, there was a swell in support for future visions of closer links with Siberia and China, at the expense of the imperial centre.¹²⁹

Tsarist attempts to reform Central Asia's geography were on the one hand very much of the future, yet constrained by the inefficiencies of the state, and by an indecisive financial planning system that was slow to encourage private enterprise.¹³⁰ At the same time, the renegotiation of space by Russian settlers and administrators was in some way a resurrection of existing trans-national routes that had existed for over a thousand years in the form of the Silk Road, but which had been largely obscured by the narrative of Russian imperialism that placed Central Asia as a dead-end periphery at the 'edge' of the known world. The map was thus a synthesis of past, present and future, and hosted both the integrating and disintegrating visions of imperial actors vis-à-vis the metropole. Maps simultaneously suggested the 'boundedness' and the 'connectedness' of Central Asian space, and the inherent tensions between the two.¹³¹ In this sense, while plans to build railways and divert rivers had either real or potential consequences to very physically alter Turkestan's landscapes, they were also a means by which the region's position within imperial space could be reimagined. While these routes were often framed in terms of their ability to tie Turkestan closer to the Russian centre, or conversely to strengthen the region's links beyond the empire's borders, the railways also had profound implications for how space and environment were used, traversed and perceived *within* Turkestan, as the following two chapters discuss.

¹²⁹ In this sense, contrary to Sperling's treatment of local expressions of space that arose from railway lobbying as inherently part of the integrating process of empire building, I propose that local proposals also had disintegrating potential. See Sperling, 'Stroit' zheleznuiu dorogu', pp. 104, 126.

¹³⁰ Proposals to build privately-funded railways received numerous bids from Russian, French and German syndicates, yet the convoluted administrative system resulted in severe delays in awarding contracts. See RGVA, f. 400, op. 1, d.1622, ll. 197-200.

¹³¹ Z. Antrim, *Routes and realms: The power of place in the early Islamic world*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 121.

3. Built oases

If prior to the construction of the Transcaspian railway, camel, horse and boat had provided the chief means of propulsion for the intrepid traveller, by the late 1880s the situation had changed immeasurably. Travel to and within Turkestan became quicker, more comfortable, and concomitantly, more popular. Rails conveyed the local, national or international passenger 'as if in a fairy-tale across the shifting sands and the infertile and arid pebbly plains',¹ with almost none of the previous 'unpleasantness' of journeys described as being 'characterised by nothing but sand, wells filled with bad water, intense heat and wind'.² The effects of these new routes were profound. Imports and exports grew rapidly, as did Turkestan's major population centres, almost all of which were connected by rail by 1900.³ In geographical terms, vast distances could now be covered in a matter of hours, as passengers moved between urban points in a distinct corridor of travel, from Krasnovodsk in the west to Ashgabad, Bukhara, Samarkand, Kokand, Tashkent and Andizhan in the east. These developments revolutionised the ways in which Turkestan was seen; opening the region's landscapes to visitors and settlers, and stimulating the development of new types of photographically-illustrated texts that catered to armchair travellers and temporary visitors, but also specifically targeted settlers in urban and rural areas who had moved to Turkestan more permanently.⁴

The following two chapters investigate the effects of travel and mobility on how terrain was visually documented, and what the use of images in popular literature reveals about how Russians engaged with the built and natural environment as both physical and symbolic space. Together, they consider the impact of Russian settlement on the region's urban and rural fabric, and how the visual portrayal of these actions in material produced for the reading public in Turkestan and beyond was very often suggestive of two ethnically segregated 'Russian' and 'native' worlds. I suggest that visual material was integral to attempts to appropriate Turkestan's landscapes, and was a particularly useful tool deployed by the Russian state to drive forward a new vision of a settler landscape in Turkestan's periphery, at the expense of a seemingly archaic Muslim heartland. The main sources for these chapters - popular travel guides, geographical surveys and settlement literature - were vital agents in producing Turkestan for a new generation of Russian readers. Their content was heavily influenced by the availability of travel routes, and provided as broad a portrait as possible of the region via descriptions of climate, terrain, ethnography,

¹ N. M. Przheval'skii, quoted in A. I. Rodzevich, *Ocherk postroiki Zakaspiiskoi voennoi zheleznoi dorogi i ee znachenie dlia russko-sredneaziatskoi promyshlennosti i torgovli*, SPb: Tip. Muller & Bogel'man, 1891, p. 44.

² E. Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of a journey in Russian Turkistan, Kokand, Bukhara and Kuldja* [ed. G. Wheeler], London: Routledge, 1966, p. 221.

³ From 1897 to 1910, Tashkent grew from a population of 155,673 to 201,191, Samarkand from 55,128 to 89,693 and Kokand from 81,354 to 113,636. For details, see *RPGONO*, p. 348.

⁴ In this sense Russian incomers, whether permanent or temporary, were all travellers to some extent, and often moved between the different categories of 'tourist', 'traveller' (local or imperial), and 'explorer' noted in J. Ryan, *Photography and exploration*, London: Reaktion Books, 2013, p. 149.

population centres and natural resources. Many included tens, and sometimes hundreds, of images, usually photographs, to document the rural and urban environment. Just as during the Kaufman era, the compilation and publication of such texts and images were important acts of knowledge-making which served to bring 'imperial territory into existence',⁵ and through which practices of appropriation, ordering and domesticating or conversely, contesting, disowning or destroying the land could take place. If the author's authority came primarily from their own lived experience of Turkestan,⁶ photographic illustration lent these publications added legitimacy through the visualisation of the landscapes that the authors described. Yet images did more than simply illustrate the text. They were clearly not straightforward likenesses of the landscapes they represented, but were 'shaped by conventions of what was photogenic, what photographers saw as interesting, and which patterns of pictorial composition they followed',⁷ Since in most cases we know little about the photographers involved, this pair of chapters focuses more heavily on the first of these forces: the conventions of the photogenic, and more specifically, how the selection of particular scenes or types of imagery spoke to Russian relationships with the built and natural world.

The current discussion concerns itself predominantly with imagery of Turkestan's urban environments, before linking to visual depictions of nature in chapter four. New towns and villages built to accommodate the growing Russian population were significant and large-scale interventions in the Central Asian landscape, very often striking in their geographic placement and built entirely separately from existing indigenous towns on reclaimed or disused land. These segregated sites were initially built for convenience, yet were evidently bound up with more ideological desires to isolate Russian settlements from native populations conceived of as 'unclean', 'backward' and 'chaotic'. In this sense, urban zones were potent spaces that reinforced the notion that Turkestan was an arena for the meeting of two entirely different civilisations, a 'place where Islam comes into contact with the Orthodox faith',⁸ and where 'old and new worlds are joined'.⁹ This chapter posits that the building and subsequent representation of urban environments were vital discursive markers of how the Russian state and local settlers were attempting to modify the image of Central Asia as a physically and demographically alien and overwhelmingly Muslim land.

⁵ A. Khazemi, 'Across the Black Sands and the Red: Travel writing, nature and the reclamation of the Eurasian steppe circa 1850', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 2010, 42: 4, p. 595. See also D. Kennedy, *The last blank spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013, p. 1, for travel and exploration as a 'knowledge-producing enterprise'. For a collection of thematic essays on travel and its written record, see P. Hulme & T. Youngs (eds), *The Cambridge companion to travel writing*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

⁶ M. Campbell, *The witness and the other world: Exotic European travel writing, 400-1600*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988, p. 3. See also M. Pratt, *Imperial eyes: Travel writing and transculturation*, London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 76-77.

⁷ W. Beinart & L. Hughes, *Environment and empire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 217.

⁸ K. P. von Kaufman, 'Sostoianiiia tserkvei i pravoslavnykh khristian', in 'Iz tserkovnoi zhizni Turkestana', *SOV*, 1901, No. 83, p. 497.

⁹ N. M., *Torzhestvennoe otkrytie Samarkandskogo uchastka Zakaspiiskoi zheleznoi dorogi*, Tashkent: [n. p.], 1888, p. 6.

Visual material was deployed to demonstrate supposedly quintessential views of native towns - bazaars, mosques and minarets - while showcasing the achievements of 'European civilisation' in the form of street lighting, wide boulevards and churches in new Russian towns, and served to reinforce and even strengthen the existing dimensions of physical segregation in urban areas. Photography could be used to encode buildings, quarters and sites with ethnic and confessional stereotype and symbol, while reflecting not only Russian notions of their own cultural superiority, but also broader ideas that settler groups were isolated oases of western civilisation in the midst of Central Asia. In this way, images were one element of the 'social construction of the spatial and its imposition and enactment in the real topography of the world'.¹⁰ Nevertheless, I suggest that using images as a means to investigate the link between urban building and population dynamics demonstrates that the contexts in which images appeared also referenced anxieties and fears, and I investigate how, although Russian actions to build and portray their new settlements were largely founded on ideas of their own superiority, visual sources reveal a profound level of disquiet about Russia's place in Central Asia, and the state's questionable ability to appropriate urban land. I suggest in fact that the divided city was only one component of a wider state-lead initiative to visually and spatially 'manage' Turkestan's population, one which was taking place not just in the urban zones of Turkestan's central heartland but also in the eastern periphery, and which increasingly relied upon nature, as well as the built environment, as its basis.

Travel and images

As transport links within and beyond the region improved, and the number and variety of Russian visitors and settlers expanded, descriptions of the region became increasingly less esoteric than earlier versions produced in the 1860s and 1870s.¹¹ Travel guides, geographies and material aimed at new settlers proliferated (I conceive of these loosely as popular reading material that targeted non-specialist audiences, in general circulation with large print numbers, and often running into multiple editions). These travel guides and handbooks adopted a more practical tone, targeting both those visiting the region and local Russian inhabitants,¹² with the aim of providing 'a full and multi-faceted picture of our *krai* as possible'.¹³ As one local writer summarised,

With increasing frequency, tourists, traders, business people, some simply inquisitive, others looking for markets and business, began to appear in the *krai*; and this mass of people, having ended up in an entirely unknown land, searched for books which they could use to orient themselves amongst the unknown landscapes and peoples, but local booksellers could only offer the out-of-date travels of Vambéry, or at the very best, the

¹⁰ R. Shields, *Places on the margin: Alternative geographies of modernity*, London: Routledge, 1991, p. 255.

¹¹ For a sample of this earlier literature, see P. I. Pashino, *Turkestanskii krai v 1866 godu. Putevye zametki P. I. Pashino*, SPb: Tip. Tiblena i Ko., 1868; N. A. Severtsov, *Puteshestviia po Turkestanskomu kraiu*, Moscow: OGIZ, 1947 [originally published 1873]; M. I. Veniukov, *Puteshestviia po okrainam russkoi Azii i zapiski o nikh*, SPb: Tip. Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, 1868.

¹² *TV*, 1909, No. 229, p. 1049.

¹³ *TV*, 1909, No. 227, p. 1037.

investigations of Severtsov and Fedchenko, which are uninteresting for the average reader.¹⁴

Thus from around the 1890s, new guides catered to practical needs just as much as to the armchair traveller or the scientific observer. The most popular publications were bookended by adverts for bicycle repairers, carpet merchants, tea rooms and bookshops in Tashkent and other towns, and evidently attempted to cater to the concrete needs of visitors and inhabitants.¹⁵

While independent travellers and local settlers produced numerous travel accounts under their own steam, the world of large-scale, multiple-edition texts came to be dominated by 'official' publications, in various guises. Popular geographical surveys were often produced in conjunction with the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, or endorsed by other imperial societies,¹⁶ while resettlement literature was published by the Resettlement Administration,¹⁷ and illustrated railway guides commonly emerged under the aegis of the Ministry of Transport, either as publisher or commissioner.¹⁸ Perhaps the most popular guide to Turkestan, Dmitriev-Mamonov's *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu*, was commissioned by the Minister of Transport, M. I. Khilkov.¹⁹ This new breed of publication exploited technological advances made in the availability and reproduction of images. New guides were more richly illustrated than their predecessors, made use of photographs to bring the texts to life, and were commended by reviewers for doing so.²⁰ In some cases, images formed a substantial component of the book, and were evidently judged to be an important selling point; readers wanted to 'see' Turkestan, as well as to read about it. It follows that it was the state-sponsored publications that almost always had the best visual content, most likely because of reproduction expenses, but possibly also because state departments could obtain greater access to images than could the independent author. In many cases, little is known about the *processes* by which images came to be included in the published book. Many publications failed to acknowledge the origin, date or photographer, and sometimes provided only vague captions. Such actions are suggestive of the fact that photographs were seen as less important than text, and had only an illustrative capacity. On the other hand, it may be that this convention was still developing - certainly more information on photographs was provided as first decade of the twentieth century progressed - or that publishers received images with very little contextualising information to reproduce. It also seems reasonable to suggest that the content of the image was deemed more significant than any acknowledgment of the photographer.

¹⁴ I. I. Geier, *Turkestan. S dop. st. "Semirechenskaia oblast"*, Tashkent: A. L. Kirsner, 1909, preface.

¹⁵ Perhaps the best examples of this can be found in A. I. Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu i Sredne-Aziatskoi zheleznoi dorogi*, SPb: Tip. Isidora Gol'dberga, 1903, and numerous later editions under the slightly altered title *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu i zheleznyim dorogam Tashkentskoi i Sredne-Aziatskoi*, and I. I. Geier, *Ves' Russkii Turkestan*, Tashkent: S. R. Konopka, 1908.

¹⁶ *RPGONO* for instance was put together by members of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society.

¹⁷ Perhaps most impressive in visual scale was the three-volume set G. V. Glinka (ed.), *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, SPb: Izd. Pereselencheskogo upravleniia glavnogo upravleniia zemleustroistva i zemledeliia, 1914 (hereafter vol. 1 unless otherwise stated).

¹⁸ *Illiustrirovannyi putevoditel' po Sredneaziatskoi zheleznoi doroge. Ot st. Krasnovodsk do st. Tashkent, Andizhan, Skobelevo, Kushka i Bukhara*, Askhabad: K. M. Fedorov, 1912.

¹⁹ Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu*, p. iii.

²⁰ See the review of Dmitriev-Mamonov's guide in *TV*, 1909, No. 232, p. 1067.

These popular texts provided some of the most accessible pictures of Turkestan during the tsarist period. Despite the lack of evidence pointing to *how* specific images came to be included in publications, the subsequent display of visual material on the printed page reveals much about how Turkestan's built and natural environments, and Russian interventions in them, were perceived. If travel writing and geographical description were forms of knowledge, images were an integral part of this body of information, and offered compelling 'eye-witness' testimony.²¹ Images had the capacity to erase distance, acting as 'visual avatars' for those who did not travel',²² and as a range of scholars working on illustrated travel accounts contend, they lent textual claims a 'patina of authenticity', by legitimising the words on the page and bringing to life scenes and landscapes in ways that words alone might not.²³ This said, images were not merely the enablers of text, and were 'volatile agents' in their own right.²⁴ In some cases, they could directly contradict the author's words, muddling and confusing the narrative of the book, or could be used in sequence to suggest scenes or discourses to which authors could only allude. Moreover, as images were at a far greater premium than words, the content of what was selected to be published speaks to what authors, editors and publishers deemed to be important.

The bulk of reprinted photographs in these popular texts consisted of scenes of towns and populated areas. This was at least partially influenced by the existence of the new railway lines. At their most fundamental level, guides and handbooks served to document space - the passage, or proposed passage of a reader through a given landscape - and a great number of publications from the late 1880s onwards began to use the route of the railway as a structural device. The path of the Central Asian line, from Krasnovodsk through Samarkand to Tashkent, south to Fergana and Andizhan or north to Orenburg, provided a convenient itinerary for authors to follow, with the route of the train suggestive of which sites should be described, both textually and visually. A significant number of publications dealt only with the urban and rural environs of the line, opening first with descriptions of the Caspian Sea and the Kara Kum desert, before moving to Ashkhabad, Samarkand, Bukhara and Tashkent in exactly the same order as did the train. Publications that included maps of the author's travels clearly attest to this pattern, and many others show a distinct correlation between the route of the railway and the landscapes described.²⁵ Even the content and structure of works that aspired to more comprehensive coverage of Turkestan remained closely tied to the path of the railway.²⁶ Passengers hopped off

²¹ Pratt, *Imperial eyes*, p. 5. For an overview of the development of travel-related photography, see G. Smith, *Photography and travel*, London: Reaktion Books, 2013.

²² D. Bleichmar, *Visible empire: Botanical expeditions and visual culture in the Hispanic Enlightenment*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012, p. 100.

²³ M. Hughes, 'Every picture tells some stories: Photographic illustrations in British travel accounts of Russia on the eve of World War One', *SEER*, 2014, 92: 4, p. 677. See also Ryan's discussion of plausibility and authenticity in Ryan, *Photography and exploration*, pp. 7-30, 31-37.

²⁴ C. Campbell, *Agitating images: Photography against history in indigenous Siberia*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014, p. 208.

²⁵ See for instance the map of travels in A. Meakin, *In Russian Turkestan: A garden of Asia and its peoples*, London: George Allen, 1903. A whole host of other travellers crafted their itineraries around the railway, including V. N. Skopin, *Sredniaia Aziia i Indiiia*, Moscow: D. P. Efimov, 1904.

²⁶ See for instance the structuring of part three of *RPGONO*, a survey of the whole of Turkestan, but with major sections governed by the route of the railway.

the train at major population centres, but often never set foot in the rural landscape in between such settlements, meaning that towns and cities loomed large in text and image. A second reason for the prominence of urban sites can be traced back to Vereshchagin's choice of Samarkand and Bukhara as the subjects for his canvases. Central Asia's cities contained hugely important historic sites, and their mosques, minarets, bazaars and local inhabitants were closely identified with the idea of Central Asia as something of an unknown Orient, offering glimpses of alterity, local colour and exoticism in equal measure. Indeed, the content of photographs in popular publications was surprisingly formulaic, generally providing quintessential views of Samarkand's Registan complex, Bukhara's minarets, Tashkent's new Orthodox churches, or local shops, bazaars or gardens. These were deemed to be remarkable and note-worthy sites, deserving of being visualised in image as well as text. But, as this chapter contends, the selection and reproduction of such images also projected more deep-seated ideas and anxieties about the encounter between Central Asian and Russian societies, and the contested nature of urban land.

Demography, settlement and the divided city

Urban zones were vital sites that acted as access points into the Russian imperial imaginary of self and Other. If Central Asia was a place where two very different worlds met, towns and cities were the crucible where the encounter was most clearly visible, even if the majority of the population continued to be rurally-based.²⁷ The creation of new, segregated settlements embodied very physically how Russians conceived of themselves as demographically isolated within Turkestan, numerically outnumbered by local settled and nomadic populations. Indeed, Russian attitudes towards Turkestan's demography revolved around a predominantly very simplistic bipartite division, drawn along ethno-confessional lines. In numerical terms, Turkestan's population in 1897, excluding Bukhara and Khiva, numbered roughly six million indigenous locals, and 197,000 Russians.²⁸ By 1911, the number of Russians had doubled, to around 400,000, or six per cent of the total population.²⁹ Although ethnographers were keen to elucidate the region's complicated ethnic patchwork, in common usage, such nuanced readings of the local population all too often slipped into the all-encompassing label of '*inorodtsy*' or '*tuzemtsy*', that designated indigenous peoples as unassimilated, non-Russian 'aliens' or 'natives'.³⁰ Even the designation 'native' was used interchangeably with the rubric 'Muslim' or 'Mohammedan', amid such assertions as 'all natives are Muslim', which themselves obscured a considerable range and depth of confessional

²⁷ According to census data, the urban population amounted to only 13.8 per cent of the total, *RPGONO*, p. 348.

²⁸ *RPGONO*, p. 362. Information from the 1897 census described the 'native' component as being 88.4 per cent Turkic, 0.3 per cent Mongol, 6.9 per cent Iranian and 0.7 per cent 'other', *RPGONO*, p. 359.

²⁹ G. V. Glinka (ed.), *Atlas Aziatskoi Rossii*, SPb: Izd. Pereselencheskogo upravleniia glavnogo upravleniia zemleustroistva i zemledeliia, 1914, map 35.

³⁰ The term '*inorodtsy*' was used with reference to non-ethnic Russians living within Russia's borders, while '*tuzemtsy*' referred to 'natives' of a 'foreign' territory, with inherently colonial overtones. For more on the changing usage and meaning of the category of '*inorodtsy*', see J. Slocum, 'Who, and when, were the *inorodtsy*? The evolution of the category of "aliens" in imperial Russia', *Russian Review*, 1998, 57: 2, pp. 173-190, and for a discussion about the idea of 'natives' in the context of Turkestan specifically, see B. Babajanov, "'How will we appear in the eyes of *inorodtsy* and *inorodtsy*?' Nikolai Ostroumov on the image and function of Russian power', *CAS*, 2014, 33: 2, pp. 270-288.

belief.³¹ Underpinning this often ham-fisted process of demographic labelling was the close correlation, in Russian eyes, between faith and 'nationality': the assumption that all Russians were Orthodox and all locals were Muslim.³²

Russians thus found themselves at an overwhelming numerical disadvantage, and this lopsided dynamic informed a key conceptualisation of what Turkestan 'looked like', in which pockets of Slavic inhabitants were surrounded by indigenous masses. This was a compelling and symbolic model that was called into service by administrators, travellers and settlers as they made sense of their new surroundings. Maps provided the clearest way of visualising what this meant in practice, and delivered indisputable evidence of Russia's weak numerical presence in Central Asia. Small patches of red, marking areas with Russian populations, stood in stark contrast to the colours of local life (figure 6),³³ while the topography of religion was described in identical terms.³⁴ The existence of such maps lent visual legitimacy to Russian claims that they were 'engulfed' or 'surrounded' by natives.³⁵ A recurrent metaphor likened the divide to a scenario of islands and seas. This comparison was perhaps most famously articulated by A. V. Krivoshein, Minister of Agriculture and State Properties, who, having visited Turkestan in 1912, commented that Russian settlements were mere 'islands in a native sea'.³⁶ Turkestan's Bishop Aleksandr assessed the situation in identical terms, summarising that Orthodox (shorthand for Russian) populations of the region 'represent little islands amongst a sea of those of other faiths, some pagan, but for the most part, Muslim'.³⁷ Indeed, such metaphors of alterity were commonly employed by colonising powers to describe enclaves of settlement surrounded by indigenous peoples: a similar situation arose in Rhodesia, where the Prime Minister noted that 'the European in this country can be likened to an island of white in a sea of black'.³⁸ This conceptualisation carried obvious spatial connotations for how Turkestan was envisaged. Russian 'islands' were scattered, isolated and disconnected, as could be visually verified by the colours on maps. The set-up posited internally homogenous, opposing and possibly adversarial groups, and was heavily predicated around Russian notions of their own cultural, moral and religious superiority.

³¹ 'Iz tserkovnoi zhizni Turkestana', *SOV*, 1901, No. 93, p. 574. Turkmen had incorporated elements of Islam into their lifestyle since the late seventh century, while the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand had been leading centres of Islamic learning, teaching and culture for many centuries. In the Kazakh and Kyrgyz steppes to the north and east however, the process of Islamicisation among the largely nomadic population was still ongoing in the late nineteenth century.

³² The census figures gave exactly the same proportions as for the ethnicity split: 3.7 per cent Orthodox, 95.6 per cent Muslim, 0.7 per cent 'other', *RPGONO*, p. 353. For detailed accounts of Islam in Turkestan, and of the Russian state's attempts to co-exist with established Islamic institutions, see footnote 39 of chapter one.

³³ 'Plemena Turkestana', in *RPGONO*, map between pp. 352-353. See also Glinka, *Atlas Aziatskoi Rossii*, map 25.

³⁴ Glinka, *Atlas Aziatskoi Rossii*, map 27.

³⁵ *SOV*, 1901, No. 92, p. 568.

³⁶ A. V. Krivoshein, *Zapiska glavnoupravliaiushchogo zemleustroistvom i zemledeliem o poezdke v Turkestanskii krai v 1912 godu*, SPb: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1912, p. 78.

³⁷ A. Kul'chitskii, *Religiozno-nravstvennoe sostoianie inorodtsev Turkestanskogo kraia i neobkhodimost' uchrezhdeniia dlia nikh pravoslavnoi missii*, Moscow: Tip. A. I. Snegirevoi, 1893, p. 2.

³⁸ D. Kennedy, *Islands of white: Settler society and culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1939*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1987, p. 2.

The urban environment was the most obvious 'island' of Russian settlement, as towns became focal points for new Russian incomers, particularly in the decades immediately following the conquest. By and large, the creation of entirely new towns was rare, as the development of existing urban space offered a more attractive proposition in terms of infrastructure, trade, security and transport links.³⁹ Instead, in finding ways to accommodate new populations and economic expansion, tsarist planners instigated a policy without parallel in the Russian empire: the creation of 'dual-cities'.⁴⁰ These new Russian settlements were built adjacent to local towns, often partitioned by a wall, drainage canal or river, while the original site, labelled the 'native' quarter, was left largely intact and undisturbed. In this fashion, Russian quarters were founded in Tashkent in 1865, Samarkand in 1871, Andizhan in 1876 and in numerous other towns, all demarcated to greater or lesser extent by the introduction of radial streets, wide boulevards, European classical architecture, and growing networks of state institutions, churches, markets, libraries, schools and shops.⁴¹ The creation of these ethnically-segregated divided cities constituted a profound attempt to reshape the Central Asian environment. On a practical level, it provided housing, facilities and infrastructure for new Russian settlers, while ideologically, the policy allowed the new quarters, carefully isolated from the perceived squalor of indigenous towns, to become sites for the visual expression of Russian identity and of the state's self-proclaimed civilising mission. The spatial practices of settlement creation thus mirrored the wider politics of Turkestan's rulers: just as Kaufman's policy of *ignorirovanie* was intended to isolate Islam from the public sphere, so the enforced segregation of the bulk of the indigenous urban population was a means to instil a hierarchy of power, and provided a physical embodiment and a constant validation of views that Russian settlements were metaphorical islands of civilisation.

The political, social and ideological implications of this 'ghettoisation' have been discussed at length by a number of authors. Recent studies have devoted sustained analysis to tsarist city planning in Turkestan, with emphasis on the creation of segregated spaces, and the uses of memorials, memory spaces and European architectural styles which served to legitimise Russia's presence, to exercise control over the native population, and to convey Russia's supposed European heritage and civilising mission.⁴² More specifically, city building had close links to

³⁹ Some new towns were built however, notably Askhabad, Skobelev, Vernyi, Perovsk and Kazalinsk.

⁴⁰ Although unusual in Russia, this type of urban settlement was common in the colonial world. For more, see A. King, *Colonial urban development: Culture, social power and environment*, London: Routledge, 1976, and C. Nightingale, *Segregation: A global history of divided cities*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

⁴¹ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 347. See J. Sahadeo, *Russian colonial society in Tashkent, 1865-1923*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007, chapter one, for more on the construction of Russian Tashkent.

⁴² Tashkent has received the lion's share of scholarly attention, including several excellent English language monographs: R. Crews, 'Civilisation in the city: Architecture, urbanism, and the colonisation of Tashkent', in J. Cracraft & D. Rowland (eds), *Architectures of Russian identity, 1500 to the present*, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2003, pp. 117-132; Sahadeo, *Russian colonial society*; P. Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet city, 1930-1966*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010. For recent literature that discuss the implications of urban space, see also M. Buttino, 'Samarkand: Kolonial'naia, sovetskaia i postsovetskaia politika izmeneniia urbanisticheskogo konteksta', in Sh. Mustafaev, M. Espagne, S. Gorshenina, C. Rapin, A. Berdimuradov, F. Grenet (eds), *Cultural transfers in Central Asia: Before, during and after the Silk Road*, Paris-Samarkand: PCAS, 2013, pp. 236-244, and S. Gorshenina, 'Tashkent: (Ne)-ekzoticheskii gorod?', in E. Shteyner (ed.), *Orientalizm/Oksidentalizm: Iazyki kul'tur i iazyki ikh opisaniia*, Moscow: Sovpadenie, 2012, pp. 186-205.

Russian self-perception, and Crews and Sahadeo have put forward convincing accounts of the ways in which segregated urban space was designed with the inculcation of Russian and imperial identities in mind.⁴³ The creation of spatial distance between rulers and ruled was *intended*, at any rate, 'to shape a social order marked by the neat separation and opposition of two communities and to make manifest the contours of a hierarchical society in which the local agents of a national community of Orthodox Russians would exercise dominion over Muslim Asians'.⁴⁴

Beyond the physical actions of tsarist architects, engineers and builders, popular texts did much to replicate the rhetoric of city planners who contrasted 'labyrinthine' Asiatic cities with their own 'wide, European streets'.⁴⁵ Such publications reinforced spatial segregation by unanimously depicting the divide between old and new towns as a powerful symbolic boundary that delineated 'two separate worlds'.⁴⁶ I contend below that visual material in particular had an important part to play in urban 'spatialisation', a process described by Shields as 'the ongoing social construction of the spatial at the level of the social imaginary (collective mythologies, presuppositions) as well as interventions in the landscape (for example the built environment)'.⁴⁷ In other words, images were an important - and often over-looked - means by which identity, meaning and stereotype could be attached to particular places or sites, revealing cognitive divisions that readily replicated and enforced the physical segregation of urban land, and which designated the fabric of the city as the centrepiece of a new world infused with Russian cultural symbolism.⁴⁸

The textual and visual content of these publications reveals how native cities were very much seen as emblematic of a wider Islamic heartland, distant both spatially and temporally in the Russian mind from their own settlements. Popular guides and geographies invoked uniform vocabularies, describing indigenous quarters as having an 'unending', 'labyrinthine' layout,⁴⁹ with 'winding' streets,⁵⁰ shabby housing with few green areas,⁵¹ and dirty public spaces.⁵² Such remarks were closely linked to ethnic slurs, the dirt and chaos of the narrow streets synonymous with Russia's perceived view of Central Asia's population, and echoed the rhetoric employed by Turkestan's administrators and colonial experts.⁵³ Meanwhile, images served to reproduce the notion of the generic and homogenous nature of such landscapes when views of buildings, streets and their inhabitants were captioned simply 'a Central Asian native town'.⁵⁴ Indeed, urban areas appeared to conform to preconceptions of what a traditional Central Asian experience might be like. Texts

⁴³ Crews, 'Civilisation in the city', and Sahadeo, *Russian colonial society*.

⁴⁴ Crews, 'Civilisation in the city', p. 119.

⁴⁵ RGVA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 2446, ll. 22, 31.

⁴⁶ *RPGONO*, p. 610.

⁴⁷ Shields, *Places on the margin*, p. 31. Shields' original use of the term was in the context of Lefebvre's *The production of space*.

⁴⁸ Sahadeo, *Russian colonial society*, p. 56.

⁴⁹ A. A. Kruber (ed.), *Aziatskaia Rossiia. Illiustrirovannyi geograficheski sbornik*, Moscow: I. N. Kushnerev, 1903, p. 254.

⁵⁰ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 317.

⁵¹ *RPGONO*, p. 615.

⁵² Kruber, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 207.

⁵³ Compare the similarities between this language and that of well-known expert Nikolai Ostroumov in Babajanov, "How will we appear?"

⁵⁴ See for instance Kruber, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, plate between pp. 228-229.

recorded for readers the urban atmosphere in the ‘cramped and squalid’ native quarters, visits to bazaars, to tea-houses and to religious buildings where ‘familiar “types”, pictures and scenes [were] everywhere’.⁵⁵ The textual impressions of visitors bear witness to the fact that these cities were caught in the imagination somewhere between the romantic and the terrible.⁵⁶ Schuyler described Samarkand as being ‘surrounded by a halo of romance’,⁵⁷ while frequent comparisons were drawn between the exotic aspect of the built environment and the tales of the 1001 nights.⁵⁸ Others rhapsodised over finding themselves in ‘genuinely bustling’ major cities of the Islamic world, noting that Bukhara was the ‘Rome of Central Asia’⁵⁹ or that Samarkand was ‘the heaven of the universe’.⁶⁰ Representations of these cities were thus infused with a certain romanticisation, as authors approached with an eye for the colourful, the exotic, and the picturesque.

Descriptions of towns were almost without exception framed around certain symbolic sites: the bazaar, the teahouse and the mosque. Each of these places was synonymous with Russian conceptions of local life, customarily described in terms of the ‘chaotic’, ‘dirty’, and ‘labyrinthine’ urban environment. In particular, visual representations of the local urban landscape were dominated by Islamic buildings. Both Bukhara and Samarkand (and to a lesser extent other main towns) contained sites of huge religious and historical significance, and as such made extremely popular choices for inclusion in illustrated material. Samarkand’s Registan complex, immortalised in the paintings of Vereshchagin, and the tomb of Timur, the famed medieval warrior-leader, vied with Bukhara’s celebrated minarets and mosques that had helped to make the city a leading centre of scholarship in the Muslim world since the tenth century. Images of these buildings were used in guidebooks and surveys to illustrate the architectural riches of Central Asia, while authors noted the ‘wonderful views’ of ‘minarets, medressas and the domes of mosques and mausoleums’,⁶¹ marvellous coloured interiors, and the statuesque height and enchanting decoration of these structures.⁶² Numerous photographs provided close-up details of tiles and ornament.⁶³ Indeed, a visual canon of particular sites, framed in similar styles, could be found in almost every illustrated text: the tomb of Timur, the Shir-Dar mosque, Bukhara’s minarets and old fortress, and the Registan ensemble.⁶⁴

⁵⁵ Kruber, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 207.

⁵⁶ For a related discussion of picturesque and sublime views of Central Asia, see K. Hokanson, ‘Russian women travellers in Central Asia and India’, *Russian Review*, 2011, 70, pp. 1-19, and for more on the conventions of the picturesque and the sublime, see chapter four.

⁵⁷ Schuyler, *Turkistan*, p. 125.

⁵⁸ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 324. See also Schuyler, *Turkistan*, p. 40.

⁵⁹ *RPGONO*, p. 357.

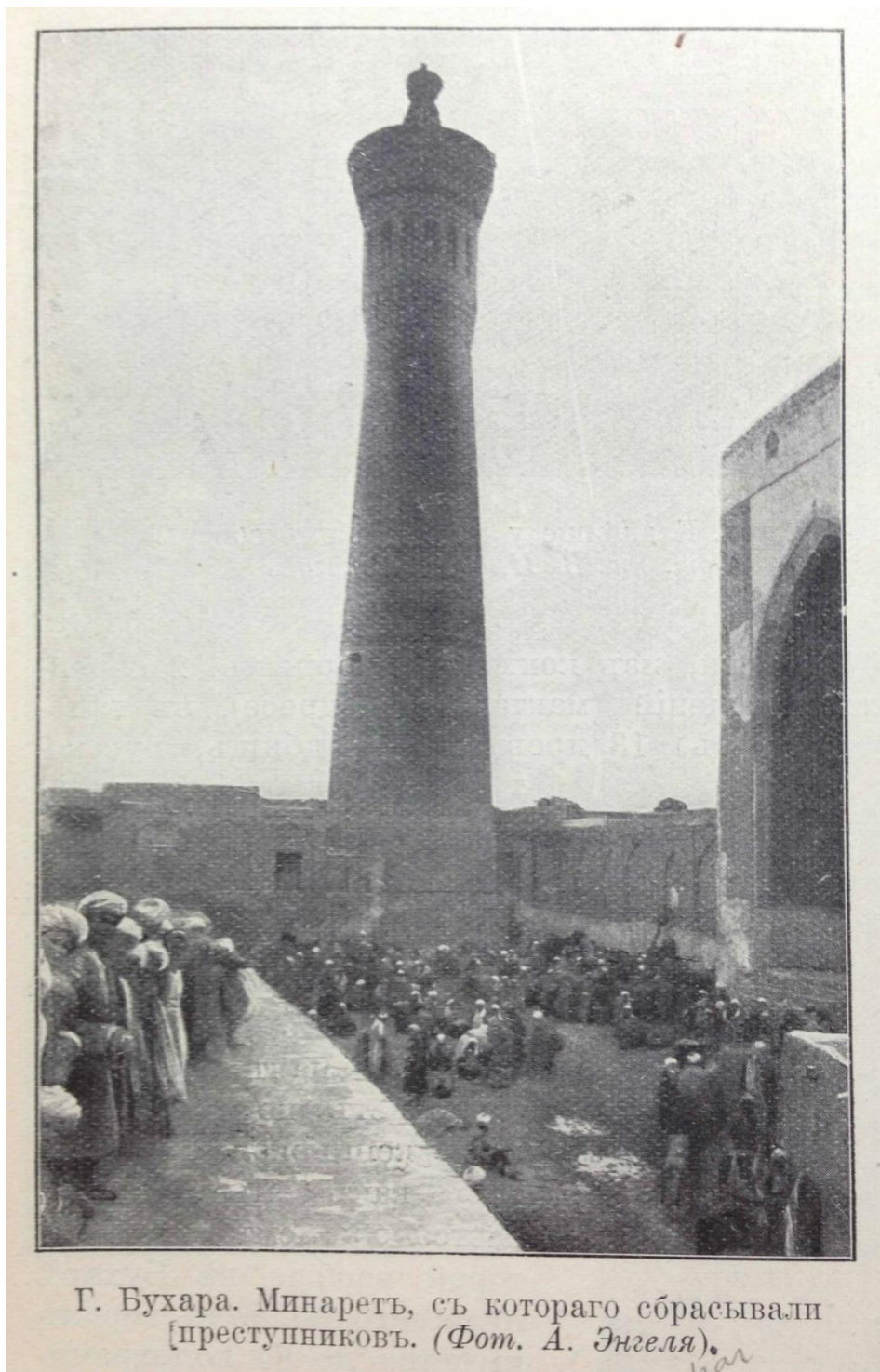
⁶⁰ Skopin, *Sredniaia Aziia i Indiiia*, p. 76.

⁶¹ A. M. Mishon’, ‘Tri dnia u drevnostei Samarkanda’, *Kavkaz i Sredniaia Aziia v fotografiakh i opisaniakh: Ezhemesiachnyi illiustrirovannyi fototipiarnyi zhurnal*, January 1900 [No. unknown], p. 82.

⁶² For instance the commentary on the Shakh-zinda mosque in A. I. Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel’ po Turkestanu*, SPb: Tip. I. Shurukht, 1913, p. 291.

⁶³ For instance, ‘Vkhod v mechet’, in Kruber, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, plate between pp. 208-9, and *RPGONO*, p. 667.

⁶⁴ Compare, amongst others, *Illustrirovannyi putevoditel’*, pp. 134-154; Kruber, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, pp. 208-215; *RPGONO*, pp. 659-681; ‘Tri dnia u drevnostei Samarkanda’, plates 1-4.



Г. Бухара. Минареть, съ котораго сбрасывали
преступниковъ. (Фот. А. Энгеля).

Figure 7. 'G. Bukhara. Minaret, s kotorogo sbrasyvali prestupnikov'.

RPGONO, p. 660.

Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark 2059 d. 49.

In illustrating what were considered to be the 'essential buildings to see', these images contributed to the recasting of working religious sites as 'sights', objects known for their historic, architectural and artistic importance, and were part of a broader textual process that conflated indigenous towns with the historic past. The outward appearance of such sites led many observers to make this connection, as a good number had fallen into states of advanced disrepair. Although visually these sites bore the marks of history, their images were invested with additional temporal meaning by the textual contexts in which they appeared. Writers were at pains to recognise the glories and advances of Islamic civilisation, but at the same time, made it abundantly clear that this period had been confined to the past. One author, writing on his three days in Samarkand, lamented the cracks in the walls of the Ulug-Bek medressa and the overall 'sorrowful state of this grandiose building'.⁶⁵ Buildings that had once been 'admittedly beautiful' now seemed 'half-ruined, and speak only of the past of this rich region'.⁶⁶ The juxtaposition of texts asserting that the origins of such cities were 'lost in deep antiquity' or that Samarkand's mosques and medressas were 'antiquities', or 'historic monuments',⁶⁷ with images of the grave of Timur, the Registan, or Bukhara's Kalyan minaret, served to deepen the connection between religious sites and the historic past, transferring their status to that of temporally distant curiosities rather than contemporary, working buildings.

Elements of historic and architectural curiosity thus played a significant role not only when photographers chose which scenes to frame, but also when the editors of guidebooks and surveys chose which images to publish. Judgements over the aesthetic potential of certain scenes also appeared to motivate the reproduction of images of local urban life. Popular publications displayed photographs of local religious schooling, prayer gatherings, reading the Qu'ran, listening to the local Mulla, or sitting in the tea house.⁶⁸ Although such images captured quotidian events, the scenes were in many cases invested with more extra-ordinary qualities, as everyday practices were described in terms of the exotic and the colourful. Authors were enchanted by the picturesque nature of such events, noting the wonderful 'green, red and gold' robes of participants,⁶⁹ the curious sounds of mass worship and the bustle of the bazaar.⁷⁰ In this sense, the local Muslim world as seen through Russian eyes in images was largely one of antiquity, colour, romance and exoticism. The visual appearance of crumbling mosques, and the identification in accompanying texts that such buildings were decaying, fitted into the wider narrative of Russian rule that prefigured Central Asia as 'antiquated' and 'backward'. This was a temporal analogon to the spatial segregation that had occurred in Central Asia's cities, and a form of Othering that distanced the practices and appearance of locals from their Russian counterparts.

⁶⁵ 'Tri dnia u drevnostei Samarkanda', p. 83.

⁶⁶ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 317.

⁶⁷ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, pp. 323-324.

⁶⁸ 'Gigantskii piupitr dlia korana', in *RPGONO*, p. 671; 'Ploshchad' Registan v Samarkande s moliashchimsia sartami', in 'Tri dnia u drevnostei Samarkanda', plate 4; 'Tuzemtsy na molitve u mecheti i medrese Tillia-kari', in *RPGONO*, p. 673.

⁶⁹ Kruber, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 203.

⁷⁰ 'Tri dnia u drevnostei Samarkanda', p. 83.

If images largely showcased local life as an exotic curiosity, this was not an entirely benign conceptualisation. Visual sources were indicative of seemingly common Russian stereotypes and prejudices about Muslim practices, and contributed to fixing local urban landscapes as emblems of 'backwardness'.⁷¹ Russian impressions of the Muslim world in the years following the conquest were bound up with notions of the 'fanatical', which became a commonplace word to characterise local populations.⁷² This 'fanaticism' was thought to be a direct consequence of Islam, which 'regulates all aspects of human life ... [and] enslaves not only the actions, but even the thoughts and imagination of religious Muslims'.⁷³ According to this commonly-held view, centuries of Islamic rule and the potent influence of religious leaders were to blame for the 'backward' and 'half-wild' state that the region found itself in, as 'Islam has exerted a pernicious influence on all Central Asian nationalities, prevented their development and created an almost total intellectual stagnation'.⁷⁴ The over-regulation of life, antiquated attitudes towards women and the cruelty of judicial punishments were all cited as examples of why in Bukhara 'instead of riches there is only the terrible poverty of the masses ... and in place of enlightenment, universal ignorance'.⁷⁵ Even fairly progressive observers such as Pahlen were moved to pronounce that Islamic law had brought Bukhara 'nothing but slavery, despotism, poverty and every form of restriction on the cultural and spiritual life of the individual'.⁷⁶ Such widespread generalisations coloured the display of visual material in popular texts, as guides and geographies drew the reader's attention to images of sites of perceived 'barbarism', in particular minarets 'from which until quite recently criminals were thrown, especially women'.⁷⁷ The visual presentation of minarets, prisons and other sites of justice, with captions that highlighted supposedly 'backward' legal and social practices, fed into notions of Islam as an exotic but barbaric religion that had permeated all aspects of local life, while the wording of captions very clearly invested images with a good deal of additional meaning (figure 7).

Against this 'closed' Islamic world, Russians could correspondingly construct their own narrative of post-conquest rule as one of enlightenment and progress, and perhaps unsurprisingly, Russian urban quarters were portrayed in almost inverse terms, recognisable by their 'spaciousness, cleanliness and abundant greenery'.⁷⁸ Had Russian settlers modified existing towns by building *in* to them, rather than *next* to them, such depictions may have been far less polarised, but as it was, texts prefigured these new settlements as bastions of European identity and of the Orthodox faith, in contrast to the neighbouring exotic landscape of the Other. Texts and images produced a series of key tropes, reiterated across a range of publications. In Tashkent, authors noted approvingly

⁷¹ For a broader perspective on the visual representation of religion in imperial Russia, see the special issue of *JfGO*, 2009, 57: 2.

⁷² A. Khalid, *The politics of Muslim cultural reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, pp. 51-52.

⁷³ V. P. Nalivkin, *Tuzemtsy ran'she i teper'*, Tashkent: A. L. Kirsner, 1913, p. 42.

⁷⁴ *RPGONO*, p. 354.

⁷⁵ Skopin, *Sredniaia Aziia i Indiia*, p. 69.

⁷⁶ K. K. Pahlen, *Mission to Turkestan. Being the memoirs of Count K. K. Pahlen 1908-1909* [ed. R. Pierce, trans. N. Couriss], London: Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 75.

⁷⁷ Geier, *Turkestan*, p. 205. See a similar caption to a photograph of a minaret in *RPGONO*, p. 660.

⁷⁸ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 318.

how easy it was to get around, thanks to the city's planned layout. 'Wide, straight streets', frequently cleaned and complete with pavements and kerosene streetlights, were home to numerous conveniences, including shops, churches, gardens, two theatres, a museum, schools and five banks.⁷⁹ References to the new quarter used the label 'Russian' or 'European' interchangeably, as authors sought to compare the town to other areas of the 'civilised' world, and to emphasise Russia's European credentials in colonial matters.⁸⁰ Images again portrayed a fairly uniform selection of scenes: Tashkent's European architecture, trams and numerous churches.⁸¹ The latter were particularly prominent symbols of the rootedness of Russian (Orthodox) civilisation in the midst of an overwhelmingly Islamic land, in much the same way as photographs of churches acted as 'proxies for imperial power' in the *Turkestanskii Al'бом*, discussed in chapter one, suggestive of Russia's symbolic ownership of terrain.⁸² In Tashkent in particular, a curious visual phenomenon could be observed, in which images in popular texts very rarely depicted the native quarter at all, despite the fact that, with a population of almost 150,000, it was almost three times the size of Russian Tashkent. One guide featured only a token photograph of a bazaar scene, in contrast to six images of Russian Tashkent, two of which depicted churches, and three of which were of different types of trees.⁸³ This type of selection confirms that visual content had a powerful role to play in creating particular images of certain sites, in this case, almost entirely relegating the indigenous town to obscurity, while conveniently reinforcing the city planners' intentions of the Russian quarter becoming the 'metonym of an imperial civilising mission' visualised through architecture and greenery.⁸⁴

In this sense, images of urban fabric portrayed two very different worlds that appeared rarely to intersect, paralleling the physical segregation that could be observed on the ground in the majority of Central Asia's cities, and in many ways strengthening what in reality was often a far more fluid situation. It is impossible to say with any surety whether the selection and contextualisation of images to describe indigenous and Russian quarters were done with the conscious desire to elevate Russia's new settlements and to denigrate older, existing ones. More likely, particularly in the case of travel accounts, was that the content of images reflected what authors thought were the most interesting sites to see. With few of the magnificent historical structures of Bukhara and Samarkand, the native quarter of Tashkent perhaps seemed relatively less impressive, while the Russian quarter, the largest of its type in Central Asia, appeared to be more worthy of comment. Nevertheless, intentionally or otherwise, images contributed to

⁷⁹ *RPGONO*, p. 610.

⁸⁰ Russian Tashkent for instance had the appearance of a 'well-built European town', Kruber, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 251.

⁸¹ See imagery of Tashkent's two main churches in Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu*, pp. 312-319; Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 321; *Illustrirovannyi putevoditel'*, p. 166; *RPGONO*, p. 609, and street lights, trams and banks on postcards, www.oldtashkent.ru [accessed 25 July 2014].

⁸² K. O'Neill, 'Constructing imperial identity in the borderland: Architecture, Islam, and the renovation of the Crimean landscape', *Ab Imperio*, 2006, 2, p. 189

⁸³ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, images pp. 318-322. See also the images of Tashkent in *Illustrirovannyi putevoditel'*, plates after pp. 166, 168, 176, 178.

⁸⁴ Crews, 'Civilisation in the city', p. 132.

investing the landscapes of the divided city with very different qualities, most of which played on existing stereotypes and preconceptions.

The visual portrayal of urban landscapes as segregated worlds - isolated, civilised islands and exotic, barbaric realms - thus clearly resonated with how prominent state actors modelled Turkestan as a demographically divided space, and is suggestive that this notion was shared more widely as a fundamental way of 'looking' at Turkestan. Russian quarters were not simply physically segregated areas, but when viewed as serial images on the pages of guides and surveys, appeared as multiple 'pockets' or 'islands' dotted across Central Asia that shared specific visual characteristics, each an element of a new, distinctly Russian world. I suggest below however, that as the tsarist era progressed, these built oases became increasingly contested sites, both physically and on the printed page, with the urban landscape just as likely to be the arena for the expression of fear and complaint, as it was for the projection of ideas about alterity and civilisation. Moreover, as I contend at the end of this discussion and continue in chapter four, the passage of time saw the emergence of an entirely different location for new physical, textual and visual debates about what kind of space Turkestan should be, one that still invoked the discourse of 'islands', but which was based on rural, rather than urban land.

Critiquing 'heaven on earth'

The discourse of a superior and civilised urban world created in the midst of an exotic and backward land was not without its complications. While Russians appeared, visually at least, to have successfully defined their towns both in terms of what they did and did not look like, imagery was also tinged with darker anxieties about local life. As discussed above, photographs framed indigenous towns as archaic, Muslim sites, bound up with common Russian perceptions of Islam as a 'backward' and at times 'fanatical' religion. This repeated trope was not simply a convenient foil for discourses that then emphasised the capacity of Russian rule to propel Central Asia into a future governed by 'western ethical and civic concepts of freedom, work, [and] civilisation',⁸⁵ but also intimated deeper Russian fears about their presence in Central Asia and the threat of Islam as a revolutionary social movement. Indeed, successive Governors General saw the inseparable relationship between religion and politics as a very real threat to the stability of the region. In a report to the Holy Synod in 1869, Kaufman's initial impression of the local religion had been that it was 'possibly the most fanatical in the world', as he noted the potential of Islam to be a dangerous unifying force, entirely outside the orbit of Russian influence and control.⁸⁶ Thirty years later, an investigation into the state of Islam, commissioned by one of Kaufman's successors, S. M. Dukhovskoi, illustrated that Russian views had if anything, entrenched in the intervening years.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Pahlen, *Mission to Turkestan*, p. 75.

⁸⁶ Kaufman, 'Sostoianiiia tserkvei i pravoslavnykh khristian', p. 497.

⁸⁷ V. I. Iarovoi-Ravskii (ed.), *Sbornik materialov po musul'manstvu*, SPb: Tip. M. Rozenoer, 1899. The study was largely devoted to the theme of threat, with chapters concerning 'Dervishism', 'Ishans and Sufism', 'Jihad', 'Hajj to Mecca and Medina', and very much coloured by the events in Andizhan the previous year.

Perhaps the most potent symbol of this perceived danger was that of the dervish, and it can be no coincidence that images of dervishes on the streets of local towns featured extremely prominently in the photographic content of popular reading material.⁸⁸ Such images depicted dervishes - followers of Sufi asceticism - in states of religious ecstasy, singing, praying, and most often in groups on street corners or near mosques.⁸⁹ It seems likely that the repeated selection of this subject was not motivated purely by the exotic, picturesque aesthetic of the dervish's form, nor was it the result of the idealisation or 'fetishisation' of the 'mystic East' that King describes in his analysis of the romanticisation of eastern religions by the west.⁹⁰ Rather, it betrayed an alarm over what the dervish represented: a world that lay entirely beyond Russian control.⁹¹ Russian fears over the capacity of religious leaders, particularly Sufis, to mobilise sections of the population against Russian rule were well-founded.⁹² Notwithstanding the generally harmonious post-conquest decades, the 1890s witnessed a number of revolts against imperial rule: in the Fergana valley in 1885, Namangan in 1891, the Tashkent cholera riot in 1892, and most notoriously the Andizhan uprising of 1898. All had religious elements, with the latter led by a charismatic Sufi who proclaimed a holy war against Russia.⁹³ Although some local Russian commentators acknowledged that unrest was most likely a result of the 'grave diseases of our [Russian] public life',⁹⁴ citing drunkenness and widespread corruption amongst the Russian ruling classes,⁹⁵ the trouble was more widely seen as a validation of the view that the suspected 'fanaticism of Asiatics could be very dangerous'.⁹⁶ Sufi elders and dervishes were viewed as a particularly alarming element, capable of stirring up discontent amongst local populations who considered them to be 'saintly people'.⁹⁷ The spiritual hold of mystics was thus seen as having an ominous capability to kindle fanaticism just as in the Caucasus or North Africa.⁹⁸ Indeed, by 1900, municipal authorities in Tashkent showed a keen awareness that the physical layout of the town's 'labyrinthine' old quarter made its population largely uncontrollable in the event of revolt or unrest, and lobbied for

⁸⁸ See for instance Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu*, p. 357; Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 177; Kruber, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 201; *RPGONO*, p. 403; *Zakaspiiskii krai. Biblioteka dlia shkoli i naroda*, Moscow: Tip. Tovarishchestva Riabushinskikh, 1916, p. 83.

⁸⁹ Central Asia was traditionally considered to be a Sufi heartland, with four influential brotherhoods active in the period: the Naqshbandiya, Kubrawiya, Yasawiya and Qadiriya orders. For an excellent introduction to the history of Sufism in the Russian empire, see chapter one of A. Bennigsen & S. Enders Wimbush, *Mystics and commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, and A. Frank, *Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia: Sufism, education and the paradox of Islamic prestige*, Leiden: Brill, 2012. For a contemporary take on dervishes and Sufism, see Iarovoi-Ravskii, *Sbornik materialov*, pp. 49-71, 85-100.

⁹⁰ R. King, *Orientalism and religion: Postcolonial theory, India and the 'mystic East'*, London: Routledge, 1999.

⁹¹ This was a distinct change from earlier representations, for instance Vereshchagin's 'Dervishi v prazdnichnykh nariadakh', 1870, which celebrated the colourful and exotic clothing on display.

⁹² In this respect, comparisons were frequently made with the activities of Sufi orders in North Africa, and with Shamil, leader of uprisings in the Caucasus, who had also been a Sufi follower.

⁹³ For more on Andizhan, see H. Komatsu, 'The Andijan uprising reconsidered', in S. Tsugitaka (ed.), *Muslim societies: Historical and comparative aspects*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004, pp. 29-61, and A. Morrison, 'Sufism, Panislamism & information panic. Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin and the aftermath of the Andijan uprising', *Past & Present*, 2012, 214, pp. 255-304.

⁹⁴ Nalivkin, *Tuzemtsy ran'she i teper'*, p. 136

⁹⁵ Nalivkin, *Tuzemtsy ran'she i teper'*, p. 125.

⁹⁶ Kul'chitskii, *Religiozno-nravstvennoe sostoianie inorodtsev Turkestanskogo kraia*, p. 2.

⁹⁷ *SOV*, 1901, No. 95, p. 590. See also Nalivkin, *Tuzemtsy ran'she i teper'*, p. 143.

⁹⁸ Iarovoi-Ravskii, *Sbornik materialov*, p. 97. For interesting parallels in North Africa, see J. Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and saint: Muslim notables, populist protest, colonial encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, and K. Vikør, 'Sufism and foreign rule in Africa', in Tsugitaka, *Muslim societies*, pp. 9-28.

the creation of a 'wide and straight road' that would cut the town in two, aiding police surveillance and the swift dispatch of troops, actions judged to be particularly apposite in the aftermath of the 'Andizhan episode'.⁹⁹

With this in mind, I take issue with a recent discussion of photography in Central Asia that, paraphrasing Barthes, claims that representations of exoticism transform the Other into 'a pure object, a spectacle, a clown. Relegated to the confines of humanity, he no longer threatens the security of the home'.¹⁰⁰ Instead, it may be that the image of the dervish was popular precisely because it visually encapsulated a threat with which Russians were preoccupied, and one that texts reiterated to the reader could be found 'on the streets of almost all of Turkestan's towns'.¹⁰¹ In this sense, dervishes acted as a reminder that Islam was a 'strange and mysterious world that governs the minds of millions in Asia',¹⁰² little understood by Russian administrators, who increasingly recognised that the policy of *ignorirovanie* had not resulted in the anticipated decay of Islam, but quite the contrary.¹⁰³ Imagery of the dervish was therefore entangled with two parallel narratives. Dervishes undoubtedly presented themselves as an exotic curiosity to Russian viewers, but were also representative of Russian fears regarding the implications of their unbalanced demography for rule in the region. In this sense, depictions of urban life were not only vehicles for voiced expressions of Russia's cultural, moral and religious superiority, but were also sites for unvoiced prejudice, fear and threat.

Meanwhile, as Russian quarters grew in size and composition, attracting railway workers, poorer settlers and vagrants in addition to military men, merchants and administrators, even the 'superior' attributes of segregated Russian towns became less convincing. In reality, the physical boundary between Russian and indigenous settlements was in fact extremely permeable, and Sahadeo, Crews and Khalid have offered important counter-readings to the traditional divide, by demonstrating that populations undermined imposed segregation by interacting across ethnic and spatial boundaries.¹⁰⁴ Tashkent's Russian quarter for instance, contained sixteen mosques to only twelve churches, an indication of the degree of social mingling at play.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, the much vaunted 'civilisation' of Russian Tashkent and its inhabitants was challenged by visitors who found the city's credentials wanting,¹⁰⁶ and by local authorities on both sides of the divide who

⁹⁹ RGVA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 2446, ll. 1-1 ob. Despite the creation of detailed plans for such a scheme (see the map in RGVA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 2446, l. 10), the project was shelved, apparently due to a lack of suitable financial support, although fear over the consequences of these proposed actions must also have been a significant factor.

¹⁰⁰ M. Dikovitskaya, 'Central Asia in early photographs: Russian colonial attitudes and visual culture', in T. Uyama (ed.), *Empire, Islam, and politics in Central Eurasia*, Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2007, p. 117.

¹⁰¹ Iarovoi-Ravskii, *Sbornik materialov*, p. 49.

¹⁰² Pahlen, *Mission to Turkestan*, p. 22.

¹⁰³ The growth of the Jadid movement, increasing numbers participating in hajj via Central Asia's new railways, and the threat of Pan-Turkism were all cited as evidence of the strengthening of Islam.

¹⁰⁴ See Crews, 'Civilisation in the city'; Khalid, *Politics of Muslim cultural reform*; and for a more detailed examination of how these boundaries were blurred, Sahadeo, *Russian colonial society*.

¹⁰⁵ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 320.

¹⁰⁶ See Saltykov-Shchedrin's biting satire of the city (although he never actually visited it) in M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, *Gospoda Tashkenttsy*, SPb: Tip. V. V. Pratts, 1873, and assorted comments from visitors on the

faced problems of drunkenness, prostitution and vice that had arrived with the Russian population. In relation to indigenous towns, Gorshenina has added to this ‘muddying’ of space by uncovering how, in the initial post-conquest years, far from leaving the vernacular urban fabric in the temporal isolation described in guidebooks, some Russians participated in the conservation and reconstruction of mosques and other buildings in states of disrepair.¹⁰⁷

An almost entirely unutilised source attests to the fact that as well as receiving sporadic criticism from visitors and from local authorities, Russian Tashkent was also the focus of good deal of complaint from everyday settlers. As their numbers swelled, reaching over 54,000 by 1910, settlers began to publish their own material, aimed at their compatriots who had travelled to Tashkent to make it their home. A relatively large number of highly ephemeral, small-circulation, semi-official or illegal titles flourished after 1905, alongside Turkestan’s long-standing official newspapers, and included several illustrated titles.¹⁰⁸ The latter - *Turkestanskii kara-kurt* and *Turkestanskii skorpion* - speak to the alternative ways in which life within the Russian quarter was perceived by those who lived there, and reveal that visual material was also being used explicitly to criticise and undermine the new urban landscape.

In such publications, satirical poems, jokes and cartoons were used to convey serious critiques of local society and government, and in particular to challenge the conventional view of Russia’s new urban fabric. Far from being clean, ordered, and ‘civilised’, the city was visually described in exactly the same terms as the indigenous world was traditionally conceived in other popular material. Themes of dirt and sanitation made frequent appearances in both titles, perhaps more so than any other topic, as cartoons depicted the city’s main street with well-dressed Russians enveloped with fumes and odours, pressing handkerchiefs to their noses.¹⁰⁹ References to dirt and dust were common in satirical poems, while the ‘latest fashion’ pictured a woman with trousers tucked into her boots to avoid ‘drowning’ in Tashkent’s dirt.¹¹⁰ Although dust and dirt were naturally plentiful in Turkestan’s hot, dry climate, the issue was conspicuously connected to criticisms of sanitation provided by the state. *Turkestanskii skorpion* issued a mock advert in 1907 for ‘Street Dirt ... recommended as a new and tested way to improve towns and other populated places, where for reasons of soil or climate, there is no natural dirt. To order, please contact the

‘bleakness’ of local life, for instance P. I. Shreider, *Po okraine. Putevye ocherki*, SPb: Tip. V. V. Komarova, 1893, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰⁷ S. Gorshenina, ‘Samarkand and its cultural heritage: perceptions and persistence of the Russian colonial construction of monuments’, *CAS*, 2014, 33: 2, pp. 246-269.

¹⁰⁸ For comprehensive listings, see M. P. Avsharova, *Russkaia periodicheskaia pechat’ v Turkestane, 1870-1917gg. Bibliograficheskii ukazatel’ literatury*, Tashkent: Gosizdat UzSSR, 1960. For more on local and Russian-language publications, see M. B. Babakhanov, *Iz istorii periodicheskoi pechati Turkestana*, Dushanbe: Donish, 1987, and Khalid, *Politics of Muslim cultural reform*, pp. 117-127. *Turkestanskii skorpion*, under the editorship of N. V. Turgarina, sailed particularly close to the wind in terms of content and readership figures, and published on its inaugural masthead ‘the first, and perhaps last, year of publication’. The editor’s foreboding was confirmed when the paper closed in December 1907 after only ten issues. *Turkestanskii kara-kurt* was published from 1911-1912, before it too closed, although it did resume publication, in different format, during 1913-1914.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Kaufmanskii prospekt vecherom’, *TKK*, 1911, No. 4, p. 12, and ‘Gorodskie dela’, *TS*, 1907, No. 3, p. 5.

¹¹⁰ ‘Na Soborke’, *TKK*, 1911, No. 2, p. 2. The trousers served a dual purpose as they also allowed ladies around town to jump over drainage canals! See also *TKK*, 1911, No. 4, p. 3, and ‘Na voskresenskom bazare’, *TKK*, 1911, No. 3, p. 6.

Tashkent City Board'.¹¹¹ The facilities supplied by the city government were frequently scorned, as a drop of local water was 'analysed' under a microscope and found to contain amongst other items, a bone, skull, bottle, animal carcass, claw, key and a frog,¹¹² while hospitals were shown in caricatures as overflowing, and disease prevalent in the city.¹¹³ Other municipal services were found wanting in numerous ways. Schools had no free places,¹¹⁴ while the city fire brigade was depicted as a lone firefighter armed only with two pots of water and a giant syringe.¹¹⁵ The state of local roads was frequently attacked,¹¹⁶ as was the lack of street-lighting.¹¹⁷ Tashkent's city government bore the brunt of the newspapers' accusatory stance. Most symbolic of this attitude was a cartoon printed in 1912 that depicted the City Commandant as a chicken, laying three eggs marked 'reports', 'insanitary conditions' and 'poor municipal services'.¹¹⁸

The sheer preponderance of environmental and politically-related satire in the two newspapers points towards a rather different reading of the urban landscape. Ethnic divisions, so frequently referenced in texts and photographs as a form of enduring identity, were noticeably not used to any great extent. Sporadic mockery based on ethnic lines, of natives speaking Russian poorly, or charging extortionate rents for shops,¹¹⁹ could certainly be found, but the same treatment was dished out to some Russian 'types', who were often portrayed as dim, lacking in morals and drunk.¹²⁰ Instead, dirt, sanitation, the poor condition of municipal services and the concomitant performance of local government were the defining features of life. The newspapers certainly seem to have caught the public mood accurately, as archives show that settlers were also privately petitioning the state to improve local services, making similar claims about the poor condition of the urban environment to those discussed above. Some of the petitions used strikingly self-aware statements to reinforce their points: local peasant V. I. Karpov complained that 'for me, as a representative of the Russian nation in the city of Tashkent, the unjust attitude of the Tashkent City Board is extremely insulting'.¹²¹ Interestingly, inhabitants of the native quarter filed petitions that revealed almost identical complaints about the nature of the urban fabric, demonstrating that

¹¹¹ *TS*, 1907, No. 7, p. 7.

¹¹² 'Kaplja Tashkentskoi arychnoi vody pod mikroskopom', *TKK*, 1911, No. 2, p. 8. See a similar reference in *TKK*, 1912 No. 6, p. 14.

¹¹³ 'K perepolnenniu Tashkentskikh bol'nits', *TKK*, 1911, No. 4, p. 13, depicts one hospital bed crammed with six patients. See also 'K epidemii briushnogo tifa v Tashkente', *TKK*, 1911, No. 3, p. 5.

¹¹⁴ 'Sliskom znakomaia stsenka dlja Tashkenta', *TKK*, 1911, No. 4, p. 17, depicts a large crowd outside a school, with no school places available.

¹¹⁵ 'Tashkentskii pozharnyi oboz v polnom sostave', *TS*, 1907, No. 9, p. 5.

¹¹⁶ 'Tashkentskie barrikady', *TKK*, 1912, No. 8, p. 8, shows a horse and cart at a perilous angle, trying to navigate around piles of debris and broken carriages, with the caption 'you can't walk or travel on our streets, but you can fly'. See also "'Aviatsionnye" siurprizy mestnykh izvozchikov na nashikh ulitsakh', *TKK*, 1911, No. 3, p. 15.

¹¹⁷ 'Edinstvennyi akkuratnyi fonarshik g. Tashkenta', *TKK*, 1911, No. 2, p. 5. Similar jokes about streetlights can be found in *TS*, 1907, No. 5, pp. 12-13.

¹¹⁸ 'Mestnyi "Shantekler"', *TKK*, 1912, No. 5, p. 12. Numerous other cartoons also criticised the ethos of the Russian administration, for instance 'Kartinka bez slov', *TKK*, 1912, No. 5, p. 13, depicting a Tashkenter drowning in a sea of papers marked 'doklady' or 'proekty'.

¹¹⁹ See for instance native shopowner Arif Khodzha, 'milking' a row of shops on Sobornaia ulitsa in 'Doinaia korova', *TKK*, 1911, No. 3, p. 1.

¹²⁰ *TKK*, 1912, No. 8, p. 10, and 'Pikovoe polozenie', *TKK*, 1912, No. 7, p. 16.

¹²¹ RGIA, f. 1396, op. 1, d. 96, l. 44 ob.

on some level, a good deal of solidarity existed between some sections of Russian and indigenous urban populations.¹²²

The urban landscape was thus not simply an arena where 'the superiority of Christian civilisation over Islam' could be visually articulated,¹²³ but was also a space that revealed disquiet and anxiety about the threat posed by indigenous life, and that gave rise to expressions of complaint that spoke to the increasingly fractured nature of settler society. A good deal of these nuances have been examined - although not necessarily from a visual perspective - by Sahadeo, Crews and others, who conceive of Tashkent (and to a lesser degree, urban fabric in general) as a vital site where ideas about Russian power, visions of self, and their increasingly contested qualities were negotiated. The visual evidence outlined above very much bolsters such claims, and demonstrates that ethnicity and religion were closely interwoven into images that projected Russian stereotypes onto the land. These sources by and large reinforce the notion that many Russians, from state actors to visitors from the imperial centre, envisaged areas of Russian settlement as metaphorical islands in a vast tract of land demarcated by otherworldly exoticism, even if the superior qualities of such settlements came ever more under question.

Yet I propose that as cities became increasingly contested sites, they receded in importance as visual centrepieces of the new world that the imperial experience claimed to foster. If the conceptual symbolism of an 'island' was something that tended towards the utopian or paradisiacal, controllable and manageable,¹²⁴ the urban landscape was no longer entirely convincing as a showpiece of 'heaven on earth'.¹²⁵ Textual and visual material exposed the fact that cities were perhaps not the best sites for the creation of Russian settlements that could be portrayed as a new and superior realm fashioned by the imperial state. Despite segregation, indigenous and settler societies lived cheek-by-jowl, resulting in an inevitable intermingling that led some to call into question the strength and permeability of Russia's urban cultural spheres. Meanwhile, the attractions of urban regions were a magnet for a range of Russian settlers, some critical of the state's capacity to enact its vision of a superior world, and others deemed to be less-than-desirable types whose actions undermined Russian claims of cultural or moral superiority. At the same time, state actors and experts became increasingly 'preoccupied by the Islamic threat to their rule', giving credence to a widening pessimism about the prospects of assimilating the region into the empire, particularly in heavily-populated urban regions.¹²⁶ In this sense, urban 'islands' were perhaps too close in terms of geographic proximity to the indigenous world that they were intended to discredit and reform.

¹²² See RGIA, f. 1396, op. 1, d. 96 and d. 110 for requests and petitions made to Pahlen during his visit, for instance f. 1396, op. 1, d. 110, l. 41 for complaints about the fire service.

¹²³ Kaufman, 'Sostoianiiia tserkvei i pravoslavnykh khristian', p. 497.

¹²⁴ R. Edmond & V. Smith (eds), *Islands in history and representation*, London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 1, 5. For broader discussions of the island as a discursive construct, see G. Beer, 'Discourses of the island', in F. Amrine (ed.), *Literature and science as modes of expression*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1989, pp. 1-27, and D. Loxley, *Problematic shores: The literature of islands*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990.

¹²⁵ Quoted in Sahadeo, *Russian colonial society*, p. 29.

¹²⁶ Morrison, 'Sufism, Panislamism & information panic', p. 288.

As the following chapter contends in more detail, as cities lost their symbolic potency, a new site that has until now been largely neglected, was receiving increasing attention as the prime location in which Russian conceptions of a 'new Turkestan' were manifest in changes to the environment, and which had at its heart the natural, rather than the built world. In this sense, I conceive the visual treatment of towns and cities to be only one component of a more far-reaching process to manage Turkestan's populations and to attempt to re-fashion the image of Turkestan from an exotic, Muslim land into a more profoundly 'Russian' territory. This approach demonstrates the value of looking at city-building and its representation in far broader perspective than has been done previously, and points towards a spatial refocusing away from Turkestan's central, urban zone, towards an agricultural periphery in the north and east. As I detail in chapter four, visual material was at the very heart of attempts by the Russian state to cast this area as a settled, green, Orthodox periphery, efforts that were in many ways far more concerted and organised than in the urban areas discussed above. In both cases, images of urban and rural land were part of an ongoing debate about the future of Turkestan, and were an important means by which attempts to transform both types of landscape could be documented, and which themselves could be used to suggest the ideological importance of such actions.

The rise of the north and east as an alternative landscape for the visual expression of Russian designs on the Central Asian environment has been largely ignored, yet the roots of this designation could be found relatively early in the post-conquest years. While urban landscapes were very clearly encoded with the religious symbolism that was so central to Russian ideas about self and Other, it seems somewhat counterintuitive to learn that, when picking a location for the seat of Turkestan's new Orthodox diocese, Kaufman had snubbed the apparently natural choice of Tashkent in favour of Vernyi, the capital of Semirech'e.¹²⁷ Indeed, it transpired that Semirech'e was the only region of Turkestan where the establishment of an Orthodox diocesan centre had been deemed permissible, with Kaufman noting that the physical location of Tashkent at the centre of 'Islamic Turkestan' was reason to exclude it in favour of Vernyi. The latter was seen to be a better strategic location for the long-term establishment of a religious centre, with Kaufman acknowledging that the town had been built in the midst of a more numerous Russian population than in Turkestan's other urban zones, and that life there 'differed little from that in any other town of the empire'.¹²⁸

In this sense, the east was more easily conceived of as a naturally Russian or Orthodox land. Being on the periphery of Turkestan, it lacked the concentration of urban populations seen in the corridor of travel between Bukhara and Tashkent, and significantly, had a predominantly nomadic rather than settled indigenous population.¹²⁹ This was judged to be an important factor, given that the very different lifestyle of local peoples meant that there was a significant 'weakness of religious feeling amongst our Semirech'e Muslims', who 'have no Mullas, no medressa, no Koran or

¹²⁷ The diocese was formally created in 1871.

¹²⁸ Kaufman, 'Sostoianiiia tserkvei i pravoslavnykh khristian', p. 498.

¹²⁹ At least 70 per cent of Semirech'e's population was nomadic, according to 1908 data in *Zapiska o sostoianii Semirechenskoi oblasti v 1908 godu*, Vernyi: [n. p.], 1908, p. 10

any other books in accessible languages'.¹³⁰ Indeed, the distinction made between sedentary Muslims in Central Asia's heartland and nomadic Kazakh and Kyrgyz Muslims in Semirech'e and parts of Syr-Dar'ia was stark, with the latter noted as being 'less under the influence of Islam', 'not fanatical', and 'having only a vague knowledge of the Koran'.¹³¹ The region thus made a much more attractive prospect for the establishment of an Orthodox centre.¹³² Closely tied to the potential for the flourishing of Orthodoxy away from the crowded urban centres in central Turkestan, I contend in the following chapter that Semirech'e and Syr-Dar'ia also became focal points for state-directed attempts to fashion an altogether new Turkestan based around 'islands' of rural rather than urban settlement. Post-Andizhan, and with rising 'Islamophobic paranoia',¹³³ by the late 1890s a number of key figures in the imperial government had come to realise that Russia's future in Central Asia could be better realised in the rural periphery than it could in the urban zones that had been the focus of Russian settlement from 1865 onwards. This turn towards the east and north promised a revolution in how Turkestan was conceived of as a spatial unit, and the gradual evolution of its mental associations from an alien, Muslim land, into a domesticated, agricultural frontier, propelled by the greening of its lands and the persuasive framing of these actions by the state.

¹³⁰ *Religiozno-nravstvennoe sostoianie inorodtsev Turkestanskogo kraia*, pp. 9-10.

¹³¹ *RPGONO*, p. 355.

¹³² Turkestan's only missionary monastery was established in 1881 on the shores of Lake Issyk-Kul. Despite the founding of the diocesan cathedral, the installation of a bishop, and the creation of the monastery, very few active proselytising attempts were made - the fear of inciting unrest outweighed the desire to Christianise, even in Semirech'e. For more on the politics of Christianisation, see T. Uyama, 'A particularist empire: The Russian policies of Christianisation and military conscription in Central Asia', in Uyama, *Empire, Islam, and politics in Central Eurasia*, pp. 23-63.

¹³³ Morrison, 'Sufism, Panislamism & information panic', p. 304. Morrison notes that the obsession with religion and the fear of a revolt against Russian rule blinded the majority of the tsarist administration to more pressing matters of governance and reform.

4. Desert, garden, field

A picture of desolation which wearied, by its utter loneliness, and at the same time appalled by its immensity; a circle of which the centre was everywhere, and the circumference nowhere.¹

This vivid and eloquent description of the Central Asian desert echoed those of hundreds of Russian and international visitors to the region, and captured rather gracefully the striking impression exacted by the scale and emptiness of Transcaspia's landscapes. The enormity of the Kara Kum and Kyzyl Kum deserts, and their apparently austere and bleak environments, led observers to note almost unanimously the 'lifelessness' of these 'deathly wastelands' and the never-ending quality of their landscapes, the outer limits of which one might easily believe were lost in the sand itself. This type of arid terrain accounted for some seventy-five per cent of Turkestan's topography. The Ust-Yurt plateau between the Aral and the Caspian Seas, the Kyzyl Kum between the Syr-Dar'ia and Amu-Dar'ia rivers, the Kara Kum between the Amu-Dar'ia and the Caspian, and the Hungry Steppe around Tashkent were sparsely populated, superheated and inhospitable environments.² Perhaps for exactly this reason, deserts and spartan steppe lands were recognisable and evocative terrains, and were by far the quintessential image of the Central Asian natural world. Deserts were synonymous with the idea of Turkestan, just as mosques were similarly emblematic in urban areas. Indeed, so pervasive was the conflation between Central Asia and these 'empty', sandy landscapes that the Russian Ministry of Finance persistently referred to Turkestan as 'The Desert'.³ Nevertheless, the region boasted considerable environmental variation, from the fertile valleys of Fergana to the lakes of Balkhash and Issyk Kul, and the mountain peaks and foothills of the Pamirs and the Tian Shan ranges. Rivers, highlands, valleys, oases, woods and fields were important constituents of Turkestan's natural world alongside the steppe and desert that so dominated Russian ideas of the Central Asian terrain.

Russian explorers had long been drawn to these landscapes, mounting expeditions to map terrain and collect specimens of flora and fauna.⁴ This chapter considers broader Russian attempts to describe, depict and characterise such environments in the popular literature introduced in the preceding chapter, and examines the ways in which terrain was seen, and the rhetorical and

¹ F. Burnaby, *A Ride to Khiva: Travels and adventures in Central Asia*, London: Cassell & Co., [1882], p. 135.

² M. Peterson, 'Technologies of rule: Empire, water, and the modernization of Central Asia, 1867-1941', unpublished PhD thesis, Harvard University, 2011, p. 9.

³ K. K. Pahlen, *Mission to Turkestan: Being the memoirs of Count K. K. Pahlen, 1908-1909* [ed. R. Pierce, trans. N. Couriss], London: Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 16.

⁴ For an overview of the activities of, amongst others, A. P. Fedchenko, I. V. Mushketov, N. M. Przheval'skii, P. P. Semenov-Tian'-Shanskii and N. A. Severtsov, see E. Murzaev, *V dalekoi Azii. Ocherki po istorii izucheniia Srednei i Tsentral'noi Azii v XIX-XX vekakh*, Moscow: Izd. Akademii nauk SSSR, 1956. For an excellent discussion of the imperial expedition, see D. Kennedy, *The last blank spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013, and of the role of image-making and photography in expeditions, see J. Ryan, *Photography and exploration*, London: Reaktion Books, 2013.

practical uses of such imagery. I focus on texts and images as tools that could be used to make the natural world 'visible', and which were crucial to the 'processes of investigating, ordering, explaining, and possessing - or attempting to possess - nature'.⁵ By examining which types of landscapes were seen and unseen in such publications, I uncover evidence of a gradual re-imagining of Central Asia that developed in tandem with the expansion of Russian settlement. Although the most common textual and visual depictions of the natural world emphasised its empty, vast and unusual qualities, I contest the claim that 'Central Asian landscapes were almost always alien and distinct from European or Russian landscapes', by pointing to the promulgation of exactly these latter scenes towards the end of the period.⁶ I discuss firstly how images were shaped to some degree by the accessibility of certain landscapes, and consider how the selection of photographs reflected Russian stereotypes about Central Asia's natural terrain, particularly the desert. The remaining half of the chapter investigates sites that were under-represented in literature, particularly the landscapes of Semirech'e, and demonstrates that although such images did not necessarily fit the popular exotic aesthetic, they were evidence that a different kind of nature was being fostered in the form of parks, gardens, orchards and cultivated fields. In doing so, I suggest that the natural world was rapidly displacing the built environment as a landscape where Russian aspirations for the future reshaping of Turkestan could be realised.

As the initial focus of Russian settlement in the post-conquest period, cities had made for natural symbols of the colonial experience. Their outward appearance spoke to the influence of Russian rule, manifest in the rational grid-system of the new towns' streets, their European architecture, electric lighting and public conveniences. Looking at Turkestan as a space in broader perspective however, and moving from the cities of the centre to the region's geographic edges reveals that the portrayal of the divided city was only one component of attempts to fashion certain places and spaces as 'metonyms of order, reason and a superior European civilisation'.⁷ Indeed, while urban areas had initially been focal points for Russian settlers, by the turn of the century increasing numbers were also moving to rural land in Turkestan's north-eastern periphery, most notably in Syr-Dar'ia and Semirech'e.⁸ By 1911, over half of the 406,607-strong Russian population was to be found within the borders of Semirech'e, with the majority living in small rural villages.⁹ This

⁵ D. Bleichmar, *Visible empire: Botanical expeditions and visual culture in the Hispanic Enlightenment*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012, p. 7. See also 'Empire and the visual representation of nature', in W. Beinart & L. Hughes, *Environment and empire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 214-232.

⁶ Peterson, 'Technologies of rule', p. 13.

⁷ R. Crews, 'Civilisation in the city: Architecture, urbanism, and the colonisation of Tashkent', in J. Cracraft & D. Rowland (eds), *Architectures of Russian identity, 1500 to the present*, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2003, p. 128.

⁸ More detail on rural settlement can be found in S. N. Abashin (ed.), *Tsentral'naia Aziia v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii*, Moscow: NLO, 2008, pp. 210-233; D. Brower, 'Kyrgyz nomads and Russian pioneers: Colonization and ethnic conflict in the Turkestan revolt of 1916', *JfGO*, 1996, 44: 1, pp. 41-53; D. Brower, *Turkestan and the fate of the Russian empire*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, chapter five; A. Morrison, 'Peasant settlers and the "civilising mission" in Russian Turkestan, 1865-1917', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 2015, 43: 3, pp. 387-417; A. Morrison, "'Sowing the seed of national strife in this alien region": The Pahlen report and *pereselenie* in Turkestan, 1908-1911', *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, 2012, 31, pp. 1-29; S. Sabol, *Russian colonization and the genesis of Kazak national consciousness*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003, chapter three.

⁹ The Russian population of Semirech'e was 204,307, compared to 103,500 in Syr-Dar'ia, 41,671 in Transcaspia, 34,200 in Fergana and 22,929 in Samarkand. Figures from G. V. Glinka (ed.), *Aziatskaia Rossiia*,

phenomenon can partly be explained by the region's slightly earlier conquest, which had enabled the establishment of Cossack and peasant communities from the 1840s onwards. More significantly, it was home to some of Turkestan's most productive - or potentially fertile - land, making it a natural destination for incoming peasants, and was officially designated as a resettlement zone by the Russian state.¹⁰ Although concerted efforts to prepare plots of land for new settlers were painfully slow, the Semirech'e and Syr-Dar'ia zones of settlement (the latter covering Syr-Dar'ia, Fergana and Samarkand *oblasti*), began to receive a small but growing influx of settlers, aided by state initiatives to improve the land itself, with large-scale irrigation projects underway by the early 1900s in the Hungry Steppe and the Chu hills.¹¹ By 1911, rural Semirech'e was home to 150,000 souls and Syr-Dar'ia to 13,600, with the unofficial numbers still higher.¹²

The development of agricultural settlement prompted an evolution in the visual presentation of Turkestan. While the green, rural landscapes did not captivate the authors of popular literature in the same way as the exotic, awe-inspiring desert, the agricultural periphery was a powerful image precisely because it confounded expectations as to what rural Turkestan looked like. This made for a potent representation of a new Turkestan, one that used nature - trees, flowers and crops - as its visual signifiers, and one that very much conformed to calls from the Ministry of Agriculture to increase colonisation in order to found a 'second Turkestan', populated solely by Russian settlers.¹³ Indeed, I demonstrate how the Russian state, particularly the Resettlement Administration, took the lead in crafting this new vision, both in terms of organising planting and settlement, and in presenting such actions in pamphlets, geographies and advice brochures. I contend that these 'agricultural culture islands'¹⁴ were actively portrayed as 'transported landscapes', presented to prospective settlers and those interested in the colonial experience as being redolent of central and western Russia.¹⁵ Thus the visual representation of acts of planting could be used to suggest a transformed, Russified landscape that was far more an integral part of empire than the exotic nature - or even the cities - of Turkestan's core.¹⁶

SPb: Izd. Pereselencheskogo upravleniia glavnogo upravleniia zemleustroistva i zemledeliia, 1914 (hereafter vol. 1 unless otherwise stated), p. 82, and G. V. Glinka (ed.), *Atlas Aziatskoi Rossii*, SPb: Izd. Pereselencheskogo upravleniia glavnogo upravleniia zemleustroistva i zemledeliia, 1914, map 35.

¹⁰ Semirech'e, like the rest of Turkestan, was officially closed to settlers from 1895-1910, although this did not discourage determined new arrivals or '*samovol'tsy*', who favoured Semirech'e over other regions of Turkestan.

¹¹ For more on these irrigation schemes, see Peterson, 'Technologies of rule'.

¹² Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 281.

¹³ A. V. Krivoshein, *Zapiska Glavnoupravliaiushchego zemleustroistvom i zemledeliem o poezdke v Turkestanskii krai v 1912 godu*, SPb: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1912, pp. 30, 67.

¹⁴ J. Pallot & D. Shaw, *Landscape and settlement in Romanov Russia, 1613-1917*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, p. 79.

¹⁵ P. Lavelle, 'The aesthetics and politics of Chinese horticulture in late Qing borderlands', in T. Liu (ed.), *Environmental history in East Asia: Interdisciplinary perspectives*, London: Routledge, 2014, p. 216.

¹⁶ For parallel attempts to transform 'foreign' landscapes in the empire through planting (or clearing), see R. Jones, *Empire of extinction: Russians and the North Pacific's strange beasts of the sea, 1741-1867*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, chapter three; D. Moon, *The plough that broke the steppes: Agriculture and environment on Russia's grasslands*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; M. Sokolsky, 'Between predation and protection: Forests and forestry in late Tsarist Primor'e', *Sibirica*, 2014, 13: 2, pp. 28-61; W. Sunderland, *Taming the wild field: Colonization and empire on the Russian steppe*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.

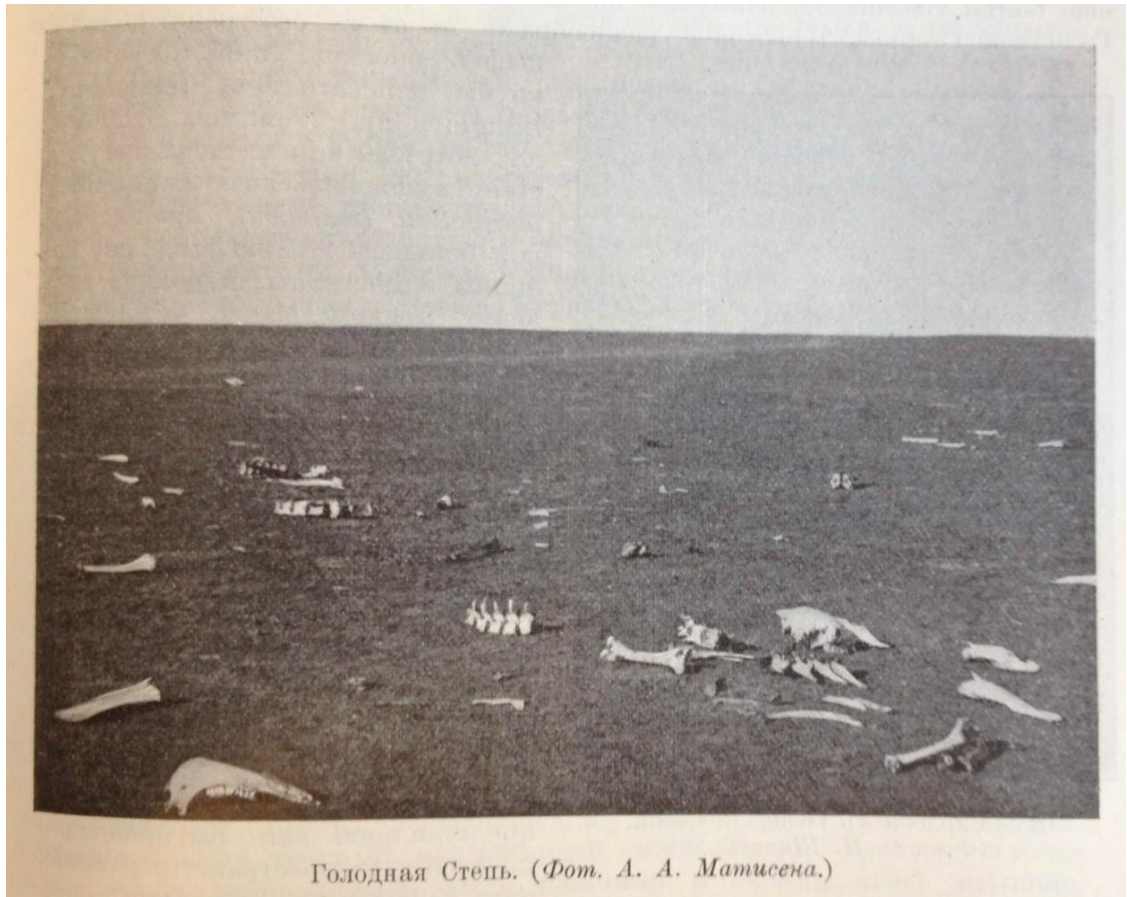


Figure 8. 'Golodnaia step'.

RPGONO, p. 29.

Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark 2059 d. 49.



Сборъ хмѣля въ Семирѣченской области.

Figure 9. 'Sbor khmelia v Semirechenskoii oblasti'.

G. V. Glinka (ed.), *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, SPb: Izd. Pereselencheskogo upravleniia glavnogo upravleniia zemleustroistva i zemledeliia, 1914, vol. 2, plate between pp. 260-261.

Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark 2062 c.5.

Barren landscapes

As discussed in chapter three, the development of new transport routes had a significant impact on how Turkestan was seen, and prompted the proliferation of a range of popular literature that captured the visual appearance of the region's landscapes. Editions that featured upwards of 200 photographs had reason to claim that they could visually encompass a representative sample of most of the region, and authors generally strove to offer as wide a portrait as possible. Khilkov's brief to Dmitriev-Mamonov had been to provide readers with 'a general picture of nature and life in Turkestan', and to include descriptions of the geographic, economic and historical conditions of the 'varied and interesting country'.¹⁷ What is strikingly apparent however is that this was sometimes far from the case in terms of visual content. The selection of imagery was often uneven and geographically skewed, meaning that some places and regions remained almost uniformly 'blank' and 'un-visualised'. Such visual biases were significant, resulting in a representation of Turkestan that relied very heavily on certain visual aspects and themes, while others were relegated to relative obscurity.

Although the natural world did not figure as conspicuously in many publications as did urban centres, one landscape in particular did make it into almost every illustrated work on Turkestan: Central Asia's deserts, either in Transcaspia or in western Syr-Dar'ia. Noticeably under-represented however were parts of northern Transcaspia and Syr-Dar'ia provinces around the Aral Sea, and especially the province of Semirech'e. This omission was striking in its consistency, and often mirrored a similar pattern in publications' textual content. Geier's *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu* covered all of Turkestan's *oblasti* apart from Semirech'e, a curious decision given that it was published fully two years after Semirech'e and Transcaspia had rejoined the Governor Generalship, and that Transcaspia had merited inclusion while Semirech'e had not.¹⁸ A later version, published in 1909 under the title of *Turkestan* did contain a chapter devoted to Semirech'e, but being separately paginated and rather obviously tacked-on, did little to challenge the notion that the *oblast'* was somehow an addendum to the text of Turkestan.¹⁹ Meanwhile, even when texts were more comprehensive, imagery did not follow suit. Dmitriev-Mamonov's celebrated *Putevoditel'*, which ran to nine editions, featured up to 240 photographic images, yet Semirech'e was rarely featured. Of 140 images in the 1913 edition, only seven were identifiably of Semirech'e. Two years later, only twelve of 179. In guides where images were at a greater premium and hence used more sparingly - perhaps due to higher printing costs or the size of the publisher - the phenomena was even more marked. Geier's *Ves' Russkii Turkestan* contained no images at all of Semirech'e, rather undoing the claim of the title, and similar patterns could be found in the illustration of other guides and geographies.²⁰ The concentration on urban centres, as

¹⁷ A. I. Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu i Sredne-Aziatskoi zheleznoi dorogi*, SPb: Tip. Isidora Gol'dberga, 1903, p. iii.

¹⁸ I. I. Geier, *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu*, Tashkent: V. M. Il'in, 1901.

¹⁹ I. I. Geier, *Ves' Russkii Turkestan*, Tashkent: S. R. Konopka, 1908, and I. I. Geier, *Turkestan. S dop. st. "Semirechenskaia oblast"*, Tashkent: A. L. Kirsner, 1909.

²⁰ See for instance A. A. Kruber (ed.), *Aziatskaia Rossiia. Illiustrirovannyi geograficheskii sbornik*, Moscow: I. N. Kushnerev, 1903. Only possibly two of twenty-seven images depicted parts of Semirech'e.

analysed in chapter three, appears understandable, but why were some natural landscapes seen when others were not? Was the desert deemed to be more noteworthy than the mountains, lakes and valleys of other regions? Was the selection of images influenced by the perceived interests of the audience, by textual content, by the predisposition of authors and editors, or by the availability of images? I suggest that there were two main factors at play, firstly, that travel conditioned the types of photographs that were taken, and secondly, that certain regions of Turkestan failed to fit into the exotic aesthetic thought to be attractive to the reader.

Travel in Turkestan continued to be possible via river, road and caravan routes, but it was the speed and comfort of the region's railway network, covering 2200 miles by 1914, that conditioned the lion's share of movement.²¹ Until 1906 at least, travellers entered Turkestan from the west, having crossed the Caspian Sea and then begun their journeys at Krasnovodsk. Thus by and large, their first impression of the region was through the prism of Transcaspia's sandy deserts. Travelling from west to east ensured that, for all but the most intrepid, Semirech'e would always be the end, rather than the beginning of travel. Indeed, dependence on the convenience of the railway meant that many appeared not to have made it to Semirech'e at all, given that it remained the only *oblast'* of Turkestan not to have a rail connection. With only post roads to travel on, Semirech'e remained 'more difficult to get to than the more distant regions of Siberia',²² and required a 530-mile road trip from the nearest railway station on the Tashkent line, which could take up to twenty days.²³ Skobelev had noted in 1877 that 'if known to Dante, the Central Asian roads would have served as an additional horror to hell',²⁴ and despite upgrade work, roads, particularly in Semirech'e, continued to be dusty, hazardous, often unpassable in winter and spring, and at particular risk of landslides and flooding.²⁵ Thus a partial explanation for the skewed coverage of certain areas may be that Semirech'e was a less attractive prospect to reach, being difficult to get to and outside the popular cordon of movement between Krasnovodsk and Tashkent. In this sense, the availability - or otherwise - of transport routes altered not only how space was traversed, but could fundamentally condition which places and landscapes were seen, elevating some at the expense of others.²⁶

²¹ *RPGONO*, p. 584.

²² *Opisanie Semirechenskogo pereselencheskogo raiona. Spravochnaia knizhka dlia khodokov i pereselentsev na 1911 god*, SPb: Tip. Sel'skogo vestnika, 1911, p. 3.

²³ *Spravochnaia knizhka po Semirechenskomu pereselencheskomu raionu na 1912 god*, SPb: Tip. "Slovo", 1912, pp. 4-5. Details of the entire road and rail network can be found in *Pereselenie za Ural v 1912 godu*, SPb: Tip. "Slovo", 1912, and *Putevoditel' po Sibiri i Turkestanskomu kraiu*, SPb: Izd. Lavrova, 1895. An early itinerary of routes in the region can be found in *The Russians in Central Asia, By Capt. Valikhanov, M. Veniukof, and other Russian travellers* [trans. J. & R. Mitchell], London: Edward Stanford, 1865, appendix 1, pp. 501-517, while a fuller description of the post road, and a detailed map, can be found in *Doroga v Semirech'e. Arys-Pishpek*, Poltava: Tip. I. L. Frishberga, 1912.

²⁴ G. Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia in 1889 and the Anglo-Russian question*, London: Frank Cass & Co., 1967 [originally published 1889], p. 400.

²⁵ *RPGONO*, p. 566.

²⁶ For a discussion of this phenomenon in broader context, see F. Schenk, *Russlands Fahrt in die Moderne: Mobilität und sozialer Raum im Eisenbahnzeitalter*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014, in particular chapter three. Schenk uses the example of Novgorod as a site that lost significance as it was by-passed by a new railway line. I am grateful to Professor Schenk for pointing out the relevant arguments in his book to a non-

Nevertheless, this explanation is at best, only partial, and I argue below that certain *types* of images were favoured over others. The desert and steppe very much resonated with notions of Central Asia's exotic alterity, while the landscapes of Semirech'e looked much more mundane and of less immediate interest to compilers of popular geographies, travel literature and so forth. Imagery of the desert was certainly the most commonly used material to visually depict Turkestan's natural world, and it may be that something as simple as the direction of travel had a good deal of influence on which images were taken and reproduced, capturing the all-important first impression of the region. Equally probable however, is that the desert fitted a certain photogenic aesthetic: it perfectly encapsulated the 'Other World-liness'²⁷ that Russians had long come to associate with Central Asia, and thus fitted seamlessly into popular conceptions of Turkestan as an alien world whose landscapes were often described as 'one vast waste'.²⁸

The textual production of the desert and steppe in popular literature followed strikingly similar conventions. Writers appeared horrified, but evidently captivated, by the encounter, and felt moved to describe in great detail the 'nothingness' that appeared before their eyes.²⁹ V. N. Skopin's first impressions encapsulated the majority of written accounts of Central Asia's steppes, noting in detail the 'searing heat',³⁰ and 'half-wild population',³¹ while describing Transcaspia's sandy expanses as 'empty of people',³² 'waterless',³³ 'lifeless' and 'deathly'.³⁴ These descriptive phrases were common motifs, and interestingly, writers continued to emphasise these traits even when they appeared to have only passed through the region by train, never venturing out into the desert itself unlike travellers in previous decades. Accounts rendered the landscape 'outside the train window' as 'on all sides, from leaving the station ... the same wild, depressing wasteland'.³⁵ Thus while travel became safer and faster, the terrain retained its textual scale and threat. The land was frequently likened to a seascape, a 'rippling sea of shifting sands', stretching as far as the eye could see.³⁶ Such depictions were by no means a model unique to Russian prose, as expeditions to the

German reader! For a similar discussion, see also J. Randolph & E. Avrutin (eds), *Russia in motion: Cultures of human mobility since 1850*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012.

²⁷ M. Campbell, *The witness and the other world: Exotic European travel writing, 400-1600*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988, p. 8.

²⁸ Ch. Ch. Valikhanov, 'Ocherki Dzhungarii', in N. I. Veselovskii (ed.), *Sochineniia Chokana Chingisovicha Valikhanova*, SPb: Tip. Glavnogo upravleniia udelov, 1904, p. 41, first published in *Zapiski Imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva*, 1861, vol. 1, pp. 184-200, and vol. 2, pp. 35-58.

²⁹ Detailed accounts focusing on Transcaspia include K. M. Fedorov, *Zakaspiiskaia oblast'*, Askhabad: Tip. K. M. Fedorova, 1901; I. Il'enko, *Zakaspiiskaia oblast'. Ocherk*, Moscow: I. N. Kushnerev, 1902; V. A. Obruchev, *Peski i stepi Zakaspiiskoi oblasti*, SPb: Tip. A. S. Suvorina, [1888]; *Zakaspiiskii krai. Biblioteka dlia shkoli i naroda*, Moscow: Tip. Tovarishchestva Riabushinskikh, 1916, in addition to general surveys of Turkestan noted above and in chapter three.

³⁰ V. N. Skopin, *Sredniaia Aziia i Indii*, Moscow: D. P. Efimov, 1904, p. 17.

³¹ Skopin, *Sredniaia Aziia i Indii*, p. 45.

³² Skopin, *Sredniaia Aziia i Indii*, p. 44.

³³ Skopin, *Sredniaia Aziia i Indii*, p. 34.

³⁴ Skopin, *Sredniaia Aziia i Indii*, p. 21.

³⁵ Kruber, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 161.

³⁶ *TV*, 1909, No. 198, p. 862. See similar comparisons in Il'enko, *Zakaspiiskaia oblast'*, p. 7; V. F. Karavaev, *Materialy i issledovaniia k projektu orosheniia Golodnoi i Dal'verzhinskoi stepei: Golodnaia step' v ee proshlom i nastoiashchem*, Petrograd: Tip. N. L. Nyrkina, 1914, p. 5; D. N. Logofet, *Na granitsakh Srednei Azii. Putevyie ocherki*, SPb: V. Berezovskii, 1909, vol. 2, p. 129.

steppe from Qajar Iran made similar comparisons.³⁷ Indeed, the use of such 'maritime metaphors' was a common technique employed by explorers of other 'blank spaces' across the world: Livingstone likened parts of Africa to a 'terrestrial sea'.³⁸ It seems likely that this stylistic device was used to couch the desert in more familiar, known terms for the reader, rendering the scene more 'imaginable' while retaining the idea of scale and emptiness, and at the same time discursively erasing local inhabitants 'with any sovereign claims to the land'.³⁹ Whereas the concept of spaciousness had almost always been an inviting prospect in Russian descriptions of the similarly 'alien' and 'empty' steppes of European Russia, in Turkestan it appeared that one could have too much of a good thing.⁴⁰ Here, the 'vast' characteristics of the steppe usually had negative connotations, threatening to disorientate or swallow the viewer. Thus beyond sheer scale, deserts and steppes represented dangerous sites; the sands were 'a sleeping bear which nobody disturbs'.⁴¹

Photographs that were published in geographies and travel literature, with their perceived 'fidelity to nature', authenticated these textual claims.⁴² Scenes commonly showed examples of the famous shifting sand dunes, of saxaul and straggly vegetation, of occasional Turkmen villages, and of camels.⁴³ If further evidence was needed, photographs were sometimes used to show more explicitly the dangers of the steppe, depicting landscapes strewn with vertebrae and jaw bones (figure 8).⁴⁴ Thus the steppe region was conceived of as a place of morbid fascination, unusual in its size and emptiness, and threatening by the same measure. Such depictions referenced the landscape conventions of the sublime - of sites that awed or terrified in their grandeur or strangeness - and bore substantial similarities to the terms and images used to describe similarly 'empty' plains in the United States and the South American savannah.⁴⁵ Images conveyed the 'bleak picture' described by authors, and embellished the concept of the steppe as a place with

³⁷ A. Khazemi, 'Across the Black Sands and the Red: Travel writing, nature and the reclamation of the Eurasian steppe circa 1850', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 2010, 42: 4, p. 598.

³⁸ Kennedy, *Last blank spaces*, pp. 19-20.

³⁹ Kennedy, *Last blank spaces*, p. 10.

⁴⁰ See Sunderland, *Taming the wild field*, pp. 52-53, 70-71, for how the European steppe was also conceived as 'alien and empty', and Moon, *The plough that broke the steppes*, pp. 35-88, for views of the European steppe from 'outsiders' and scientists.

⁴¹ Kruber, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 171.

⁴² Ryan, *Photography and exploration*, p. 36.

⁴³ See for instance *RPGONO*, pp. 2, 16, 18, 22, 29, 33, and Kruber, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, pp. 170, 288.

⁴⁴ *RPGONO*, p. 29.

⁴⁵ B. Stafford, *Voyage into substance: Art, science, nature and the illustrated travel account, 1760-1840*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984, pp. 139-162. See also K. Hokanson, 'Russian women travellers in Central Asia and India', *Russian Review*, 2011, 70, pp. 11-14; D. Kennedy, *The magic mountains: Hill stations and the British Raj*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996, pp. 40-42; Ryan, *Photography and exploration*, pp. 84-112. A very broad overview of the conventions of the picturesque and the sublime in travel literature can be found in P. Hulme & T. Youngs (eds), *The Cambridge companion to travel writing*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 42-47. For a discussion of the uses of picturesque and sublime aesthetics in literature, see S. Copley & P. Garside (eds), *The politics of the picturesque: Literature, landscape and aesthetics since 1770*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, and in Russian literature, see S. Layton, *Russian literature and empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, and H. Ram, *The imperial sublime: A Russian poetics of empire*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003. Grove also suggests that images of sublime wildernesses were ultimately constructed as ways of dealing with anxieties about the survival, nature and integrity of the human individual and human society, in R. Grove, *Green imperialism: Colonial expansion, tropical island Edens and the origins of environmentalism, 1600-1860*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 483.

‘neither life nor movement’.⁴⁶ This goes some way to explaining why the steppe figured so prominently in popular visualisations of Turkestan’s terrain: it was exotic in its novelty and both fascinating and terrifying in its appearance, which very much affirmed existing Russian and European conventions of the sublime, echoes of which could be seen in other common images of the mountainous Pamir and Tian Shan regions.

Thus the unusual terrain of the steppe appeared to fit what might be deemed attractive and noteworthy by the reader and the photographer. Images in particular could attest to the environment’s stillness and emptiness, qualities that the photograph could capture particularly effectively, and gave truth to assertions that these landscapes were empty. As the table below demonstrates, such claims had basis in fact; Transcaspia was physically much emptier in terms of population than other regions of Turkestan. Yet quite clearly, Turkestan’s deserts and steppes were not empty landscapes. Both texts and images directly contradicted this narrative by revealing the faces of Turkmen inhabitants, ruined mausoleums, wells, plants and animals. Rather, this way of viewing the landscape had meaning beyond the merely photogenic, generating discursively ‘empty’ space that had use and potential.

	Population 1897 census	Population 1909	Inhabitants per square <i>verst</i> (1 <i>verst</i> = 0.6629 miles)
Semirech’e	987,863	1,158,900	3.5
Syr-Dar’ia	1,478,398	1,837,200	4.1
Fergana	1,572,214	1,900,200	15.0
Samarkand	860,021	1,154,800	19.0
Transcaspia	382,487	429,300	0.8

Table 1. Population density in Turkestan, 1897-1909.

Source: *RPGONO*, p. 345.

The utility of these supposedly empty landscapes is most apparent in the writings of those who travelled to the steppe in order to study and transform it. Engineers and irrigation specialists incorporated survey images into their work which offered seemingly unimpeachable evidence that the steppe was tangibly empty, not for any particular aesthetic reason, but with a view to establishing a case for change. In this sense, words and images were powerful forces acting to cast the landscape of the usually ‘deathly’ steppe as an environment open for improvement. This very much resonates with recent work done on irrigation in Central Asia by Julia Obertreiss, who notes that Russians viewed the steppe with an eye to its exploitation, using terms such as ‘empty’ and ‘lifeless’ to ‘underline the current uselessness of the region and the potential opportunity to turn it

⁴⁶ Karavaev, *Materialy i issledovaniia*, pp. 5-6.

into an assimilated and settled place in the future'.⁴⁷ This view, or what Pratt labels the 'European improving eye', is evidence of a particular imperial vision that produces 'habitats as empty and unimproved', and scans them for prospects and potential.⁴⁸ Images of the 'empty' steppe accompanied the plans for major irrigation projects, showing both general views of the landscapes through which proposed canals would pass, and specific sand dunes and terrain at marked points along the route.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, and as will be seen in chapter five, engineers noted that the steppe required 'only water for its revival and transformation into a cultivated oasis'.⁵⁰ In the sense of Pratt's 'improving eye', these images and their associated texts cast the land as a potentially useful resource, rather than a waste, and very much lent legitimacy to claims that 'dead' land could be 'revived' or brought to life, by demonstrating its current 'unimproved' state.⁵¹ Thus the image of Turkestan's most recognisable terrain was constituted not only by the idea of a bleak, inhospitable world, but also by one of economic and social potential. While for the average traveller, the fascination of the steppe lay in its novelty and strange appearance, the image of the empty sands also had other connotations that could, in certain situations, speak to ambitions to transform the desert into a more useful and productive land. A combination of the ready accessibility of such landscapes, and their aesthetic and discursive potential made the image of the steppe an extremely common presence in popular literature.

'Ozelenenie' and the garden city

While sublime and supposedly empty spaces received a good deal of coverage, the itineraries followed by travellers coupled with the appealing exoticism and grandiose scale of the steppe and mountains rendered other landscapes empty in a rather different way. These areas were absent from the visual record almost entirely, seemingly not worthy of image making, or displaced from possible inclusion in literature by images that either better matched the text, or were of more appeal to the reader. These places were remote and comparatively inaccessible, and the northern third of Turkestan in particular fell victim to this phenomenon. Images of the Aral Sea, of Transcaspia north of Krasnovodsk, or of north-eastern Syr-Dar'ia province were rarely to be found. The implications of this for the general image of Turkestan's terrain meant that in popular texts at least, Turkestan as a spatial entity came to be ever more closely associated with imagery of the desert and of the populated cordon between Krasnovodsk and Tashkent.

Yet investigating these relatively 'unseen' landscapes in more detail reveals a more complicated picture of the 'vast', 'wild' and 'exotic' Central Asia. It was not necessarily the case that nobody had ventured to the more northern parts of Turkestan with a camera, but rather that certain places did

⁴⁷ J. Obertreiss, "'Mertvye" i "kul'turnye" zemli: Diskursy uchenykh i imperskaia politika v Srednei Azii, 1880-e – 1991 gg.', *Ab Imperio*, 2008, 4, p. 200.

⁴⁸ M. Pratt, *Imperial eyes: Travel writing and transculturation*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 61.

⁴⁹ See for instance 'Obshchii vid stepi v vost. chasti pustyni Kara-Kum', in M. N. Ermolaev, *Propusk vod r. Amu-Dar'i v Mervskii i Tedzhenskii oazisy s tsel'iu orosheniia 516000 desiatin zemli v vostochnoi chasti Zakaspiiskoi oblasti*, SPb: Tip. Uchilishcha glukhonemykh, 1908, between pp. 36-37, and also marked parts of the project route, plates between pp. 38-39, 40-41, 42-43.

⁵⁰ Karavaev, *Materialy i issledovaniia*, p. 5.

⁵¹ Obertreiss, "'Mertvye" i "kul'turnye" zemli', pp. 200-204.

not necessarily fit the aesthetic of what most Russians expected Central Asia to look like. The case of Semirech'e and eastern Syr-Dar'ia province serves as an excellent example of exactly how photographs could be used to both capture and *create* entirely different landscapes in certain contexts. On the face of it, these regions were not as visually interesting to the traveller, and without a rail connection to Semirech'e, far fewer travellers actually visited the province. It lacked the drama of the desert, and in many ways, did not 'look' like the Central Asia of the Russian imagination. Nevertheless, I contend in the second half of this chapter that it was precisely because of this that the region's landscapes took on huge significance in popular literature diffused by the state to target new settlers, and that visions of this new and very different kind of nature were the foundations upon which a wholly new Turkestan was to be built.

Those who did manage to navigate across the whole of Turkestan from west to east, eventually reaching Semirech'e, noted a striking change in the natural terrain. On entering Semirech'e, Schuyler noted that 'north of the mountains I seemed to breathe a different air... I had left behind the fanaticism and the narrow life of the sedentary populations behind me, and was again on the Steppe in a most healthful and delightful region',⁵² whilst in almost identical vein fifty years later, a guide noted how when moving beyond the 'deathly steppes and wastes', towards the mountains, the traveller 'sees in front of him an entirely different world'. These landscapes were verdant with foliage and characterised as 'green oases, cut off from the world by the waterless wasteland; gardens full of southern fruits, flowers and birds'.⁵³ While such descriptions of an entirely different world played to the hyperbolic, they were rooted in topographical fact. The renowned Russian geologist I. V. Mushketov recorded how Turkestan could effectively be split into two, divided by the Karatau mountain range (located to the north-east of the Syr-Dar'ia river, roughly equidistant between Tashkent and Vernyi), and composed of the Aral and Balkhash basins.⁵⁴ The former consisted roughly of the steppe regions and the main population centres, the latter corresponded approximately to Semirech'e and north-eastern parts of Syr-Dar'ia province.

It was precisely these latter regions that were comparatively unseen in the main popular travel guides and geographies. This 'green' world, belonging to a different geological formation, with a different hydrology and climate, particularly in the case of Semirech'e's quasi-Alpine vistas, lakes and cooler climate, remained visually and discursively isolated, mirroring the author's comments above. While such landscapes did not necessarily conform to the generalised view of a region dominated by heat, deserts and mosques, I contend that it is in the visual depictions of these environments, and the contexts in which such representations appeared, that particular evidence is to be found of the visual importance of the land to Russian modes of seeing. In fact, the empty steppe and the greener periphery were closely linked, the former acting as a useful foil for the transformations that appeared to be taking place in the landscapes of the north and east.

⁵² E. Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of a journey in Russian Turkistan, Kokand, Bukhara and Kuldja* [ed. G. Wheeler], London: Routledge, 1966, pp. 254-255.

⁵³ *Zakaspiiskii krai*, pp. 38-39.

⁵⁴ I. V. Mushketov, *Turkestan. Geologicheskoe i orograficheskoe opisanie po dannym, sobrannym vo vremia puteshestvii s 1874g. po 1880g.*, SPb: Tip. M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1886, p. 20.

Russian urban and rural settlers, town planners and resettlement officials played a significant part in transforming and 'improving' Turkestan's natural landscapes, albeit by harnessing the pre-existing qualities of the land and climate. Indeed, the sheer number of botanical and zoological expeditions to Central Asia testified to the diversity of local flora and fauna. On one trip alone, the explorer N. A. Severtsov collected over 4000 samples of 'for the most part rare, or in many cases, entirely new types' of botanical specimens.⁵⁵ The majority of these plants were to be found in the more verdant regions of Semirech'e and parts of Fergana and Syr-Dar'ia *oblasti*. While Russian settlers acknowledged the existing 'bounties of nature' in these regions,⁵⁶ home to numerous existing wild and cultivated plant species, including spruce, fir, larch, pine and birch trees in upland areas, apples, apricots, pistachios, raspberries and almonds in valleys and plains, along with domestic flowers and vegetables, shrubs and saxaul,⁵⁷ they also attempted on a far broader scale than elsewhere in Turkestan to alter the natural landscape on their own terms, introducing new foliage, trees and other plants that could flourish in the gentler climate of the north and east. This occurred in both urban areas, with the creation of parks, gardens and tree-lined streets, and in rural regions, in the guise of cultivated fields, orchards and groves. Although the planting of trees, flowers and vegetables was ostensibly carried out for practical reasons, I contend below that these actions had symbolic and rhetorical significance in bringing what was a discursively 'empty', 'barren' land to life: they signified the ownership of space and the introduction of a new, 'Russian' nature. Images and words had the effect of designating areas of Russian settlement as particularly 'charged sites', replete with cultural and emotional connotations, no more so than in the form of trees and greenery.⁵⁸ In this context, while the successful cultivation of plants was vital to the success of settlers' putative new lives, a whole panoply of planting facilitated the emergence of a photographic landscape that, when managed by the state, could act in certain situations as a cipher for Russian identity, re-creating the familiar environs of 'home' in sharp contrast to the exotic environment of the 'barren' steppe.⁵⁹

Russian 'greenification' had an established pedigree across Turkestan, usually linked to attempts to reshape the landscape through irrigation. It had profoundly practical motivations, aiding sanitation, the cultivation of land in steppe regions, and the prevention of erosion in mountainous and desertified terrain.⁶⁰ In the 1870s, Grand Prince Nikolai Konstantinovich - a nephew of Tsar Alexander II, who, while exiled in Turkestan, undertook a number of irrigation projects - had

⁵⁵ N. A. Severtsov, *Puteshestviia po Turkestanskomu kraiu*, Moscow: OGIZ, 1947 [originally published 1873], p. 119. Such expeditions produced an array of detailed descriptions of entirely new species, for instance *Opisanie novykh i bolee redkikh rastenii po materialiam, sobrannym O. F. Fedchenko, v Turkestane i Kokane*, vol. 18, issue 3 of A. P. Fedchenko, *Puteshestvie v Turkestan*, SPb: Tip. M. Stasiulevicha, 1882. On the diversity of indigenous flora, see *RPGONO*, p. 213.

⁵⁶ RGIA, f. 432, op. 1, d. 15, l. 4.

⁵⁷ For more, see A. A. Andrievskii, 'Les Semirech'ia i ikh znachenie v zhizni kraia', *Lesnoi zhurnal*, 1914, 3, pp. 390-405, and V. Meshkov, S. Baizakov, A. Yeger & A. Orozumbekov, 'Forest rehabilitation in Kazakhstan', *IUFRO World Series* [International Union of Forest Research Organisations], 2009, 20: 4, pp. 83-130.

⁵⁸ Stafford, *Voyage into substance*, p. xxi.

⁵⁹ Moon highlights the same desire amongst settlers and migrants to 'replicate their familiar way of life' in Moon, *The plough that broke the steppes*, p. 173.

⁶⁰ For a detailed discussion of the environmental benefit of tree-planting, see Moon, *The plough that broke the steppes*, chapter six.

experimented with the introduction of light foliage into watered plots of the Kara Kum desert.⁶¹ Other irrigation schemes, such as the Murgab Imperial Estate in Transcaspia, resulted in the similar creation of plots of land that could sustain orchards, gardens and cotton fields, while as noted in chapter one, one million plants were introduced along the route of the Transcaspian railway, to reinforce the sand and soil.⁶² In parallel to these projects in arid and semi-arid areas, the use of foliage became a fundamental part of settlement creation, and even in urban zones, the cultivation of plants was integral to discursive claims to have improved the local environment. Green spaces, parks and gardens acted as important visual markers of the incorporation of urban landscapes into the Russian world. In contrast to the supposedly 'dark and squalid' indigenous quarters, Russian cityscapes were 'positively covered in greenery'.⁶³ Descriptions of Tashkent commonly referenced the superb 'picturesque alleyways' full of almond, peach and apricot trees, which made the city resemble 'an Italian garden'.⁶⁴ In Askhabad, the planted square and elaborate fountains of the railway station made it 'entirely possible to imagine that one was not in the depths of the Central Asian desert, but in a well-built town of western Europe'.⁶⁵ Similarly, the commentator noted that the gardens in Russian Samarkand were so wonderful that 'the local townspeople live just as if they were at a luxurious [Russian] dacha'.⁶⁶ In comparison, the garden of the 'Central Asian native' was decried as 'primitive', and as bearing no relation to the 'elegance and variety of flowers, decorative trees and shrubs' found in Russian gardens in Turkestan.⁶⁷ Key to these aestheticised notions of quasi-European greenery - paralleling the quasi-European urban architecture - was that many of the new planted areas had been filled with items imported from central Russia and Europe to 'enrich' Turkestan. Garden plantations and parks in towns and cities were 'three quarters composed of foreign species, of which some, for instance the white acacia, ailanthus, bignonia, amongst others, have made themselves at home in Central Asia and can easily run wild'.⁶⁸

The symbolic importance of urban greenery can be seen most clearly in new towns where Russian settlers and city planners were not constrained by the need to accommodate substantial pre-existing populations, and where climate and soils were more conducive to ambitious planting schemes. Vernyi, in the foothills of the Trans-Ili Alatau mountains, developed from a small Cossack settlement founded in 1854, to become the regional capital of Semirech'e. Partly for reasons of geographical isolation and its comparatively recent establishment, it never attained the size of other urban areas: in 1897, its population was only 22,744, compared to 155,673 in Tashkent, and

⁶¹ GARF, f. 664, op. 1, d. 6, ll. 1-8.

⁶² RGIA, f. 350, op. 1, d. 277, l. 26 ob.

⁶³ *Illustrirovannyi putevoditel' po Sredneaziatskoi zheleznoi doroge. Ot st. Krasnovodsk do st. Tashkent, Andizhan, Skobeleva, Kushka i Bukhara*, Askhabad: K. M. Fedorov, 1912, p. 125.

⁶⁴ Kruber, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, pp. 318, 249.

⁶⁵ E. P. Tsimmerman, *Po Zakaspiiskoi zheleznoi dorogi*, Moscow: I. N. Kushnerev, 1889, p. 22.

⁶⁶ Tsimmerman, *Po Zakaspiiskoi zheleznoi dorogi*, p. 77.

⁶⁷ N. A. Maev, *Turkestanskaia vystavka 1890g. Putevoditel' po vystavke i ee otdelam*, Tashkent: Tip. S. I. Lakhtina, 1890, pp. 18-19.

⁶⁸ *RPGONO*, p. 212. For an interesting parallel, see the introduction of non-native eucalyptus in French North Africa, in D. Davis, *Resurrecting the granary of Rome: Environmental history and French colonial expansion in North Africa*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007, pp. 102-108.

55,128 in Samarkand.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, Vernyi had great significance not only as a regional capital, but as the seat of the Orthodox diocese of Turkestan, and as the only major town in the region to have a majority ethnically-Russian population.⁷⁰

The city was an intriguing site where acts of foliage cultivation and their textual and visual representation took on potent connotation. The years after the town's founding witnessed a flurry of 'zelenoe stroitel'stvo' - 'green building',⁷¹ as a committee of municipal architects and administrators highlighted that Vernyi was an 'ideal place' to grow all kinds of trees, flowers and vegetables, thanks to its fertile soil and favourable climate.⁷² Accordingly, the city administration recommended that each homeowner plant no fewer than twenty decorative trees around his land, and establish two rows of trees along the drainage canals that passed by the walls of the house.⁷³ Acacias, poplars, vines, elms, oaks, maples and birch trees soon extended from the land of private houses to the deepening rows of trees along each road of Vernyi's grid-system.⁷⁴ Three large public gardens were created, and were home to frequent displays by the local horticultural society. These projects, and work conducted in the wider environs, were encouraged by Semirech'e's appropriately-named forestry official, E. O. Baum. Baum did much to promote personally the region's flora, both in terms of the preservation of existing species, such as the Tian Shan spruce, and the general greenifying (*ozelenenie*) of the area. He oversaw the planting of an 800-acre plot of forest outside Vernyi, largely still intact 130 years later,⁷⁵ and the introduction of nurseries where the public could 'acquire seeds from different species of trees, wild fruit trees and grafted varieties'.⁷⁶ These nurseries acted as distribution centres for all kinds of native and foreign plants, as botanical samples and seeds were being received from far away in European Russia, many of them species non-native to Central Asia.⁷⁷ Seed merchants in St Petersburg maintained a seemingly lucrative trade with these nurseries,⁷⁸ while the network of botanical exchange extended from Vernyi to numerous other parts of Semirech'e, as items from the public gardens were matured and dispatched to other settlements. Numerous young plants and seeds for trees, vegetables and flowers were sent on to Issyk-Kul *uezd* for instance.⁷⁹

⁶⁹ *RPGONO*, p. 348.

⁷⁰ Geier cites 30,000 inhabitants, of which 20,000 were Russian, in Geier, *Turkestan*, p. 14. *RPGONO*, p. 772, suggests 37,000 inhabitants, 26,000 of which Russians - so about two thirds in both cases.

⁷¹ S. G. Sarsenova (ed.), *Parki i skvery goroda Almaty 1868-1916g. Sbornik arkhivnykh dokumentov i materialov*, Almaty: Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv g. Almaty, 2004, p. 4.

⁷² TsGARK, f. 41, op. 1, d. 349, l. 67.

⁷³ TsGARK, f. 41, op. 1, d. 349, l. 180.

⁷⁴ TsGARK, f. 41, op. 1, d. 349, l. 233. See TsGARK, f. 689, op. 1, d. 36 for an excellent large-scale map of the city dated 1898, and f. 41, op. 1, d. 804 for an earlier incarnation dated 1874.

⁷⁵ Meshkov et al, 'Forest rehabilitation in Kazakhstan', p. 100. See also M. V. Gudochkin & P. S. Chaban, *Lesy Kazakhstana*, Alma-Ata: Kazgosizdat, 1958, p. 15.

⁷⁶ S. A. Urashev, *Vernyi na rubezhe XIX i XX vekov*, Almaty: Kazakhskii natsional'nyi pedagogicheskii universitet imeni Abaia, 2006, p. 81.

⁷⁷ This forms an interesting parallel to the networks of botanical gardens and nurseries that Schiebinger describes, but with the flow of plants and seeds going *from* centre to periphery, rather than vice versa, in L. Schiebinger, *Plants and empire: Colonial bioprospecting in the Atlantic world*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004.

⁷⁸ TsGARK, f. 41, op. 1, d. 349, see for instance ll. 35, 61-61 ob.

⁷⁹ TsGARK, f. 41, op. 1, d. 349, l. 235.

The reasons for these concerted efforts to greenify the new town were both practical and symbolic. Plants were acknowledged as vital agents in improving and maintaining sanitary conditions,⁸⁰ while timber was a prized building material, recommended for all new structures after the earthquake of 1887 that destroyed much of the city.⁸¹ At the same time, foliage provided shade from the hot sun, public gardens offered local inhabitants attractive places to relax and socialise, and the overall greening of the town resulted in a pleasing aesthetic for those living within its bounds. Indeed, Vernyi's visual appearance provoked striking textual portrayals. Writers noted that the town was 'buried in greenery and gardens, which almost entirely cover smaller houses and buildings',⁸² and was 'lost in the greenery of gardens and alleyways'.⁸³ This greenery was seen in an overwhelmingly positive light, making the town and its environs beautiful and 'picturesque'.⁸⁴ Beyond the beauty of the town's green spaces however, there was a more profound link between the imperial heartland and the cultivation of trees and plants. Judging from the trade in imported seeds, settlers were keen to continue growing species with which they were familiar, both in their private gardens and in municipal areas, and were 'domesticating' the landscape into a picturesque and pastoral terrain in much the same way as inhabitants of imperial hill stations in the British Raj used horticulture to recreate the 'favoured landscapes' of home.⁸⁵

The city planners' 'green building' thus cultivated a particular aesthetic, loaded with poignancy and symbolism. Vernyi to most intents and purposes looked 'entirely Russian'.⁸⁶ Visitors took photographs of trees, mountains and churches, and expressed delight that the town 'has in every way the appearance of a flourishing Russian, or perhaps Siberian town, presenting a complete contrast to all places south of the mountains'.⁸⁷ The alleyways of trees and Russian plants growing in gardens played a key role in the emergence of a recognisable nature, acting as evidence of the appropriation of the land into familiar urban and rural structures. This apparent feat was greatly aided by the fact that such suggestions could not be as readily disproved as they could in Turkestan's other main cities. With a predominantly Russian population, Vernyi had no 'native' quarter, and 'neither kaftans nor turbans' could be seen on the town's streets.⁸⁸ Indeed, local officials felt so confident of their town's Russian identity that initial descriptions for the design of Vernyi's coat of arms bore the words 'the victory of Christians over Muslims'.⁸⁹ Acts of planting were thus a metaphorical and physical rooting of Russian settlement; a transformative

⁸⁰ TsGARK, f. 48, op. 1, d. 450, l. 24, cited in Sarsenova, *Parki i skvery*, p. 65.

⁸¹ TsGARK, f. 44, op. 1, d. 51079, l. 2 ob., cited in N. A. Buketova, *Vernenskie istorii*, Almaty: Elnur, 2011, pp. 23-25.

⁸² *RPGONO*, p. 771.

⁸³ *Zakaspiiskii krai*, p. 90. See also Geier, *Turkestan*, p. 14.

⁸⁴ See for instance *Semirechinskaia oblast'*, Moscow: Obshchestvo pasprostraneniia poleznykh knig, 1872, p. 3, and M. I. Veniukov, *Puteshestviia po okrainam russkoi Azii i zapiski o nikh*, SPb: Tip. Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, 1868, p. 122.

⁸⁵ Kennedy, *The magic mountains*, p. 51.

⁸⁶ A. P. Khoroshkhin, 'Ocherki Semirech'ia', in *Sbornik statei kasaiushchikhsia do Turkestanskogo kraia*, SPb: Tip. A. Transhelii, 1876, p. 308.

⁸⁷ Schuyler, *Turkistan*, p. 263. Photographs of Vernyi that showcased the town's abundant greenery were published in amongst others, *RPGONO*, pp. 770-772.

⁸⁸ Pahlen, *Mission to Turkestan*, p. 200.

⁸⁹ TsGARK, f. 48, op. 1, d. 523, l. 3. Interestingly this sentence appears to have been later crossed out.

intervention in the landscape that marked the ownership of space in much the same way as did the sowing of gardens by Qing settlers in neighbouring Xinjiang, or as de-forestation and the clearing of land acted as a physical establishment of Russian settlement further east in the Priamor'e.⁹⁰

Photographs of the local environs supplied evidence of this familiar, green and verdant landscape. Those who knew the region well were proud of Semirech'e's extensive natural greenery, and engaged in no small amount of hyperbole to emphasise the region's green credentials. According to one local writer, the Governor of the *oblast'*, G. A. Kolpakovskii, had gone to great lengths to 'encourage afforestation in every town and village', so that 'everywhere streets were planted with trees, man-made woods and glades were multiplying, and so forth ... Nowadays every populated place in the region is hidden by the green of trees'.⁹¹ Images of Vernyi and other towns in Semirech'e, while only appearing sporadically in popular material, depicted the spires of churches poking above urban treelines and framed snow-bound evergreen-lined streets, offering visually recognisable scenes that could be associated with elements of everyday life in European Russia.⁹² Indeed Pahlen, when visiting the region, noted that the prosperous 'Russian villages' with their 'thatched rooves ... and gardens', could easily have come straight from 'some central province of Russia'.⁹³ Meanwhile, pine forests and the Tian Shan spruce were amongst the most common visual representations of rural Semirech'e,⁹⁴ and along with textual accounts wove a particular narrative that emphasised an identifiable nature, reminiscent of 'home', and certainly a far cry from the 'barren' and 'lifeless' steppes of southern and western Turkestan.

Lands of plenty?

The use of greenery to visualise a specifically 'Russian' natural landscape was most evident in imagery of Semirech'e and eastern Syr-Dar'ia's rural terrain, which incrementally came under the cultivation of peasant settlers, the majority of whom originated from central and western regions of the empire.⁹⁵ In Semirech'e, the first rural villages were founded by Russian Cossacks, with fourteen established between 1847 and 1867, while the first peasant settlers appeared in 1868, from the Voronezh region. By 1911, Turkestan was home to 326 peasant villages, with almost half (155) in Semirech'e, known for its favourable agricultural conditions.⁹⁶ Dealing with irrigated

⁹⁰ Lavelle, 'The aesthetics and politics of Chinese horticulture', and Sokolsky, 'Between predation and protection', pp. 30-35.

⁹¹ A. P. Kuplast, *Semirechenskaia oblast'*, Poltava: [n. p.], 1910, p. 18.

⁹² Compare for instance images in Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, of Vernyi, between pp. 330-331; Pishpek, p. 331; Kopal and Lepsinsk, pp. 333-334, and similar compositions in *RPGONO*, pp. 765-773.

⁹³ Pahlen, *Mission to Turkestan*, pp. 193-197.

⁹⁴ For instance, Kuplast, *Semirechenskaia oblast'*, pp. 12, 19; *Opisanie Semirechenskoi oblasti*, SPb: Ekaterinskaia tipografiia, 1914, p. 18; V. A. Vasil'ev, *Semirechinskaia oblast' kak koloniia i rol' v nei Chuiskoi doliny. Vvedenie k proektu, s kartoi Semirechenskoi oblasti i 59-iu fotografiiami*, Petrograd: Ekaterinskaia tipografiia, 1915, plate between pp. 40-41. A comprehensive account of Semirech'e's forests can be found in Andrievskii, 'Lesy Semirech'ia'.

⁹⁵ A particular concentration of incoming settlers came from the Voronezh and Poltava districts. For a detailed breakdown of points of origin, see RGIA, f. 391, op. 2, d. 1275.

⁹⁶ *RPGONO*, p. 332. Other key zones of settlement were to be found around Chimkent and Aulie-Ata, along with the villages of the eastern Hungry Steppe.

plots or rain-fed fields, peasant settlers cultivated a variety of green products. Semirech'e's climate and soils did not lend themselves to the production of cotton, rather grain cultivation (wheat, rye, barley, oats and millet) prevailed, as did the growing of fruits and vegetables (potatoes, maize, peas, melons, grapes, apples, tomatoes and apricots) in smaller fields and gardens.⁹⁷ Similar crops could be grown in the Syr-Dar'ia settlement zone, with the addition of cotton, which was highlighted to prospective peasants as the 'most profitable plant to grow'.⁹⁸

While not numerically substantial compared to indigenous settlements, these peasant villages had a profound impact on the physical and imaginative landscapes of Turkestan. Clues towards contemporary ways of 'looking' at the land can be found in the rare voice of peasant settlers themselves: scouts sent to the region from Poltava in 1907 noted its similarities with Little Russia (Malorossiiia), blessed as it was with 'a similar climate and fertile soils', and observed that the land was criss-crossed by irrigation canals, while trees, grains, wild grasses and fruits grew in abundance.⁹⁹ The visitors were quick to note the latent fertility of the local terrain, and one noted that while on new plots of land prepared for settlers 'there are few plants', he added that 'they are growing, and quickly'.¹⁰⁰ Thus the scouts appeared to be appropriating the land by superimposing their own, familiar environmental norms onto Semirech'e's landscapes. The presence - or absence - of trees, flowers, crops and other plants was an important cognitive symbol as to whether the land had potential, and an indication of what its ideal state should be.

This green, agricultural land was increasingly invested with huge symbolic capital through the dissemination of visual and textual images which crafted a vision of a fertile, productive and distinctly Russian-looking rural landscape. Central to the construction of this image was the Russian Resettlement Administration, and its parent department, the Main Administration of Land Management and Agriculture (GUZZ).¹⁰¹ The Resettlement Administration directed the migration of peasants to Turkestan (and to other regions of the empire), undertook land surveys, distributed plots of land, and managed a network of resettlement officials, transit stations and medical points, which began to expand in number from 1907 onwards. Alongside these activities, it distributed a huge number of photographic images to travel publications, monographs, geographies and so forth, and itself published a variety of literature for prospective settlers and other interested parties. These settlement pamphlets, handbooks and geographical descriptions used a combination of words and images to begin a process of re-framing Turkestan's rural land, and while the reprinted photographs were often of poor quality, their display in publications

⁹⁷ *Spravochnaia knizhka po Semirechenskomu pereselencheskomu raionu na 1912 god*, p. 14.

⁹⁸ *Spravochnaia knizhka dlia khodokov i pereselentsev. Opisanie Syr-Dar'inskogo pereselencheskogo raiona*, Tashkent: Tip. V. M. Il'ina, 1914, p. 11.

⁹⁹ P. P. Olenich-Gnenenko, *Poezdka Poltavskikh khodokov v Semirech'e. Otchet Pereselencheskogo agenta P. P. Olenicha-Gnenenka. S prilozheniem mnieni khodokov, uchastvovashikh v ekspeditsii*, Poltava: Tip. D. Podzemskogo, 1907, p. 3. For more on scouts and their relationship to the wider phenomenon of peasant migration, see L. Siegelbaum, 'Those elusive scouts: Pioneering peasants and the Russian state, 1870s-1950s', *Kritika*, 2013, 14: 1, pp. 31-58.

¹⁰⁰ Olenich-Gnenenko, *Poezdka Poltavskikh khodokov*, p. 43.

¹⁰¹ For more on GUZZ, see P. Holquist, "'In accord with state interests and the people's wishes": The technocratic ideology of imperial Russia's Resettlement Administration', *SR*, 2010, 69: 1, pp. 151-179.

distributed by GUZZ was highly significant.¹⁰² Indeed, as noted above, given that fewer independent visitors reached rural Semirech'e or northern Syr-Dar'ia, and hence took fewer photographs, GUZZ enjoyed a good deal of effective control over the imagery of the region that emerged into the public realm.

While the texts of these publications began the process of opening the land to incoming Russians by commonly describing it as 'bountiful' and 'fertile', and its nomadic inhabitants as 'not at all dangerous to Russian settlers', 'peace-loving' and actively 'non-fanatical', it was their images that most strikingly underscored the region's potential as a 'land of plenty'.¹⁰³ Photographs were used to portray a very specific type of rural landscape, and contributed to the visual production of new rural communities, in which a triangular link between greenery, Russian settlers and the land itself was reinforced. Pamphlets showed visual evidence of Russian children playing outside their homes, families harvesting cotton, and women processing the grape harvest.¹⁰⁴ Central to the potency of such images was the framing of plants, trees and crops. The visual dimension underscored the transformative effects of Russian settlement, for instance scenes of tree planting,¹⁰⁵ and the maturing gardens and leafy streets of larger villages.¹⁰⁶ At the same time, it pointed to the seemingly fertile nature of the land itself when managed by the peasant farmer: photographs commonly depicted peasants in fields of crops, gathering the harvest,¹⁰⁷ and standing in groves of fruit trees holding apples to the camera.¹⁰⁸

Such compositions were selected for publication in order to showcase the productivity of Turkestan's rural landscapes and the bounties of nature that could be reaped by migrant workers. In this sense, the images acted as a link between prospective settlers and the physical landscape, and were adverts deployed by GUZZ that demonstrated the promise of a future life.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Sabol captures the ambition of this scheme by noting that 'in 1907 more than 100,000 pamphlets were distributed glorifying the virtues of Semirechie [sic] and other regions made accessible to immigrants'.¹¹⁰ This image of the land as a type of managed 'Garden of Eden'¹¹¹ must have had a huge impact on prospective peasants, particularly those who were unable to read the detailed information supplied on soil types, crop varieties, livestock, and so forth, and provided an attractive 'real' image to Russia's famine-weary peasants that, in Crosby's words, 'shimmered like steam rising from an ox spitted and roasting over hot embers'.¹¹² The visualisation of agricultural

¹⁰² Morrison dismisses this visual content as 'blurred photographs', in Morrison, 'Peasant settlers', p. 410.

¹⁰³ *Opisanie Semirechenskogo pereselencheskogo raiona*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ See for instance *Spravocnaia knizhka dlia khodokov i pereselentsev*, plate 15 between pp. 16-17, plate 31 between pp. 32-33, and Vasil'ev, *Semirechinskaia oblast' kak koloniia*, plate between pp. 122-123.

¹⁰⁵ 'Posadka derev'ev v stepi', in *Opisanie Semirechenskoi oblasti*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁶ See Karavaev, *Materialy i issledovaniia*, images between pp. 146-147, and *RPGONO*, pp. 325, 329, 325.

¹⁰⁷ *Spravocnaia knizhka dlia khodokov i pereselentsev*, plates 8, 13, 14, 15, 16 between pp. 16-17.

¹⁰⁸ Vasil'ev, *Semirechinskaia oblast' kak koloniia*, plate between pp. 192-193.

¹⁰⁹ See J. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and empire: The manipulation of British public opinion, 1880-1960*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984, for a more detailed explication of the visual image as a weapon of imperial propaganda and advertising.

¹¹⁰ Sabol, *Russian colonization*, p. 48.

¹¹¹ For the evolution of this Edenic metaphor, see Grove, *Green imperialism*, chapter one.

¹¹² A. Crosby, *Ecological imperialism: The biological expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 299.

life in rural Turkestan thus established a generic aesthetic of the local landscape on the pages of settlement literature and associated texts, founded on stylistic scenes of gardens, harvests and fields. This model of the countryside was given further stimulus by reports that almost all Russian villages looked the same, being 'one long straight street with plots of land on either side, with the streets and land surrounded by willows, sometimes poplars, and small gardens'.¹¹³

Indeed, GUZZ was keen to keep records of success stories from Turkestan's new peasant villages, and to deploy them in appropriate textual and visual formats. Of particular interest was the village of Spassk in the Hungry Steppe, which was frequently used as a model settlement, complete with church, hospital, school, experimental agricultural station and tree-lined streets. Images of the village appeared in almost every illustrated guide concerning settlement,¹¹⁴ alongside a major exhibition sponsored by the Resettlement Administration in 1911.¹¹⁵ The exhibition also contained numerous photographs of the 'nature, villages and settlers of Semirech'e', which were to act as representative samples of the best human and natural landscapes on offer in Turkestan.¹¹⁶ A short history of Spassk, compiled by resettlement officials, attests to the symbolic value of the village to the Resettlement Administration as evidence of Turkestan's promise of a better life. The record profiled four peasants from the village, who had evidently been selected as model residents.¹¹⁷ Two of the four originated from western Ukraine and had moved to Turkestan to work on the railways, a third had been born in Turkestan, while the fourth, G. I. Mishchenko, had moved from Poltava. The profile noted that all had taken up the offer of land in Spassk with the aspiration of making a better life, and indeed appeared to have done so. Mishchenko had been 'unable to make a profit' in European Russia, but now made a 290 ruble annual profit, growing cotton, barley and lucerne, and owned his own barn, storehouse, living quarters and cattle yard.¹¹⁸ Accompanying the text were original photographs of the men, each pictured either in a field of crops or in a garden.¹¹⁹ The image of the seemingly-popular Mishchenko went on to appear in a compendium of winners from a competition to find the best exponents of peasant agriculture, in honour of the tricentenary of the Romanov dynasty, and pictured the peasant and his family outside their house, against a background of newly planted saplings.¹²⁰

¹¹³ *RPGONO*, p. 333.

¹¹⁴ See for instance Karavaev, *Materialy i issledovaniia*, images between pp. 106-107, 136-137, 146-147, 218-219.

¹¹⁵ The exhibition was first held in Omsk in the summer of 1911, and later moved to St Petersburg. For examples of exhibits, see *Pereselencheskoe delo na pervoi Zapadnosibirskoi vystavke. Glavneishie eksponaty pereselencheskogo pavil'ona byvshei v g. Omske. Katalog sobr. v Kustarnom muzee eksponatov*, SPb: Tip. F. Vaisberga, 1912, particularly pp. 104-112. Similar information can be found in RGIA, f. 391, op. 4, d. 949.

¹¹⁶ *Pereselencheskoe delo na pervoi Zapadnosibirskoi vystavke*, p. 11. For details of which scenes were pictured, see pp. 45, 104, 110-112, and RGIA, f. 391, op. 4, d. 949, ll. 170, 183, 203.

¹¹⁷ 'Kratkie istoricheskie spravki o vozniknovenii i razvitii khoziaistv krest'ian pos. Spasskogo Turkestanskogo kraia', RGIA, f. 391, op. 5, d. 1101.

¹¹⁸ RGIA, f. 391, op. 5, d. 1101, ll. 10-14 ob.

¹¹⁹ RGIA, f. 391, op. 5, d. 1101, ll. 15-17.

¹²⁰ P. V. Khaliutin, *Krest'ianskoe khoziaistvo v Rossii. Izvlech. iz opisaniia khoziaistv, udostoien. premii v pamiat' trekhsotletiiia tsarstvovaniia Doma Romanovykh*, Petrograd: Tip. AO tip. dela, 1915, vol. 3, issue 2, 'Stepnye oblasti i Turkestan', p. 25.

The retention of these images in the archive suggests that they were valued visual exponents of rural life that could be deployed as instructional or promotional devices. GUZZ was actively collecting photographs of model peasants; men and women who had founded settlements, introduced new farming techniques, and had won prizes for their produce in local exhibitions.¹²¹ The subsequent publication and display of these images privileged a particular vision of the land as fertile and productive. While acting as instructional examples of best practice, such sources thus also provide insight into the *type* of landscape idealised by GUZZ, and were visual fragments of a world that was yet to be fully attained. Chief architect of this vision was A. V. Krivoshein, director of the Resettlement Administration and later head of GUZZ, who championed the eventual ‘rebalancing’ of nomadic land to incoming Russian settlers, resulting in a ‘second Turkestan’ that consisted of a settled, prosperous agricultural frontier, populated by one and a half million peasants on eight million acres of irrigated land.¹²² Images of idealised rural landscapes promoted the gradual fulfilment of Krivoshein’s objectives, and reflected positively on GUZZ’s abilities to inculcate a sense of technocratic, ordered productivity, where land and people were ‘abstracted resources’ to be properly managed and exploited.¹²³

Alongside fertility and productivity, images were also suggestive of familiarity, and it was this quality that was perhaps the most potent in establishing an image of Turkestan’s new rural landscape. Being able to visualise the coded landscape of foliage, of peasants picking apples and gathering cotton went some way to legitimising Russian claims to the land, by supplying evidence of the rootedness of the new settlers’ lives. This visual legitimacy sprang from both the body of the peasant, and from the constant presence of greenery. The framing of the peasant, together with trees, plants and crops tapped into something beyond the latent productivity of the land: it portrayed the rural landscape as a familiar, domesticated site, an improved mirror of ‘home’. Just as in Vernyi, greenery was portrayed with specifically national dimensions. The architecture of villages, the outward appearance of peasants, and the greenifying of the land were tangible symbols of Russianness that were not associated in the spatial imagination with Central Asia. Thus images and texts contributed to the appropriation of the land into discourses of the known and familiar empire, by reproducing elements and scenes from the agricultural landscapes of western and central Russia.

¹²¹ This largely obscured the uneasy relationship between Russian officialdom and the peasant settler in Turkestan described in Morrison, ‘Peasant settlers’. For a broader discussion of the often-fraught relationship between the state and the Russian peasant, along with other popular images of the peasantry, see C. Frierson, *Peasant icons: Representations of rural people in late nineteenth century Russia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

¹²² Krivoshein, *Zapiska*, p. 67. This type of large-scale, aggressive colonisation was favoured by Krivoshein’s associates at GUZZ, and also by Semirech’e’s own resettlement official, S. N. Veletskii. See RGIA, f. 391, op. 5, d. 116, ll. 16-72, for Veletskii’s case for ‘intensive colonisation’ in Semirech’e. The Resettlement Administration’s official journal, *Voprosy kolonizatsii*, published 1907-1916, showcased a variety of work that propounded ambitious, state-directed schemes to increase the Russian element in the empire’s frontiers. For a broader take on Krivoshein’s ‘second Turkestan’ across Asiatic Russia, see in particular G. Gins, ‘Pereselenie i kolonizatsiia’, *Voprosy kolonizatsii*, 1913, No. 12, pp. 73-132 and No. 13, pp. 39-99.

¹²³ Holquist, “In accord with state interests”, p. 162.

The dimensions of this project were clearly apparent in a lavishly produced three-volume guide to Asiatic Russia published in 1914. Compiled by the Resettlement Administration, the volumes described in text and photographs how the lands of Asiatic Russia, including Turkestan, were 'an integral and inseparable part of our state'.¹²⁴ The selection of photographic images to illustrate the text was heavily skewed towards the rural resettlement regions. While the mosques of Bukhara, Samarkand's medressas and images of indigenous locals were included, they were segregated and numerically far outnumbered by photographs that depicted new peasant settlements, experimental crop stations, and the mountains, rivers and fertile plains of Semirech'e and Syr-Dar'ia. Alongside images of churches and schools, fields of crops, rows of trees and cheerful-looking peasants in smocks were displayed prominently (figure 9),¹²⁵ and gave legitimacy to textual claims that 'here Russia is arising anew - just as old *Rus*', with its simple and uncomplicated agricultural style of life'.¹²⁶ These images of the 'new Turkestan' thus contributed to designating peasant villages and land as 'solid nest[s] of Russian Christian culture',¹²⁷ familiar and productive sites where peasants could 'find faith and comfort'.¹²⁸ In doing so, photographs unified what in reality were largely disconnected pockets of Russian habitation into a landscape that had all the dimensions of a settler colony, articulated through tangible textual and visual symbols of Russianness.

The link between the visual appearance of ethnic Russians and vernacular architecture, and the appropriation, in visual terms at least, of the land into 'Russia' seems clear. Yet in many ways, it was the cultivation and subsequent visual framing of foliage that provided the strongest and most compelling link to the Russian centre that could be exploited by GUZZ. Greenery, in the guise of trees and forests, had close links with the Russian national character, and was seen as 'the cultural symbol of the nation'.¹²⁹ The connection between landscape and the articulation of an ethnically Russian identity had been made forcefully in middle to late nineteenth century Russia by a group of writers and artists who used forests, trees and fields as icons of identity in new elucidations of Russia's symbolic geography and her 'meager nature'.¹³⁰ Moreover, as Janet Costlow suggests, trees were deeply embedded in the nineteenth-century Russian psyche, from the prose of Turgenev, through the canvases of Shishkin to the debates of the 'forest question' that raged across society.¹³¹ Given that all things arboreal were very much in the Russian social spotlight, spanning folk culture, Orthodox tradition, property debates and environmentalism, the

¹²⁴ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. viii.

¹²⁵ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, pp. 384, 470, 489; vol. 2, pp. 248-249, 260-261, 268, 390-391.

¹²⁶ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. viii.

¹²⁷ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 239.

¹²⁸ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 240.

¹²⁹ E. Pravilova, *A public empire: Property and the quest for the common good in imperial Russia*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014, p. 72.

¹³⁰ For an excellent discussion of the evolution of Russian landscape conventions in painting, and the connection to national identity, see C. Ely, *This meager nature: Landscape and national identity in imperial Russia*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002. For a broader discussion of Russian space and identity, see S. Franklin & E. Widdis, *National identity in Russian culture: An introduction*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, particularly chapters three and four.

¹³¹ J. Costlow, *Heart-Pine Russia: Walking and writing the nineteenth-century forest*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013.

appearance of trees in peasant settlements and towns in Turkestan probably struck a chord with the Russian observer as a legible and understandable symbol of nationhood. Indeed, it may even be the case that the apparent greenifying of parts of Turkestan received extra prominence towards the turn of the twentieth century as a striking antidote to the visual and textual landscapes of loss, destruction and even violence that swirled around the 'forest question' and its debate across Russian society.¹³² Visions of the planting of trees, growing of crops and maturing of shrubs and foliage in Turkestan thus very much resonated with existing conventions of the Russian landscape in the nineteenth century, not just in painterly and artistic circles, but in widespread social debate, and it may be that this offers a plausible explanation, at least in part, as to why seemingly mundane trees and plants received visual and textual prominence in certain types of literature. If photographs and texts allowed the land to act as a visual cipher for identity, greenery was a prime semantic marker of Russianness. In this sense, images and texts of green, fertile fields, towns and villages contributed to the construction of an 'ethnoscape': 'a landscape invested with "powerful emotional connotations and cultural meanings"', when viewed and interpreted by Russian observers.¹³³

The putative transformation of part of Turkestan's rural environment into a domesticated, agricultural landscape had further ramifications, not only for the gradual establishment of a 'second Turkestan', populated by Russian peasants, but for the indigenous Kazakh and Kyrgyz population. While rendering the aesthetic of a familiar, green landscape conspicuously visible, Russian depictions of settlement in Syr-Dar'ia and Semirech'e at the same time relegated local constituents of the land, both sedentary and nomadic, *invisible*, or at best, marginal. Kazakhs and Kyrgyz rarely made it into the same company as the images discussed above, despite constituting over ninety per cent of the population. Indeed, their predominantly nomadic way of life, moving between winter and summer pasture lands, meant that they were far easier to erase visually from the land than were the more settled peoples in other regions of Turkestan. While some believed that the state policy of confiscating nomadic land and turning it over to new settlers would contribute to a gradual sedentarisation of the nomads, with the appearance of new indigenous settlements that had 'houses built in Russian style and streets planted with trees',¹³⁴ others

¹³² A broad historical overview of Russia's forests can be found in R. French, 'Russians and the forest', in J. Bate & R. French (eds), *Studies in Russian historical geography*, London: Academic Press, 1983, vol. 1, pp. 23-44. For more recent discussions of the rise of the 'forest question', deforestation and conservation in nineteenth and twentieth century Russia, see B. Bonhomme, *Forests, peasants and revolutionaries: Forest conservation and organization in Soviet Russia, 1917-1929*, Boulder: East European Monographs, 2005, chapter two; S. Brain, *Song of the forest: Russian forestry and Stalinist environmentalism, 1905-1953*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011, chapters one and two; Costlow, *Heart-Pine Russia*, chapter three; Moon, *The plough that broke the steppes*, pp. 98-111; Pravilova, *A public empire*, chapter two.

¹³³ Costlow, *Heart-Pine Russia*, p. 148. Costlow uses this in the context of Nesterov's paintings, but it seems plausible to extend her understanding of the word to the non-painterly image world. The original discussion of ethnoscapings can be found in A. Smith, 'Nation and ethnoscape', in *Myths and memories of the nation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 149-159.

¹³⁴ *RPGONO*, p. 328.

recognised that the forced requisitioning of land had the potential for serious inter-ethnic conflict.¹³⁵

Given that the indigenous population outnumbered the Russian incomers by a factor of ten to one or more, it was entirely disingenuous to suggest that a wholly 'Russian' landscape had been created. It was equally spurious to suggest that the Russian presence alone had transformed an arid, barren region into a green, fertile space. Irrigation and crop-growing had existed in Central Asia for many centuries (local actors often had a better grasp of the science and practicalities of irrigation than had the new settlers), and the region encompassed considerable biodiversity. Moreover, Russian peasant settlement, even in Semirech'e, remained weakly developed, and Krivoshein's dreams of over one million settlers inhabiting the region were very much a distant reality.¹³⁶ Meanwhile, these nascent rural communities were perhaps not as idyllic as portrayed. In the Chu resettlement district for instance, peasants made numerous complaints about the poor quality of the land, submitting statements that they were unable to make a living farming only cereals, that allotment boundaries were incorrect, and that the land itself was 'such poor quality that even millet would not grow'.¹³⁷ The local investigator sent to review the problem pointed less to failings of the land and its administration, than to the peasants themselves, who he described as being lazy, overtly dependent on local Kyrgyz, and showing little inclination to adapt to new techniques such as field irrigation.¹³⁸ Meanwhile rumblings of discontent amongst the incoming Russian population can be traced through other sources, with Resettlement Agents recording numerous complaints about the insufficiencies of the land and the lack of assistance given by the local Resettlement Administration, amid claims that the land allocated for settlers was full of 'mosquitos and gadflies', and that 'wheat doesn't grow'.¹³⁹ Archival records uphold the view that the peasant situation in Syr-Dar'ia and Semirech'e was far from ideal. Reports regularly cited the need for more support to be given to settlers, in the form of monetary assistance and the provision of agricultural and hydrotechnical experts to advise on methods of production.¹⁴⁰ It is clear that demand for land far outstripped supply, and that the preparation of new plots lagged behind what was needed. Moreover, the vision of village infrastructure providing 'faith and comfort' proved to be somewhat wishful thinking, as only six villages in the whole of the Syr-Dar'ia resettlement region had a church in 1914.¹⁴¹

Thus the type of rural landscape portrayed in state-distributed material was in many ways highly utopian. The significance of images was that they not only facilitated the construction of this

¹³⁵ These tensions were recognised by Pahlen during his tour of Turkestan, and contributed in no small part to the uprising of 1916, which was at its most bloody in the rural resettlement zones. See Morrison, "Sowing the seed", and Brower, 'Kyrgyz nomads', for more on Pahlen's views and the dynamics of land requisitioning.

¹³⁶ An excellent map showing the dispersal of Russian settlements in Semirech'e can be found in RGIA, f. 380, op. 39, d. 1571.

¹³⁷ V. S. Vorotnikov, *Chuiskie pereselencheskie uchastki v Pishpekskom uezde Semirechenskoi oblasti*, Vernyi: Tip. Semirechenskogo oblastnogo pravleniia, [1909], pp. 1-5.

¹³⁸ See for instance Vorotnikov, *Chuiskie pereselencheskie uchastki*, pp. 22-23, 31.

¹³⁹ Olenich-Gnenenko, *Poezdka Poltavskikh khodokov*, p. 35.

¹⁴⁰ RGIA, f. 391, op. 5, d. 1878, ll. 2-4.

¹⁴¹ RGIA, f. 391, op. 5, d. 1878, l. 4 ob.

idealised rural world, but in obscuring scenes of indigenous life, allowed it to take on the dimensions of a much larger, Russian terrain. The veracity, or otherwise, of what images and texts suggested was a secondary concern. Crucially, the evidence of the eye - via the medium of the photograph - allowed this particular version of events to be sustained and corroborated. This way of looking at landscape gave primacy to a particularly aestheticised image of green terrain, and privileged the visual and textual production of 'a new Russian Turkestan', whose familiar, agricultural landscape offered a wholly different view onto the region's natural world from the usual 'deathly' steppes and deserts.¹⁴² A range of actors participated in the physical construction of this vision, which was directed by resettlement officials, but with the complicity of foresters, city planners and peasants themselves, who were doubtless far less interested in the imperial dimensions of their actions than prosaic practical and economic concerns. Nevertheless, all were keen to recreate the familiar, along the lines of their own pre-conceptions of what the land should look like. Such actions resulted in a marked change in the aesthetic of place, and one that was noticed, recorded and deployed as a means to familiarise, own and appropriate the land. Greenery was central to the iconography of this environment, suggestive of a new symbolic geography that imitated the terrain of Russia proper, and which offered 'emotional resonance and cultural significance of place' for those living in the region and observing from metropolitan Russia and the land-hungry provinces.¹⁴³

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Images of Turkestan's landscapes in Russian popular literature were in part conditioned by the ways in which people travelled, and in part by conventions of what were deemed to be the most interesting scenes for the viewer. In this sense, the desert remained an evocative and exotic sight, yet as the tsarist period progressed, the role that nature played in Russian conceptions of Turkestan gradually evolved. The 1914 *Aziatskaia Rossiia* project privileged a different natural environment, one dominated by trees and fields, as did a whole host of other material produced by the Russian state from 1907 onwards. Thus beyond supplying evidence of the patterns of environmental change, images provide insight into how Russians looked at the natural world, and perhaps most significantly, of the centrality of nature and landscape to shifting ideas about Turkestan's place within the empire. Photographs were clearly an important component in appropriating the land, part of a hierarchy of landscape aestheticisation that extended from the very soil itself to the visual representation of the plants that grew in it. Visual material provided the state with a way to inscribe meaning onto terrain, revealing a view of nature that combined both imperial and national dimensions. If the state sought the appropriation of a fundamentally Other land into the imperial domain, it did so by attempting to portray at least part of it as visually and organically Russian. The dominant image of the exotic steppe thus acted as a foil to the new, green world that the state aspired to create. Two very different landscape conventions emerged, in which the hills, valleys and irrigated plains of Semirech'e and eastern Syr-Dar'ia were set

¹⁴² Krivoshein, *Zapiska*, pp. 32, 80.

¹⁴³ Costlow, *Heart-Pine Russia*, p. 5.

against the flat, 'barren' lands of the bulk of Turkestan. This was very much an 'antipodal' landscape, and one which ironically, while viewed as a quintessentially 'natural' world in terms of trees, crops and foliage, was at root largely artificial.¹⁴⁴

In the larger scheme of the past two chapters, if divided cities constituted a very physical intervention in the environment, this was only one facet of the semi-imaginative division of peoples and landscapes in a wider geographic sense. Looking beyond the city-dominated narratives of Turkestan reveals that rural terrain was emerging as an equal, if not superior site for Russian claims to be reshaping the local environment. Photography was used to present areas of rural settlement as counter-sites to the main body of Central Asia, and readers of resettlement material or viewers of exhibitions might well believe that the local populations were almost entirely Russian, that the land was verdant and fertile, and that life in Islamic Turkestan was somehow entirely distant and unrelated. In this sense, the medium of the visual was less open to interpretation or counter-interpretation in rural areas than in urban zones. Certainly rural settlers retained some degree of agency, and although not armed with cameras or pencils, peasants *were* complicit in the transformation of the environment, by tree-planting, growing plants, and posing for photographs in their new surroundings. Yet peasants left very scant trace of themselves, and certainly very little, if any, photographic or other graphic material. In Tashkent on the other hand, an established community of settlers, with the means and technology to disseminate visual material quite clearly had more opportunity to produce varied visual depictions of their environments than their counterparts in the countryside. Images were thus a powerful means of presenting the visions of the Russian state, and were important tools in driving forward the vision of a settled, Russian, Orthodox Turkestan before it truly existed. Photographs documented environmental change, but at the same time also actively enabled it, both by providing valuable insights into the state's aspirations for what the future Turkestan might look like, and by advertising the region to new settlers who could put such visions into practice.

Thus the aesthetic potential of environmental 'improvement' was a compelling device in the hands of the imperial state when deployed textually and visually as a tool to re-create the Russian natural world at the edge of empire, in a land that existed in the Russian imaginary as predominantly a 'vast, alien and almost exclusively Muslim territory'.¹⁴⁵ The rural landscapes of northern and eastern Turkestan became increasingly incorporated, in visual terms at least, into the world of the Russian peasant settler, while the vast bulk of the Central Asian heartland remained closely associated with Islam, particularly in the urban centres of Bukhara, Khiva and Samarkand. Images in popular geographies, travel literature and settler material thus had the effect of creating two regions located on different spatial and temporal planes, a division that rather interestingly mirrored (in reverse) the Islamic conception of *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb*,

¹⁴⁴ Kennedy describes a similarly 'bifurcated view' of the plains and the British hill stations in colonial India in Kennedy, *The magic mountains*, pp. 61-62.

¹⁴⁵ A. Morrison, 'Killing the cotton canard and getting rid of the Great Game: Rewriting the Russian conquest of Central Asia, 1814-1895', *CAS*, 2014, 33: 2, p. 133.

of a world divided into believers and non-believers.¹⁴⁶ The implications of this way of looking at Turkestan were potentially profound, and were suggestive of a spatial fracturing or splintering of the region in two. The core region designated by GUZZ, Krivoshein, and other prominent figures within the local administration as the incarnation of a 'new' Turkestan, was peripheral land in rural Syr-Dar'ia and Semirech'e, ironically the two original constituents of Turkestan when it was formed in 1867. In this sense, part of what was, and has usually been described as a distant, cut-off region, was recast as a crucial zone of settlement, part of the wider frontier of empire and the model for Turkestan's anticipated development. This shift from what has traditionally been conceived of as the heart of Turkestan towards its periphery is suggestive of the future direction of Russian policy towards the region, had the tsarist regime survived the events of 1917. The threat of the 'enduring strength' and alterity of Islam, and the danger of a potent challenge to Russia's presence in cities concomitantly contributed to the creation of this agricultural, visually Russified periphery, betraying the lack of capacity that the Russian administration felt to effect change in the Central Asian heartlands.¹⁴⁷ Rather than attempting to re-shape the social and cultural image of 'traditional' Central Asia, Russian efforts appeared to re-focus on starting afresh in nomadic, rural lands, revealing, when examined against the grain, that perhaps large parts of Turkestan, particularly the heavily populated urban core, were not seen as being necessarily appropriable at all.

¹⁴⁶ See Komatsu's discussion of Dar al-Islam, and conflicting ideas over what it represented, in H. Komatsu, 'Dār al-Islām under Russian rule as understood by Turkestani Muslim intellectuals', in T. Uyama (ed.), *Empire, Islam, and politics in Central Eurasia*, Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2007, pp. 3-22.

¹⁴⁷ V. P. Nalivkin, *Tuzemtsy ran'she i teper'*, Tashkent: A. L. Kirsner, 1913, p. 125.

5. Models and experiments

In 1889, a group of Russian migrants arrived on the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea. Waiting at the port of Uzun-Ada, the terminus of the Transcaspian railway, they encountered Prince E. E. Ukhtomskii, himself travelling across Central Asia.¹ Upon questioning by the Prince, they revealed that they had arrived in Transcaspia from an assortment of central Russian provinces, chiefly Saratov, Tambov and Samara, in search of land. In particular, the putative settlers seemed keen to relay that although they had no fixed destination in mind, they had heard that 'Tsarskoe Selo is being built' nearby.² This curious reference was not the product of the false rumours common amongst migrant groups - some settlers arrived in Turkestan in search of the mythical country of 'Nizatsia', apparently mistakenly derived from the Russian word '*kolonizatsiia*' - but was in many ways entirely accurate.³ While by no means on the scale of St Petersburg's Tsarskoe Selo, and with rather different ultimate intentions, an imperial estate *was* being constructed in the far south of Transcaspia not far from the Persian border.

The site in question, the Murgab Imperial Estate, had been established two years previously, with the aim of using the waters of the Murgab river to provide irrigation for the cultivation of cotton. Three huge dams with accompanying irrigation networks were built across the channels of the river, which by 1909 hosted the largest hydroelectric plant in the Russian empire. Cotton-processing factories, using the latest American and European machinery, manufactured a variety of products which were exported from the estate's railway station on the Transcaspian mainline. Meanwhile, by 1910 the estate's town, Bairam Ali, boasted a 'beautiful palace with parade grounds, parks and orchards', a library, school, hospital and workshops.⁴ Tree-lined avenues, fountains, a church, canteen and theatre, where if the gushing hyperbole of a local guide was to be believed, a balalaika orchestra played regularly for the estate's workers, were all available for local residents.⁵ The estate also had its own post service, police, telegraph office and sub-station, while all of the main buildings were connected by telephone lines, and 'electric light was everywhere'.⁶ In the words of Krivoshein, the project signified a 'wonderful experiment in the

¹ Ukhtomskii was a prominent Orientalist, diplomat, member of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, and an influential advisor to the Tsar on eastern matters. His numerous other roles included chairman of the Russo-Chinese bank, 1896-1910, and editor of *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 1896-1917. He is perhaps best known for the account of his journey accompanying Tsar Nicholas II across the Russian empire to the Far East in 1890-1891, published as E. E. Ukhtomskii, *Puteshestvie Gosudaria imperatora Nikolaia II na Vostok*, SPb: F. A. Brokgauz, 1893-1897, illustrated by none other than N. N. Karazin.

² E. E. Ukhtomskii, *Ot Kalmytskoi stepi do Bukhary*, SPb: Tip. V. P. Meshcherskogo, 1891, p. 53. The original Tsarskoe Selo was an imperial estate outside St Petersburg, developed into a popular summer residence by Catherine I and Catherine the Great.

³ D. Brower, *Turkestan and the fate of the Russian empire*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, p. 131.

⁴ K. A. Chapkovskii, *Murgabskie udel'nye zavody. Otchet o komandirovke v Murgabskoe gosudarevo imenie osen'iu 1911 g.*, Tashkent: Tip. L. M. Fedorovoi, 1913, p. 6.

⁵ *Illustrirovannii putevoditel' po Sredneaziatskoi zheleznoi doroge. Ot st. Krasnovodsk do st. Tashkent, Andizhan, Skobelevo, Kushka i Bukhara*, Askhabad: K. M. Fedorov, 1912, pp. 63-66.

⁶ Chapkovskii, *Murgabskie udel'nye zavody*, p. 6.

application of scientific technology' that 'clearly represented the great future of irrigation in Turkestan'.⁷

In the spirit of Krivoshein's comments, the estate, while attracting relatively little attention from the academic community, has conventionally been framed as an irrigation project.⁸ In this sense, it was a prime exponent of how irrigation could act as clear evidence of the imperial control of nature and 'dominance of the Central Asian landscape', yet at the same time it was neither the most ambitious nor the most productive project of its type in the region.⁹ This chapter suggests instead that the estate had greater significance as a 'model' site than it did as simply an irrigation scheme. Beyond water and crops, the urban and rural landscapes of the estate formed something of a utopian space that represented an idealised vision of the social and economic future of Turkestan. Combining elements of modern transport connectivity, the planned, rational town and the flourishing, verdant land described in chapters two, three and four, and being comparatively isolated in a sparsely populated corner of the Kara Kum desert, the estate possessed the perfect conditions for a controllable model managed by the imperial state. Moreover, I demonstrate in the first half of the chapter that despite the estate's remote location, it was very much in the public eye - the migrants of 1889 already knew of its existence - and that it was primarily visual material that designated and sustained its status as a model site, from the faking of photographs to the submission of material to exhibitions, dispatch of blueprints to other projects, and dissemination of photographs to foreign conferences.

Judging from the amount of visual work that went in to propagating the image of the estate as a technologically innovative and socially progressive site, the visible environmental transformation of the surrounding land was vital to the legitimisation of Russia's presence on Central Asian soil. Visual descriptions cast the estate as something of a 'heterotopia' that had inverted the 'empty', 'barren' landscape of Transcaspia into a green, verdant oasis, and disrupted the usual temporal flow of traditional life by fusing science and engineering into a futuristic experiment.¹⁰ Standard

⁷ A. V. Krivoshein, *Zapiska Glavnoupravliaiushchego zemleustroistvom i zemledeliem o poezdke v Turkestanski krai v 1912 godu*, SPb: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1912, pp. 35-36.

⁸ See I. Matley, 'The Murgab oasis: The modernisation of an ancient irrigation system', *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 1975, 17: 2-3, pp. 422-429, and M. Peterson, 'Technologies of rule: Empire, water, and the modernization of Central Asia, 1867-1941', unpublished PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2011, pp. 109-113.

⁹ Peterson, 'Technologies of rule', p. 23. See Peterson also for the broader context of Russian irrigation, particularly larger schemes in the Hungry Steppe and the Chu valley of Semirech'e. Shorter discussions can be found in, amongst others, A. Morrison, *Russian rule in Samarkand, 1868-1910: A comparison with British India*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, and R. Pierce, *Russian Central Asia, 1867-1917: A study in colonial rule*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960. On the link between the steppe and irrigation more broadly, see J. Obertreiss, "'Mertvye" i "kul'turnye" zemli: Diskursy uchenykh i imperskaia politika v Srednei Azii, 1880-e - 1991 gg.', *Ab Imperio*, 2008, 4, pp. 191-231.

¹⁰ In his 1967 lecture 'Des Espaces Autres', Foucault characterised heterotopias as 'something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be formed within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted'. Parts of the lecture were later reprinted as M. Foucault, 'Of Other spaces', *Diacritics*, 1986, 16, pp. 22-27, quote p. 24. In particular, his notion of heterotopic sites as a way to 'make difference', is instructive for this chapter, as are points four and six of his principles of heterotopias. Principle four outlines that heterotopic sites are often linked with 'slices in time', acting as a break from 'traditional time' (p. 26), principle six discusses how heterotopias create 'spaces of compensation' - a real space 'as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill-

narratives disseminated by the Russian government depicted the estate's inhabitants as 'pioneers',¹¹ who had transformed the 'lifeless wasteland'¹² into a flourishing site that had 'enormous economic and instructive potential for the whole of our Central Asian possessions'.¹³ Yet such new model landscapes were complex entities, not only in terms of the amount of work needed to sustain them as exemplars of Russian practice, but also because they were not uncontested sites. Visitors and workers questioned the success of what Krivoshein had deemed to be a 'wonderful experiment', revealing serious flaws in the project. Attempts to build the first dam ended in disaster when the structure collapsed, wasting a million rubles and contaminating surrounding land. Subsequent reservoirs were discovered to be silting up rapidly, jeopardising irrigation plans and severely limiting future ambitions. Meanwhile, disputes raged over the amount of water that the estate siphoned off from the river, crucial to the survival of villages downstream, and local employees submitted complaints of exploitation and malpractice. Furthermore, Pahlen's visit in 1908-1909 uncovered evidence of rampant corruption in the estate's management that cast the project in an altogether unflattering light.

If the Murgab Estate was a model site, it was thus also an increasingly fictive space, with a growing dissonance between the image of the land produced by photographs and the reality of life. Images, when carefully selected and displayed, had the effect of mediating reality, allowing a significant gulf to open up between the portrayal of the estate and its lived experience. In this sense, I suggest that the estate was one of a series of model or experimental sites across Turkestan that were extremely visually prominent, but as the last two chapters have alluded, did not have straightforward, uncontested narratives. I argue that these sites - the village of Spassk, the stations of the Central Asian railway, and to some extent, the Russian quarter of Tashkent - were designed to be visually seen, very often in photographs rather than in person, and were nominated sites of display that were intended by the Russian administration to act as a 'real world' exhibition, characterised by 'the apparent certainty with which everything seems ordered and organized, calculated and rendered unambiguous'.¹⁴ These visual 'objects of show' were meaningful signifiers of how landscapes, and the people who lived within them, could be transformed by environmental intervention, and were a way in which Turkestan as a colonial entity could be abstracted into a series of representative sites intended to reshape the foundational image of Central Asian space.¹⁵

constructed, and jumbled' (p. 27). For a recent discussion of the concept, and a detailed bibliography, see P. Johnson, 'The geographies of heterotopia', *Geography Compass*, 2013, 7: 11, pp. 790-803.

¹¹ RGIA, f. 515, op. 88, d. 1291, ll. 11-12. See also V. M. Karlovich, *Sooruzheniia Murgabskogo gosudareva imeniia*, SPb: Tip. br. Panteleevykh, 1891, p. 3.

¹² RGIA, f. 515, op. 88, d. 1291, l. 6.

¹³ S. P. Maksimov, *Obshchii otchet izyskanii na r. Murgabe v tseliakh izucheniia obespechennosti orosheniia Murgabskogo gosudareva imeniia*, SPb: Tip. Ministerstva putei soobshcheniia, 1914, p. 120.

¹⁴ T. Mitchell, 'The world as exhibition', *Comparative studies in society and history*, 1989, 31: 2, pp. 224-226.

¹⁵ M. David-Fox, *Showcasing the great experiment: Cultural diplomacy and Western visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 107.

The Murgab Estate as model

In August 1887, an imperial *ukaz* established the Murgab Imperial Estate as a property of the Russian crown, to be administered by the Appanage Department.¹⁶ The estate was located in the south of Transcaspia in Merv *uezd*, where the river Murgab, having risen in the hills of Afghanistan dispersed into the alluvial sands of the Kara Kum, and occupied a triangular section of land on the right bank of the river, approximately 280,000 acres in area.¹⁷ Following the annexation of Merv in 1884, an action seen as an ‘important political success’ in establishing Russian supremacy over the numerous Turkmen tribes in the Merv oasis and Afghan border region, A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov, Commander of the Caucasus region to which Transcaspia had initially been appended, noted the strategic importance of the area, which would allow access to the Afghan border (as seen in chapter two, a railway would be built through the Murgab valley in the late 1890s), and its economic potential in light of the fertile land of the river delta.¹⁸ Evidence of past settlement in the region, in particular the ‘ruins of the ancient dam of Benda-Sultan, whose reconstruction could constitute one of the main undertakings of our government in widening the area of cultivation around the Merv oasis’ drew special attention, and the rebuilding of the dam and irrigation network received priority as an important social and economic project.¹⁹ Land surveys were undertaken in 1885, by which time Dondukov-Korsakov had invited engineer I. I. Poklevskii-Kozell to formulate a detailed building proposal.²⁰ With official sanction in 1887, and under the leadership of the estate’s head, N. A. Luttsau, the ambitious scheme took shape. Initial goals were to establish the estate’s main settlement at Bairam Ali, to create in it a ‘tolerable atmosphere for life and work, and most importantly, to rebuild the Sultan-Bent dam as quickly as possible’.²¹ In the longer term, planners aimed to ‘build irrigation canals, settle [colonise] the estate ... and so encourage the voluntary acceptance of Russian citizenship in the formerly rich Merv oasis’.²² Thus environmental change was to be the stimulus for more profound social transformation.

The task of rebuilding the Sultan-Bent dam received careful attention. Without the creation of a reservoir and irrigation channels, crops could not be grown, and settlement could not begin. Under Poklevskii-Kozell’s direction, building work began in 1889 and the following year the dam neared completion. At this point however, the much vaunted project quite literally collapsed. If

¹⁶ The Appanage Department (Departament udelov) managed the estates of the imperial family, and from 1856-1917 was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Imperial Court (Ministerstvo imperatorskogo dvora). For more see N. P. Eroshkin (ed.), *Vysshie i tsentral’nye gosudarstvennye uchrezhdeniia Rossii 1801-1917*, vol. 3, SPb: Nauka, 2002, pp. 189-201.

¹⁷ For a historical and geographic overview of the oasis area, see Matley, ‘The Murgab oasis’.

¹⁸ A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov, ‘Iz zapiski komanduiushchego voiskami Kavkazkogo voennogo okruga voennomu ministru o khode prisoedineniia doliny Murgaba k Rossii’, in A. Iliasov (ed.), *Prisoedinenie Turkmenii k Rossii: Sbornik arkhivnykh dokumentov*, Ashkhabad: Izd. Akademii nauk Turkmenskoi SSR, 1960, p. 745.

¹⁹ Dondukov-Korsakov, ‘Iz zapiski’, pp. 746-747.

²⁰ This was the same Poklevskii-Kozell who proposed a new northern route in Semirech’e in chapter two. The engineer is an intriguing figure. Born in the Minsk region in 1839, he moved to Central Asia following the Polish uprisings, and there became heavily involved in building projects in Kul’dzha (Semirech’e), from which he fled in a home-made boat when the town was annexed by the Chinese. For more see TsGARK, f. 44, op. 1, d. 55022, and I. I. Poklevskii-Kozell, *Novyi torgovyi put’ ot Irtysha v Vernyi i Kul’dzhu i issledovanie reki Ili na parokhode “Kolpakovskii”*, SPb: Tip. D. I. Shemetkina, 1885.

²¹ RGIA, f. 515, op. 88, d. 1291, l. 12.

²² RGIA, f. 515, op. 88, d. 1291, l. 3.

official notes are to be believed, ad hoc changes to the dam made at last minute by Poklevskii-Kozell had severely damaged the integrity of the structure.²³ The problem lay with a faulty spillway, which, once the dam was operational, began to settle, leaving behind a crater into which 'water poured with such strength' that the overflow was uncontrollable.²⁴ The Russian Minister of Finance, I. A. Vyshnegradskii, travelling through Central Asia with S. Iu. Witte in 1890, made a particularly ill-timed visit, following orders from the Tsar to 'inspect sluices and canals' at the estate.²⁵ On examining the sluices, Witte proclaimed that 'both Vyshnegradskii and I considered the construction to be defective'. The men then 'asked to see the plans and came to the conclusion that the dyke designed to hold back the water could not stand up to the pressure once water was released from the river. Kozel-Poklevskii [sic] insisted that we were wrong, as would be proven when the water was released'.²⁶ Two days after Witte's departure, the spillways were opened and the irrepressible stream of water from the sluices 'rapidly turned into a raging torrent that bored into the desert and carried away all the water, eventually leaving the dam standing high and dry'.²⁷ Poklevskii-Kozell's designs bore the brunt of suspicion.²⁸ The structure of the dam had been ill-conceived, exacerbated by the last minute changes which had been made 'without the participation of any technical authority from the Appanage Department'.²⁹ Thus the errors made in the initial visual representations of the project set up a chain of events that saw the physical rendering of the scheme end in a costly disaster.

The complex relationship between the estate and its visual projections was further uncovered by Pahlen, who visited the estate during his year-long tour of Turkestan,³⁰ and made the fascinating claim that following the Sultan-Bend debacle, 'photographs and reports were faked in order to present a rosy picture to the Tsar, whose interest in the estate was as keen as ever'.³¹ It is unclear how Pahlen substantiated his accusation. Given that it seems unlikely that he came into contact with the intricacies of Central Asian irrigation projects during the 1890s, it is more plausible that he learned of the deception only during his senatorial investigation into the condition of Turkestan in 1908-11.³² In any case, little sign of either the reports or the photographs can be found in archives relating to the project. If Pahlen is to be believed, the relationship between the

²³ RGIA, f. 515, op. 88, d. 1291, l. 93.

²⁴ Karlovich, *Sooruzheniia Murgabskogo gosudareva imeniia*, p. 34.

²⁵ S. Iu. Witte, *The Memoirs of Count Witte* [trans. S. Harcave], London: M. E. Sharpe, 1990, p. 110.

²⁶ Witte, *The memoirs of Count Witte*, p. 110.

²⁷ K. K. Pahlen, *Mission to Turkestan: Being the memoirs of Count K. K. Pahlen, 1908-1909* [ed. R. Pierce, trans. N. Couriss], London: Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 147.

²⁸ See for instance RGIA, f. 515, op. 88, d. 1291, ll. 93-94; Karlovich, *Sooruzheniia Murgabskogo gosudareva imeniia*, p. 35; *Poiasnitel'naia zapiska k situatsionnomu planu Murgabskogo gosudareva imeniia*, SPb: Tip. Glavnogo upravleniia udelov, 1896, p. 8; B. Kh. Shlegel', *Postroika Sultan-Bendskoi plotiny v Murgabskom gosudarevom imenii. Doklad B. Kh. Shlegelia*, Odessa: Tip. G. M. Levinsona, 1912, p. 5.

²⁹ E. R. Barts, *Oroshenie v doline reki Murgaba i Murgabskoe gosudarevo imenie*, SPb: Tip. Uchilishcha glukhonemykh, 1910, pp. 43-44.

³⁰ Pahlen's findings were published as a twenty-one-volume report: K. K. Palen, *Otchet po revizii Turkestanskogo kraia, proizvedennoi po Vysochaisheму poveleniiu senatorom gofmeisterom K. K. Palenom*, SPb: Senatskaia tipografiia, 1910-1911. For a good analysis of Pahlen's discoveries in Transcaspia, see A. Morrison, 'The Pahlen Commission and the re-establishment of rectitude in Transcaspia, 1908-1909', *Monde(s). Histoire, Espaces, Relations*, 2013, 4, pp. 45-64.

³¹ Pahlen, *Mission to Turkestan*, p. 148.

³² During the 1890s, Pahlen was serving in local government in Kurliandskaia *guberniia*, in the Baltic region.

visual and the propagation of the estate's success takes on greater significance. While the fraudulence of officials who produced the faked documents was symptomatic of the 'extortations, corruption, bribery, and arbitrariness' that Pahlen uncovered in Transcaspia's administrative machinery, and thus most likely the reason that he chose to highlight the incident, the accusation accentuates the importance of the photographic image as a source of ultimate truth.³³ Documents may have been relatively easy to fix or alter, but it was the photograph that could provide visible, factual 'proof' of the continued progress of the project. Quite how it was hoped that photographs (presumably of other parts of the estate, or of the dam before its collapse) would fool the Tsar into believing that all was well - and whether this proved effective - is unclear.

Following the spectacular failure of his project, Poklevskii-Kozell attempted to rescue the situation by dispatching a series of hastily drawn solutions to strengthen the dam to the head of the Appanage Department.³⁴ In the face of such an 'unqualified disaster' however, the hapless engineer was relieved of his duties, and work began on a separate structure further upstream.³⁵ The Hindu Kush dam, built between 1891 and 1895, proved to be a far more successful proposition, and allowed the development of a lengthy network of channels and ditches that carried water away from the reservoir to irrigate surrounding land. This in turn enabled the start of serious cultivation, chiefly in the form of cotton crops, but also grains, fruits and trees.³⁶ Later building work in 1907-1909 created two additional dams; the Iolotan and a new version of the Sultan-Bend, while a hydro-electricity station was built at the Hindu Kush dam which was used to supply electricity to Bairam Ali. At the same time, the estate's town underwent significant expansion, with the creation of factories, housing and amenities for workers.

While the geographic remoteness of the estate meant that relatively few observers were able to witness the fruits of the above activities with their own eyes, the project was a resolutely public site. I suggest below that the venture was always intended to be a highly visible project, and indeed had an intricate 'visual economy', as it was seen on a variety of local, regional, national and international scales, in an assortment of different contexts, including the travel guide, the exhibition and the journal, and via a range of photographic, cartographic and technical material.³⁷ The estate's life in visual representation propagated and sustained the idea that it was a model site by referencing two intertwined motifs: the project's technological prowess and the social symbolism of 'transformed' rural landscapes, themes that were deployed to reflect positively on the capabilities of the Russian state, and of the Russian 'civilising' influence more generally.

³³ Pahlen, *Mission to Turkestan*, p. 124.

³⁴ RGIA, f. 515, op. 88, d. 1241, ll. 7-32.

³⁵ Pahlen, *Mission to Turkestan*, p. 147. For more on the handover of the project, see RGIA, f. 515, op. 44, d. 45.

³⁶ On the cultivation of cotton, see N. A. Abaev, *Razvitie khlopkovodstva v Murgabskom oazise*, Ashkhabad: Izd. Akademii nauk Turkmenskoi SSR, 1956.

³⁷ For more on the 'visual economy', see D. Poole, *Vision, race and modernity: A visual economy of the Andean image world*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997.

The estate's innovative credentials enticed a number of engineers, travellers and state dignitaries to inspect the project at first hand.³⁸ The very fact that visitors made the effort to travel to the estate from Russia - and further afield - implied that there was some instructive purpose in making the long journey to Transcaspia, and in turn, these visitors took photographs (or re-used existing images) that captured particular points of interest. Descriptions, both textual and visual, of the estate proliferated in a variety of literature from 1890 onwards, as the project began to feature regularly in travel guides and general geographies, as well as more specialised works on cotton production and agricultural practice. Despite inauspicious beginnings, the estate's new reservoirs and irrigation network were trumpeted as a resounding success story, the 'last word in engineering skill',³⁹ and were framed to emphasise Russia's technological prowess.⁴⁰ Photography in particular did much to emphasise the scale of the project. Images of men at work, dwarfed by giant turbines, reinforced concrete foundations and cavernous trenches readily communicated the scheme's ambitious dimensions.⁴¹ More specialist literature relied heavily on the photographic image to provide a visual survey of the estate, and the sheer number of photographs needed to illustrate the various dams and new structures underscored not only the amount of building work that had been undertaken, but also the wide geographical spread of the estate's land, the latter being further reinforced by maps that accompanied such publications.⁴²

Along with scale, images drew the viewer's eye to the technology that underpinned the project. Descriptions cast the estate as a pioneering testing ground that offered the 'first experience of large-scale hydro-technical building work for our Russian engineers', and 'pointed the way forward for future works'.⁴³ Of particular note was the hydro-electric plant at the Hindu Kush dam, the largest of its type in the entire empire, and the image of the building was one of the most frequently re-used photographs in publications.⁴⁴ Electricity generated by the turbines was used to light the estate's buildings and power its factories, a substantial feat given that the electrical charge had to travel over twenty-five miles to Bairam Ali. Engineering innovation was also highlighted in images of new types of turbines and sluice gates in operation (figure 10).⁴⁵ Close-up shots showed workers fitting the new devices, which were evidently of such novelty that the

³⁸ Visitors included Vyshnegradskii and Witte, Pahlen, the foreign engineers Moncrieff and Cottard, and members of the Imperial Russian Technical Society.

³⁹ K. M. Fedorov, *Zakaspiiskaia oblast'*, Askhabad: Tip. K. M. Fedorova, 1901, p. 68.

⁴⁰ On the importance of technology and its deployment in imperial narratives, see M. Adas, *Machines as the measure of man: Science, technology and ideologies of western dominance*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989; D. Headrick, *The tools of empire: Technology and European imperialism in the nineteenth century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981; and for a reinterpretation of the importance of western technologies, C. Dewey, *Steamboats on the Indus: The limits of western technological superiority in South Asia*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014.

⁴¹ See for instance G. V. Glinka (ed.), *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, SPb: Izd. Pereselencheskogo upravleniia glavnogo upravleniia zemleustroistva i zemledeliia, 1914, (hereafter vol. 2 unless otherwise stated), plates 1, 2, 6 between pp. 250-251; Maksimov, *Obshchii otchet*, plates after pp. 4, 6, 24; Shlegel', *Postroika Sultan-Bendskoi plotiny*, plate 7, p. 9, and plate 14, p. 14.

⁴² A number of publications boasted a huge range of photographs, maps and diagrams that illustrated the estate in great detail. See particularly Barts, *Oroshenie v doline reki Murgaba*; Maksimov, *Obshchii otchet*; Shlegel', *Postroika Sultan-Bendskoi plotiny*.

⁴³ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 252.

⁴⁴ Barts, *Oroshenie v doline reki Murgaba*, pp. 147, 152, and Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, pp. 250-251.

⁴⁵ See photographs of the dams and regulators in S. Poniatovskii, *Opyt izucheniiia khlopkovodstva v Turkestane i Zakaspiiskoi oblasti*, SPb: Tip. V. F. Kirshbauma, 1913, pp. 26-28, and *RPGONO*, pp. 433-438.

scheme began to achieve wider recognition, as B. Kh. Shlegel', one of the estate's engineers, presented the project as a case study to a conference of engineers in Kiev in 1912. He reported that specialist equipment had been imported from Riga for the building works, and that a new system of sluices and floodgates, allowing 'the exact and easy regulation of water flow', had been introduced, based on a system devised by Irish engineer Francis Stoney.⁴⁶ This new technology had been used on the Aswan Dam and the Manchester Ship Canal, but never before in Russia.⁴⁷ The thirty images that Shlegel' presented to his audience provided visual evidence of his claims, and documented the overwhelmingly positive effects of technology in a series of 'before and after' shots that showed previously desolate ditches transformed into tree-lined canals.⁴⁸ Images of the dams and of the construction process therefore sustained the idea of a successful experiment, by providing visible evidence of the project's impressive scale and incorporation of new technologies. While written accounts cast aside the Poklevskii-Kozell debacle as an 'unlucky' episode, the visual record effectively expunged the event from the estate's history by only referencing the project's eventual completion.⁴⁹

The interest in the estate's technological dimensions extended to the factory complex at Bairam Ali, as manufacturing innovation became visually synonymous with the estate's development into the early twentieth century. Agronomists had been sent as far afield as America, Algeria and Egypt to learn about new techniques of cotton cultivation, and once fields had been irrigated and sown, large-scale cotton processing began in earnest.⁵⁰ The estate's factories at Bairam Ali dealt primarily with raw cotton and cottonseed, the by-product of cotton processing. Alongside a cotton-cleaning plant, other factories processed the leftover remnants: cotton husks were made into fuel briquettes; lint dispatched for the manufacture of paper, felt and wool; and the by-products of the cotton-oil purification process used for soap, glycerine and lubricants. The oil itself was said to be of 'outstanding' quality, rivalling 'that of Provence'.⁵¹ Visitors to the estate exhausted their supply of superlatives. The four factories were praised by engineer K. A. Chapkovskii who visited the estate in 1911, declaring them to be 'exemplary',⁵² and the estate in general to be 'the last word in technology'.⁵³ By employing a refinery specialist from America, and importing American machinery, the factories stood out as examples of the 'very best' of their type in Turkestan,⁵⁴ and produced 'superior' products.⁵⁵

⁴⁶ Shlegel', *Postroika Sultan-Bendsoi plotiny*, p. 28. For a brief biography of Stoney, see D. Newton, *Alan Turing: A study in light and shadow*, [Philadelphia]: Xlibris, 2003, p. 17.

⁴⁷ Shlegel', *Postroika Sultan-Bendsoi plotiny*, p. 28.

⁴⁸ Shlegel', *Postroika Sultan-Bendsoi plotiny*, plate 23, p. 22, and plate 24, p. 23.

⁴⁹ For passing reference to the disaster as an 'unlucky' event, see *RPGONO*, p. 639.

⁵⁰ For detail on the wider state of the cotton industry in Turkestan, see Poniatovskii, *Opyt izucheniia khlopkovodstva v Turkestane*, and N. P. Verkhovskoi, *Khlopkovodstvo v Turkestane i perevozka khlopka po Tashkentskoi i Sredne-Aziatskoi zheleznym dorogam*, SPb: Tip. Ministerstva putei soobshcheniia, 1910.

⁵¹ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 250.

⁵² Chapkovskii, *Murgabskie udel'nye zavody*, p. 6.

⁵³ Chapkovskii, *Murgabskie udel'nye zavody*, p. ii.

⁵⁴ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 293.

⁵⁵ *RPGONO*, p. 648.

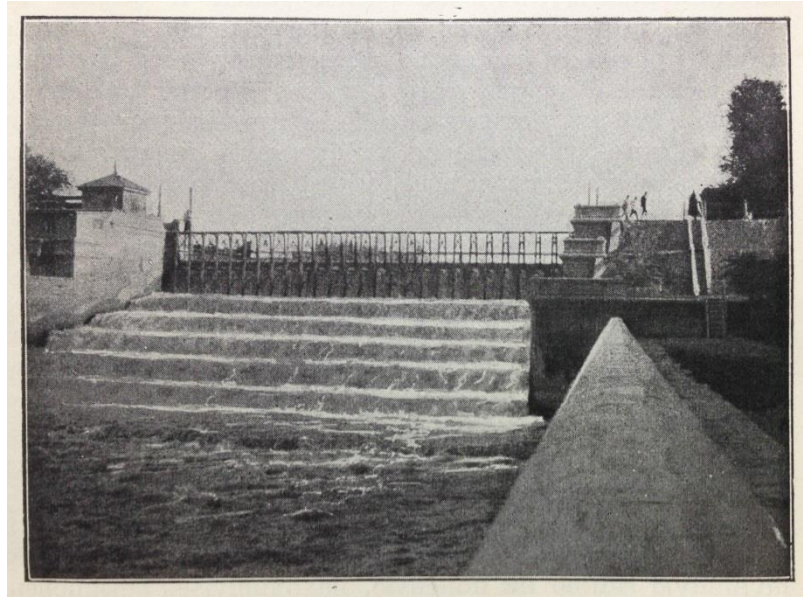


Figure 10. 'Gindikushskaia plotina'.

RPGONO, p. 433.

Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark 2059 d. 49.



Figure 11. S. M. Prokudin-Gorskii, 'Untitled'.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, reproduction number LC-DIG-prokc-20091.



Figure 12. S. M. Prokudin-Gorskii, 'Pereselencheskii khutor v Spasskom poselke'.
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, reproduction number LC-DIG-prokc-21807.

The exemplary nature of the factories was sustained and reiterated by the frequency and context within which photographs of the plants were reproduced. Most illustrated texts about the estate featured numerous photographs of the factory ensemble, with particular attention paid to the machinery contained within.⁵⁶ Chapkovskii's account of his visit featured forty photographic plates of his factory tour; a 'superb array' of images which illustrated the various stages of production and 'provided a clear picture of the whole business'.⁵⁷ In keeping with the content of the text, the images documented a model system, with each factory tidy, clean and attended by well-dressed workers, posing for the camera.⁵⁸ The projection of cleanliness and order in the images was sustained throughout, as the factories were presented in the best possible light to visitors, as befitted their 'exemplary' status. This was further enhanced by images of scientists in a laboratory, presumably experimenting with new by-products of cotton processing.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, in showcasing American technology, photographs further cemented the close visual link between the estate and industrial modernity. *Turkestan'skie sel'skoe khoziaistvo*, an illustrated journal published in Tashkent by the Turkestan Agricultural Society, devoted numerous pages and photographs to the topic, with much made of the 'Murray' gin system, one of the 'very latest American innovations' that had been discovered by an engineer on a fact-finding mission in 1910.⁶⁰ Such photographs afforded a promotional opportunity for all involved: for the estate itself, for the Appanage Department (and concomitantly the Russian state), and for the American exporters.

The popularity of the factories resulted in their images becoming a visual shorthand for the whole of Turkestan's cotton industry. The Resettlement Administration's *Aziatskaia Rossiia* described the attributes of 'the best factories' for cotton processing, accompanied by a photograph that illustrated to the reader the inside of a cotton processing plant.⁶¹ While not attributed to the Murgab estate, after careful comparison with other photographs it appears that the image was taken at Bairam Ali. A similar usage can be found in Dmitriev-Mamonov's guide to Turkestan, which took the Murgab Estate as an illustrative example of the cotton industry, with all seven photographs that illustrated a description of the wider cotton industry taken at the estate.⁶² The name of the Carver Cotton Company appeared several times, carefully foregrounded in images of the cotton processing machinery,⁶³ while the text noted that the factories used the latest American gins, were lit by electricity, and that workers were compensated for any injuries received.⁶⁴ Thus

⁵⁶ Numerous images of the factory interiors can be found in Chapkovskii, *Murgabskie udel'nye zavody*, pp. 24-84; A. I. Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu i Sredne-Aziatskoi zheleznoi dorogi*, SPb: Tip. Isidora Gol'dberga, 1903, pp. 76-82; Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 293; *Illustrirovannii putevoditel' po Sredneaziatskoi zheleznoi doroge*, pp. 234-236.

⁵⁷ Review of Chapkovskii's *Murgabskie udel'nye zavody* in *TSKh*, 1913, No. 7, pp. 680-687, quote p. 687.

⁵⁸ Chapkovskii, *Murgabskie udel'nye zavody*, for instance photograph 28, between pp. 42-43.

⁵⁹ Chapkovskii, *Murgabskie udel'nye zavody*, photograph 38, between pp. 82-83.

⁶⁰ V. G. Gofmeister, 'Murgabskii khlopkoochistitel'nyi zavod', *TSKh*, 1913, No. 7, pp. 650-659, quote p. 653.

⁶¹ Glinka, *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, p. 293.

⁶² Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu*, pp. 92, 94, 95, 97, 104.

⁶³ Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu*, p. 80.

⁶⁴ Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu*, pp. 81-85.

the image of factories and the production process became partially generic, attaining wider representative symbolism, and in doing so, sustaining the notion of the model estate.

As the life of the estate developed, the symbolic role of the project in bringing about a literal and metaphorical flourishing of the local area became more prominent. From only 2128 inhabitants in 1897, the estate's residents had quadrupled to over 10,000 by 1911.⁶⁵ Their social and economic hub lay at Bairam Ali, seventeen miles from Merv, a town that, judging from the blueprints, was planned much like a miniaturised version of Russian Tashkent, with a network of radial streets, squares and gardens that convened at a central park and palace.⁶⁶ All commentators noted the settlement's excellent layout, with wide, tree-lined streets, and facilities for workers that included a library, school and a forty-bed hospital, all of which resulted in a town that not only provided the basic necessities for inhabitants, but could even be described as 'luxurious'.⁶⁷ For what was a fairly modestly-sized, and in many ways, visually unremarkable settlement, Bairam Ali received a disproportionate amount of coverage, particularly in travel literature and regional geographies. The illustrated travel guide to Central Asia devoted over half of its images of the estate to Bairam Ali, as did Dmitriev-Mamonov's survey.⁶⁸

This selection of fairly mundane photographs of empty streets, buildings and parks was rooted in the fact that the continuing fascination with the estate was as much a question of aesthetics as it was with technology and innovation. In the case of Bairam Ali, two particular symbolic motifs took centre stage. Firstly, the town was noteworthy because its outward appearance supplied evidence of the estate's progressive management. Workers had access to a wide range of facilities, which reflected favourably on the munificence of the imperial administration. Images of the hospital, canteen, library and communal parks underscored the extent of the social provision available and thus acted as an approving commentary on the state's level of care for its tenants and workers.⁶⁹ Secondly, the town looked very familiar. One description of the estate opened with the statement 'here is the Murgab Imperial Estate - with a park, orchards and vegetable gardens and a bazaar'.⁷⁰ Rather curiously, the most notable feature of an estate possessing three giant dams and the largest hydro-electric plant in the Russian empire appeared to be its foliage. Similarly, Dmitriev-Mamonov noted the abundance of 'orchards of apricot and peach trees, vines, almond groves, nurseries with rare plants from China, India, Mexico, plantations of various types of cotton, and so forth'.⁷¹ The publications' photographs followed suit, with their images depicting a tree-lined

⁶⁵ RGIA, f. 515, op. 88, d. 1291, ll. 68, 177. Russian settlers accounted for only around 1400 of this number.

⁶⁶ RGIA, f. 515, op. 87, d. 1222, and f. 515, op. 44, d. 67, l. 76.

⁶⁷ Barts, *Oroshenie v doline reki Murgaba*, p. 167. Detailed descriptions of the town can be found in Barts, *Oroshenie v doline reki Murgaba*, pp. 165-168, and Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu*, pp. 256-261.

⁶⁸ Four of seven images of the estate depicted Bairam Ali in *Illustrirovannyi putevoditel' po Sredneaziatskoi zheleznoi doroge*, pp. 92-98, 234-246, while the ratio was similar (seven of eleven photographs) in Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu*, pp. 254-262.

⁶⁹ See images of the school, hospital and parks in Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu*, pp. 258-259, and *Illustrirovannyi putevoditel' po Sredneaziatskoi zheleznoi doroge*, pp. 96-98.

⁷⁰ *Illustrirovannyi putevoditel' po Sredneaziatskoi zheleznoi doroge*, p. 63.

⁷¹ Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu*, p. 261.

street, the main park, the palace from the park, and apiaries surrounded by trees.⁷² In a similar fashion, no image of Bairam Ali's central palace - an elegant, single-storey building with arched porticos and capacious veranda designed to be used by the Tsar - was complete without reference to its garden, and commentators frequently noted the beautiful planting and lush vegetation.⁷³ As discussed at length in the previous chapter, the predominance of rather ordinary-looking greenery fitted a particular aesthetic to which a Russian audience could relate.

Beyond my suggestion that this type of imagery invoked familiar ideas of Russianness, such scenes also caught the eye because they were so seemingly out of place. Visitors to the settlement were quick to note the 'emptiness', 'unattractiveness' and 'melancholy' of the surrounding environment, which very much resonated with the common descriptions of Turkestan's arid desert landscapes considered in the last chapter.⁷⁴ The physical location of the estate thus provided the viewer with an opportunity to assess whether the project had realised the ambition of its planners to 'resurrect the deathly wasteland and give it life',⁷⁵ and photographs that neatly captured the blooming of roses and white acacias in what had previously been a sandy 'wasteland' appeared to bear witness to the achievement.⁷⁶ In this way, greenery was an important marker of the revival of 'dead' land, and spoke to the transformative symbolism of Russian settlement.⁷⁷

Moreover, the spatial dichotomy of a thriving Russian-looking town in an 'empty' and 'deathly' environment also had temporal dimensions. The entire Murgab project, predicated around the rebuilding of dams and irrigation canals that had first been constructed from the tenth to the twelfth centuries, was conceptualised as being a symbolic resurrection of Central Asia's glorious middle ages.⁷⁸ The area had then been a site of great wealth, with old Merv boasting over 2000 years of settlement, and as eastern capital of the Seljuk empire, one of the most significant cities of the Islamic world.⁷⁹ Bairam Ali, built amongst the ruins of old Merv, was a concerted attempt to emulate this past golden age,⁸⁰ and careful attention was paid to reference in text and image the estate's auspicious siting.⁸¹ Indeed, highlighting Russia's inheritance of the region's rich heritage

⁷² Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu*, pp. 258-262, and *Illustrirovannyi putevoditel' po Sredneaziatskoi zheleznoi doroge*, pp. 92-98.

⁷³ See for instance numerous photographs of flower beds and gardens in *RPGONO*, pp. 646-648.

⁷⁴ See Karlovich, *Sooruzheniia Murgabskogo gosudareva imeniia*, p. 3; Maksimov, *Obshchii otchet*, p. 1; *RPGONO*, p. 647.

⁷⁵ RGIA, f. 515, op. 88, d. 1291, l. 153.

⁷⁶ Barts, *Oroshenie v doline reki Murgaba*, p. 167.

⁷⁷ The characterisation of land as 'dead' prior to Russian intervention was fairly common - see Krivoshein, *Zapiska*, p. 32, and Poniatovskii, *Opyt izucheniia khlopkovodstva v Turkestane*, p. 349 - and lends a good deal of credibility to Obertreiss's claims, discussed in chapter four, that such descriptions opened the land to new narratives of improvement.

⁷⁸ Although the original Sultan-Bend dam was built by Sultan Sandzhar in the twelfth century, pre-existing irrigation systems have also been discovered. The dam was destroyed by the Mongols during the sack of Merv in 1221, and subsequently rebuilt by Tamerlane's nephew, before again being destroyed by the Emir of Bukhara at the beginning of the nineteenth century. For more on the history of the oasis, from the tenth century through to Soviet times, see Matley, 'The Murgab oasis'.

⁷⁹ The UCL Ancient Merv Project estimates that Merv was the third largest city in the world in the tenth century. For more, see <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/merv> [accessed 1 July 2015].

⁸⁰ The town's name was taken from the ruins of the nearby Bairam Ali fortress, *RPGONO*, p. 641.

⁸¹ Dmitriev-Mamonov described the setting 'amongst the ruins of ancient Merv', in Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel' po Turkestanu*, p. 260, and included a range of photographic illustrations of the ruins, pp. 253-

had been a desirable strategy for those involved in the estate's initial planning. A celebratory photograph album, made to commemorate Dondukov-Korsakov's first visit to the area in 1884, featured a large number of images of archaeological finds from the ruins of Merv, as well as documenting the current state of the region.⁸² This visual appropriation of Merv's present *and* past had echoes in the official account of the estate's founding, which noted that as 'streets, regulators and the foundations of new structures' were being built, so the ancient ruins were 'gradually disintegrating'. 'In place of the ancient mosque set in the walls of old Merv', new buildings were appearing, most notably an Orthodox church with a 'golden cross that will shine brightly high above the remains of the past'.⁸³ Similarly, a description published by the Appanage Department devoted almost half of its pages to a historic overview, before continuing to an account of the estate itself, which it noted repeatedly was situated 'in the ruins of old Merv'.⁸⁴

Thus the notion of rebuilding history, and in doing so, reconstituting the flourishing culture of the middle ages in a Russian form, was closely interwoven with the visual aesthetic of the estate's location in Transcaspiya's desert landscapes.⁸⁵ Visual images cast the estate at once as a profound rupture in geographic space in sharp relief to its physical surroundings, but also as a complex anachronistic juncture; ahead of its time in terms of modern technological innovation juxtaposed to the traditional habits of neighbouring nomadic Turkmen, but conversely referencing a distant past, re-clothed in modern garb. This quasi-heterotopic representation served to strengthen existing notions that the project was a model for future schemes, not simply demonstrated by the change that could be effected in the landscape, but by the idealised social conditions to which such actions gave birth.

Display and decline

A variety of visual representations thus sustained and perpetuated the Murgab Estate as a model of environmental transformation that had temporal, spatial and social dimensions. Such images in guide books, geographies and specialist technical literature contributed to the estate's public presence, one that had clearly been effective from the outset, given that the peasants from Samara and Tambov had heard about the project within two years of its establishment. While some images were displayed in more neutral contexts of travel literature, or personally presented by engineers who had worked on the site, the estate's administration - and ultimately the Appanage Department - played a vital role in keeping the project in the public eye. In 1910 it launched an open competition via the St Petersburg Society of Architects to find a design for a new church to be built at the centre of the estate, a quest that was evidently popular, judging from the number of

272. For similar references, see *Illustrirovannyi putevoditel' po Sredneaziatskoi zheleznoi doroge*, pp. 84-88; *Poiasnitel'naia zapiska*, pp. 1-5; *RPGONO*, p. 647.

⁸² TsGAKFFD SPb, album P56, *Al'bom fotografii sniatykh pri poezde glavnonachal'stvuiushchego kn. A. M. Dondukova-Korsakova v Merve 1884*, plates 44-53.

⁸³ RGIA, f. 515, op. 88, d. 1291, ll. 154-155.

⁸⁴ *Poiasnitel'naia zapiska*, pp. 1, 14.

⁸⁵ For a similar narrative of restoring the landscapes of the past, see D. Davis, *Resurrecting the granary of Rome: Environmental history and French colonial expansion in North Africa*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007.

proposals received.⁸⁶ The rules of the competition framed it as a prestigious opportunity to contribute to an important state project, and called for an 'imposing and striking' structure.⁸⁷ Such links between the estate and the wider public, both in Turkestan and the imperial centre, were fostered in even more convincing fashion however, through what was perhaps the most visual display of all, the exhibition.

The arena of the exhibition allowed the estate's managers to showcase the project as an aesthetic and technological entity to a far larger audience than any printed publication.⁸⁸ The deliberate and controlled selection of primarily visual material provided an unusual opportunity to gather together a range of different representations, and to articulate a powerful narrative of the estate's wider symbolism. Exhibition catalogues reveal that the Appanage Department submitted material - including blueprints, engineering plans and models of the dams, sluices and irrigation network, along with photographs similar to, or including those published in travel guides, samples of cotton and fruit trees - to at least four exhibitions: the Turkestan exhibitions of 1890, 1909 and 1911, and the World's Fair of 1900. These visual artefacts convincingly reinforced the narrative of the model estate, highlighting its advanced technology and putting on show the various developments in engineering and plant cultivation that the experiment had yielded. Meanwhile, intriguing new products developed in Bairam Ali's factories, laboratories and orchards showcased the future potential of such intensive projects. The Tashkent exhibition of 1890 saw the introduction of new, exotic specimens from the estate's plant nurseries, along with experimental wines and jams.⁸⁹ The 1900 World's Fair in Paris exhibited 'examples of new products made in the cotton factories',⁹⁰ while the 1911 Tashkent exhibition displayed 'for the first time' the result of work undertaken at Bairam Ali to invent a new type of animal feed, made from by-products of the cotton-cleaning process.⁹¹ The new product was praised as having 'enormous significance for the economic life of Turkestan [usually reliant on importing animal fodder], and deserving of the most serious attention'.⁹² To add an extra frisson of excitement, the public were invited to visit a nearby pavilion, where a horse, cow, several sheep, pigs and chickens were being fed the new fodder, with a local vet on hand should the substance prove to have adverse effects.⁹³

More elaborate material retained in the archives of the Appanage Department seems to have been produced specifically with this kind of public display in mind, and highlights the effort that went in to presenting the estate as a valued and at times utopian site. A large, full-colour map, fixed onto four display boards showed a plan of the estate and its land, with six hand-drawn images inset

⁸⁶ The details of the project and the submitted entries can be found in RGIA, f. 515, op. 85, d. 106.

⁸⁷ RGIA, f. 515, op. 85, d. 106, l. 19.

⁸⁸ The exhibition as a mode of display will be discussed in more detail in chapter six.

⁸⁹ RGIA, f. 515, op. 88, d. 1291, l. 24.

⁹⁰ *Katalog Russkogo otdela Vsemirnoi Parizhskoi vystavki 1900g.*, SPb: Tip. Isidora Gol'dberga, [1900], p. 475.

⁹¹ V. G. Gofmeister, *Novye produkty, vyrabatyvaemye v Turkestanskom krae iz khlopkovoi shelukhi*, Tashkent: [n. p.], 1911, p. 13.

⁹² Gofmeister, *Novye produkty*, p. 11.

⁹³ Gofmeister, *Novye produkty*, p. 9.

into the surface illustrating vistas of Bairam Ali, the Hindu Kush dam, and the irrigation network.⁹⁴ Besides the use of colour and the specially-made vignettes, the map was embellished with golden floral motifs, and housed in a velvet case: it was evidently produced with care and designed to promote the estate in the best possible light, by combining the practical visualisation of a map with the design and materials of a precious object. The overtly decorative nature of the map suggests that it was produced for an event where it could be used to celebrate publicly the estate's existence, and be seen by a number of people, most likely an exhibition or an anniversary.⁹⁵

Thus the estate's administration actively sought to increase its public presence, hailing the scope and accomplishments of activities in the Murgab valley. Photographs, models, maps and newly-invented products all visually contributed to supporting the narrative of success. Not only were these individual components valued for their didactic attributes, continuing to sustain the concept of the estate as a highly innovative model, they also had importance for what they said collectively about the state of the Russian colonial endeavour. Closely bound up with the celebration of Russian technology was the idea of progress and civilisation: the estate was not merely a property of the imperial crown, but an outpost of Russian settlement and administration in one of the furthest reaches of the empire. The material on display attested to the visual and economic transformation that Russian governance had brought about in a sparsely-habited region that was largely covered in desert. Thus the various representations of the Murgab Estate acted as an advert for the colonial experiment, not just in Central Asia, but in the wider empire, legitimising Russia's actions by demonstrating that the state had improved and modernised the annexed land, and had even succeeded in appropriating it into a familiar set of Russian aesthetic values.

There was certainly much to celebrate in the Murgab valley. Yet its landscapes were, rather obviously, far more complex than the visual narrative of technology and progress admitted. In fact, such images obscured an increasingly fractured reality which in some ways was entirely incongruent with the estate's visual representation. As previously noted, if Pahlen is to be believed, photographs were a crucial component in maintaining a façade of success and productivity right from the estate's first year of existence. This discrepancy between image and reality can be found in numerous other cases, where archival evidence and dissenting voices within the estate reveal a project increasingly in jeopardy and decline. The Hindu Kush, Iolotan and Sultan-Bend dams, whilst visually located at the centre of the estate's success story, were not without their complications. Notes in the dams' construction files show that there were concerns over the deleterious effect of the reservoirs on local sanitation. Surveys indicated that the standing water was a breeding ground for mosquitos, which brought with them a threat of disease epidemics in the immediate locality.⁹⁶ Moreover, disputes had arisen between the estate's

⁹⁴ RGIA, f. 515, op. 87, d. 1215. The map is undated, but certainly made after 1895, given the depiction of the Hindu Kush dam.

⁹⁵ It is also possible that the map was made as a gift for a visiting dignitary, or perhaps the imperial household, but then would most likely not have been retained in the archive of the Appanage Department, making exhibition display the most likely purpose.

⁹⁶ RGVIA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 3707, l. 50.

management and representatives from nearby settlements over the distribution of river water. Local villagers faced dwindling supplies as the estate's reservoirs siphoned off increasing amounts of water. In response, the Murgab Water Committee was established to set out the percentage distribution throughout the year, in an attempt to diffuse the rising tensions.⁹⁷

More significantly, the Hindu Kush dam appeared to be silting up. Only a decade after its completion, the reservoir had already lost over half of its volume to silt, and 'could no longer provide the necessary amount of water for irrigation'.⁹⁸ The Appanage Department dispatched a team in 1907, led by engineer S. P. Maksimov, to survey the reservoir and river, and to record detailed findings on the course and flow of the silt. Maksimov's findings, which formed the 'most detailed survey of a river ever carried out in Russia', confirmed the worse-case scenario.⁹⁹ From an initial capacity of two and a half million cubic metres, by 1905 the volume of water in the reservoir had already halved, and was decreasing by over 150,000 cubic metres a year.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, Maksimov indicated that this unfolding disaster was the reason that the Iolotan and Sultan-Bend dams had been built in the second expansion phase of 1907-1909, a suggestion that cast the impressive visual spectacle of scale and technology in an altogether new light.¹⁰¹ According to the survey, even these new reservoirs would not be able to reverse the situation, as both had only around forty years left before they too became irrevocably clogged.¹⁰² The conclusions of the engineering team were far from encouraging. Faced with the unfeasible task of artificially thwarting the silt by strengthening the river banks, the team advised that it was best to abandon the reservoirs to their 'natural fate', and use the dwindling water supply to the best possible effect.¹⁰³ Ultimately, the gradual reduction of irrigated land would 'threaten the death ... of the whole enterprise', a revelation that sat rather uneasily beside the image of successful innovation generated by the photographs and technical drawings discussed above.¹⁰⁴

Other facets of life at the estate also appeared to undermine its status as a model project. The buildings at Bairam Ali, so frequently photographed for their aesthetic appeal and paternalistic symbolism, were subject to an ongoing stream of structural repairs, as cracks riddled the

⁹⁷ RGVIA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 3707, l. 106. For a discussion of the workings of the Committee, see Pahlen, *Otchet po revizii Turkestanskogo kraia*, vol. 7, pp. 326-332.

⁹⁸ Chapkovskii, *Murgabskie udel'nye zavody*, p. 4.

⁹⁹ Maksimov, *Obshchii otchet*, p. vii. See also I. M. Kark, *Zametki o doline Murgabe*, SPb: Tip. M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1911.

¹⁰⁰ Maksimov, *Obshchii otchet*, p. 8.

¹⁰¹ Maksimov, *Obshchii otchet*, p. 8.

¹⁰² Maksimov, *Obshchii otchet*, p. 114.

¹⁰³ Maksimov, *Obshchii otchet*, p. 114.

¹⁰⁴ Maksimov, *Obshchii otchet*, p. 121. Such predictions were accurate, as Matley notes that the Sultan-Bend dam was completely silted up by 1932 in Matley, 'The Murgab oasis', p. 429. A report published in 1915 revealed the true scale of the disaster: not only were the reservoirs silting up, but the surrounding land had become so salinated that crops and plants could no longer survive: V. A. Vasil'ev, *Ocherk gidrotekhnicheskikh rabot v Murgabskom gosudarevom imenii*, Petrograd: Izd. Glavnogo upravleniia zemleustroistva i zemledeliia, 1915. While unusual in Turkestan, such revelations of the negative environmental effects of modernity bore echoes of Solov'ev's earlier musings on landscape deterioration in V. S. Solov'ev, 'Vrag s vostoka', in S. M. Solov'ev & E. L. Radlov (eds), *Sobranie sochinenii Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov'eva*, SPb: Knigoizdatel'skoe tovarishchestvo "Prosveshchenie", 1914, vol. 5, pp. 452-465 [originally published 1892].

foundations and walls.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, the arrival of Pahlen, on his inspection of Turkestan in 1908, was the catalyst for the exposure of even more fundamental contradictions between the image of the estate and the daily realities of life. Pahlen questioned the small amount of land that had been irrigated (roughly one fifth of the total area within the estate's boundaries), suggesting that more should have been achieved given the enormous efforts made to build irrigation infrastructure.¹⁰⁶ More seriously, Pahlen's investigations uncovered systematic, institutionalised corruption on the part of the estate's administrators and some tenants. Under the estate's terms, land was leased to Russian and settled Turkmen tenants, as well as nomad-leasers from around the Merv oasis, under apparently highly favourable conditions. These tenants could use the estate's hospital and other facilities free of charge, and could also arrange for the repair of equipment and benefit from reduced factory fees.¹⁰⁷ In return, half of the crop yield belonged to the estate, and the remaining portion to the tenant. Yet as well as identifying evidence of the subletting of holdings which enabled share-croppers, including officers from the Appanage Department, to 'earn a supplementary income without incurring the slightest risk',¹⁰⁸ Pahlen was particularly scathing of the 'serious abuses of several members of the estate's administration'.¹⁰⁹ It transpired that, working together, senior figures were involved in the extortion of up to a third of tenants' incomes in return for the acquisition or continued lease of the land. Those who refused to pay the bribes were dealt with accordingly: former tenant Kodzhar Kalkhanov, who had farmed 400 acres of land, had his plot taken away after refusing to pay a bribe of 500 rubles.¹¹⁰

Pahlen recorded how this 'open and impudent' abuse of power was viewed with 'surprise' by Turkmen landholders, who memorably explained to their Russian visitor that 'while the White Tsar does nothing, the poor here will have no life'.¹¹¹ The discovery of this endemic corruption thus significantly undermined the notion of the model estate, or at least presented the very worst kind of model that reflected the widespread depravity, fraud, bribery and other abuses of power uncovered by Pahlen in Transcaspia.¹¹² The irony of the situation cannot have been lost on Pahlen, who had specifically been asked by the Minister of the Imperial Court to include the estate in his investigations, as it was 'an institution that had influence on the economic position of the whole *krai* and its population'.¹¹³ Far from offering its workers progressive conditions, the estate appeared, under certain administrators at least, to have taken advantage of its tenants, subjecting

¹⁰⁵ RGIA, f. 515, op. 44, d. 67, ll. 113-170.

¹⁰⁶ Pahlen, *Mission to Turkestan*, p. 148.

¹⁰⁷ Chapkovskii, *Murgabskie udel'nye zavody*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Pahlen, *Mission to Turkestan*, p. 148.

¹⁰⁹ RGIA, f. 1396, op. 1, d. 282, l. 4.

¹¹⁰ Pahlen singled out Collegiate Assessor A. V. Ivashevskii, assistant to the head of the estate, and State Councillor S. Iu. Tolstoi, assistant to the head of the Appanage Department, for particular criticism. See RGIA, f. 1396, op. 1, d. 282, ll. 4-5.

¹¹¹ RGIA, f. 1396, op. 1, d. 282, ll. 5-6.

¹¹² This said, Pahlen chose to attribute these failings largely to the savage climate rather than 'the corrosive effect of imperialism', Morrison, 'The Pahlen Commission', p. 62.

¹¹³ RGIA, f. 1396, op. 1, d. 282, l. 1.

them to a life of poverty and extortion that was hardly commensurate with the lofty aspirations recorded in 1884, to 'encourage the voluntary acceptance of Russian citizenship'.¹¹⁴

Singular stories, multiple sites

Although the above discussion has concerned only one site, looking in detail at a specific case reveals the complex nature of visual and textual representations of such projects, not only the various visual scales on which schemes were projected, but also the nuanced interweaving of visual 'truth' and factual 'reality'. In many ways, the visual record of the estate that was championed by the Appanage Department, and which appeared in a variety of printed literature, was a thoroughly artificial version of life in the Murgab valley. Images of the estate's technological and transformative successes contributed to a kind of suspended reality that almost entirely masked an array of corruption and engineering bungling. While this is only one 'singular story', a close reading of this case demonstrates that the capacities of the visual to portray and produce new model landscapes were increasingly valued by the imperial state as a means to provide technical templates for other projects of a similar nature, and more significantly, as a way to showcase the entire imperial experiment.¹¹⁵ Moreover, as I suggest below, the Murgab Estate was only one of network of similar sites that gained prominence towards 1914 as new and particularly visual symbols of the remaking of Central Asian space.

Despite being in some respects a rather duplicitous model, the Murgab Estate had a good deal of significance in the expanding realm of Russian irrigation in Turkestan. In this respect, it offered a glimpse, in a not wholly-convincing-fashion, of how rivers and tributaries could be managed and directed to irrigate land that was previously unproductive to cultivation. From 1900 onwards, increasing efforts were made to irrigate other swathes of Turkestan's desert regions, although unlike the Murgab scheme, many of these projects remained in the planning stages, limited to paper by technical difficulties, insufficient funding, or, as Peterson points out, the lack of detailed legislation governing the legal ownership of water.¹¹⁶ Various plans were formed to irrigate the eastern Kara Kum with water from the Amu-Dar'ia,¹¹⁷ while in the Hungry Steppe and the Syr-Dar'ia basin, schemes were made to irrigate land using water diverted from the Syr-Dar'ia,¹¹⁸ and

¹¹⁴ RGIA, f. 515, op. 88, d. 1291, l. 3.

¹¹⁵ P. Sartori, 'Introduction: On the social in Central Asian history: Notes in the margins of legal records', in P. Sartori (ed.), *Explorations in the social history of modern Central Asia (19th-Early 20th century)*, Leiden: Brill, 2013, p. 12. Sartori makes a convincing case for the importance of micro-histories as a facet of wider historical research.

¹¹⁶ See Peterson, 'Technologies of rule' for the most comprehensive discussion of tsarist irrigation in Central Asia. On the limits of progress without a comprehensive water law, see p. 224.

¹¹⁷ See M. N. Ermolaev, *Propusk vod r. Amu-Dar'i v Mervskii i Tedzhenskii oazisy s tsel'iu orosheniia 516000 desiatin zemli v vostochnoi chasti Zakaspiiskoi oblasti*, SPb: Tip. Uchilishcha glukhonemykh, 1908, and RGIA, f. 427, op. 1, d. 26. For a similar scheme see V. M. Sazonov, *K proektu orosheniia Zakaspiiskoi oblasti*, SPb: Tip. Uchilishcha glukhonemykh, 1912.

¹¹⁸ V. F. Karavaev, *Materialy i issledovaniia k proektu orosheniia Golodnoi i Dal'verzhinskoi stepei: Golodnaia step' v ee proshlom i nastoiashchem*, Petrograd: Tip. N. L. Nyrkina, 1914; A. N. Voeikov, *Poiashnit'naia zapiska k proektu orosheniia 40,000 desiat. v iuzhnoi chasti Golodnoi i 40,000 desiat. v Dal'verzhinskoi stepiakh*, SPb: Tip. Uchilishcha glukhonemykh, 1908; *Zakliucheniiia Komissii po obsuzhdeniiu vozmozhnykh variantov orosheniia Golodnoi i Dal'verzhinskoi stepei i ustanovleniiu okonchatel'noi skhemy i osnovnykh zadaniia dlia detal'nogo proektirovaniia po etoi skheme*, Petrograd: Tip. A. Benke, [1915]. For detailed project outlines, see myriad plans in RGIA f. 427, op. 1, d. 26; f. 432, op. 1, d. 160; f. 432, op. 1, d. 659; f. 432, op. 1, d. 926. The gradual

similar proposals were put forward in Semirech'e for the Chu river region.¹¹⁹ Such projects were based on the creation of vast reservoirs that would feed into canals and drainage ditches, and were highly ambitious in scale. Ermolaev's scheme for the Amu-Dar'ia involved a 79-mile-long canal, evidently using the Nile barrage as inspiration,¹²⁰ while the engineer G. K. Rizenkampf aimed to irrigate land in the Hungry Steppe larger than the area of Lincolnshire, which would later include projections for a whole new city, 'Golodnostepsk'.¹²¹

The perceived success of the Murgab irrigation project led to it becoming something of a *cause célèbre* for some engineers directing these ventures, as requests for advice were made frequently to the estate's management. Rizenkampf maintained a lengthy correspondence with the estate's head as he undertook preparatory work in the Hungry Steppe in 1914-1915.¹²² Keen to exploit the experience of the estate in light of the 'insignificant nature of Russian technical knowledge of this type of project', Rizenkampf sought a variety of information, from the correct temperature at which to fire bricks, to the efficacies of local building materials.¹²³ Above all, he made frequent requests for the original schematics and technical drawings to be sent to him.¹²⁴ Meanwhile, a good deal of material was exchanged between administrators and engineers across a number of projects in Transcaspia, the Hungry Steppe and the Chu hills, meaning that it is possible that the Murgab documentation travelled even further.¹²⁵ Such requests to use the estate's rich visual archive of working drawings demonstrate that even as late as 1914, the project retained a good deal of instructional value, and was still seen in some aspects at least, as a successful experiment in the application of engineering technology.

In this sense, the Murgab Estate was an important model that showed how landscapes could be reformed, and was an outlier for other more grandiose irrigation schemes, which themselves made substantial use of visual material to project visions of huge reservoirs or irrigation canals onto the land.¹²⁶ Indeed, by 1914, the demand for visual material from various irrigation projects in Turkestan was such that a specialist photo-technical laboratory was set up to regulate the process.¹²⁷ Yet given the huge range of scales, from local to international, on which the estate was textually and visually represented, its significance as a model transcended that of the relatively

implementation of parts of these schemes resulted in the opening of the Romanov canal in 1913, images of which can be found in RGIA, f. 432, op. 1, d. 501, ll. 49-63, and f. 432, op. 1, d. 900, plates 1, 3, 4, 5.

¹¹⁹ V. A. Vasil'ev, *Proekt orosheniia doliny reki Chu*, SPb: Tip. N. Ia. Stoikovoï, 1913.

¹²⁰ RGIA, f. 427, op. 1, d. 26.

¹²¹ RGIA, f. 432, op. 1, d. 768a.

¹²² RGIA, f. 432, op. 1, d. 750.

¹²³ RGIA, f. 432, op. 1, d. 750, ll. 1-4.

¹²⁴ See RGIA f. 432, op. 1, d. 750, ll. 1-1 ob, 2, 5, 6. For examples of these working drawings, see RGIA, f. 515, op. 88, d. 1291, ll. 85-88, 129-133, and RGVIA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 3707, ll. 94-95.

¹²⁵ RGIA, f. 432, op. 1, d. 659, ll. 1, 4, 13, 25, 35, 72, 75, 80, and f. 432, op. 1, d. 750, ll. 7-10.

¹²⁶ An excellent sample of these superbly detailed maps and diagrams can be found in the appendix of Ermolaev's *Propusk vod r. Amu-Dar'i*.

¹²⁷ See details in RGIA, f. 432, op. 1, d. 158. The team was allocated a budget of over 100,000 rubles to support ongoing projects under the auspices of GUZZ, and was forced to turn down requests due to the level of demand. In the course of 1915-1916 alone, the laboratory produced work for the projects to irrigate land in the Hungry Steppe, Fergana, the Chu and Zeravshan river basins, the Merv and Tedzhen oases, and the protectorate of Khiva. The work appears to have been mainly photographic, but also involved the production of colour copies of maps, albums of technical drawings and printed brochures.

closed world of state-driven irrigation schemes. The project was very clearly a publicly visible site, one that embodied the state's vision for a settled, Russified Turkestan just as much as it did a complex hydro-technical project.

Looking at the estate as a public model with particularly strong visual dimensions, rather than merely within the frame of irrigation, opens up a number of wider parallels with other similarly visual sites. The 1914 *Atlas Aziatskoi Rossii* is suggestive of the fact that a number of places or landscapes around Turkestan had been nominated by the state (the atlas was produced and published by GUZZ) as worthy of particular visual accent. Alongside the geographic and ethnographic maps of Turkestan that appeared in the volume were maps that depicted the routes of railways, the geography of Turkestan's resettlement zones, plans of major towns in the region, and a detailed schematic of the Murgab Estate.¹²⁸ Indeed, no other individual site was singled out in such specific detail. From the discussion of Turkestan's railways, its new Russian towns and nascent rural settler landscapes in the previous three chapters, it is evident that the Murgab project bore substantial similarities in terms of being a visually prominent site. All of these projects were sustained by a whole array of visual representation and were very much in the public eye. Settler villages were subject to intensive promotion by GUZZ, the Murgab project by the Appanage Department, while the Transcaspian railway was pictured in the illustrated press and guide books,¹²⁹ as well as photographic albums and even a 120-metre panorama displayed at a public lecture in St Petersburg.¹³⁰ All were represented in some form at local, national and international exhibitions, and were commemorated and memorialised in a variety of visual forms. Thus each site can be conceived of as being part of a network of visually significant landscapes that were heavily championed not only by the Russian state, but also by a good number of imperially-minded Russian visitors and settlers. Visual evidence of environmental transformation was the foundation of each of these projects, from photographs of tree and crop planting in rural villages, to neat train stations with telegraph poles and steam engines, to the wide streets and European architecture of towns and the giant dams of the Murgab Estate. All confounded the popular notion that the Central Asian landscape was a 'barren waste', and provided visual evidence that 'Russian forces' were indeed 'fertilising' the landscape.¹³¹

The photographic itineraries of imperial visitors attest to the fact that this network of new sites was gaining prominence. Pahlen left a rich visual record of his trip to Turkestan that appears to have been omitted from the historical record as scholars instead focus on his written works and the eventual result of his investigations, the multi-volume *Reviziia*. While historians have been

¹²⁸ G. V. Glinka (ed.), *Atlas Aziatskoi Rossii*, SPb: Izd. Pereselencheskogo upravleniia glavnogo upravleniia zemleustroistva i zemledeliia, 1914, map 40. See also maps 16, 45, 58, 60.

¹²⁹ See chapter two for examples of representations at exhibitions and in the illustrated press.

¹³⁰ *Zakaspiiskaia voennaia zheleznaia doroga. Al'bom vidov*, Askhabad, 1899. The album contained thirty-eight photographs taken by the photographer Engel'. Some of the images, along with photographs of the line taken by A. Luarsabov can be found in RGIA, f. 350, op. 65, d. 105. The panorama was displayed at a lecture given by P. Ia. Piasetskii in 1895, and was pictured in *Niva*, 1895, No. 3, page unknown. An image of the panorama can be found here: <http://zerrspiegel.orientphil.uni-halle.de/i454.html> [accessed 30 July 2015].

¹³¹ *Sredniaia Aziia i ee prigodnost' dlia vodvorenii russkoi zhizni*, SPb: Tip. S. Muller & I. Bogel'man, 1889, p. 49.

criticised for relying too heavily on such 'overtly colonial' sources, Morrison rightly defends Pahlen's writings as giving 'a more vivid picture [of Turkestan] than any other source',¹³² and his photographs give the most vivid picture of all, quite literally. Much work remains to be done to annotate and identify the 459 images of Turkestan that are preserved in Pahlen's archive, but on initial inspection, it is striking that the photographs frame a similar selection of sites to the network described above.¹³³ The Murgab Estate featured more than any other single place in Turkestan, while alongside scenes of native life in town and countryside were images of oil drilling on Cheleken island (off the coast of Trancaspia), mines, railways, irrigation canals and Russian farmsteads. The subjects of these images must partly have been influenced by the nature of Pahlen's visit: his itinerary was far from that of the usual tourist or visitor, and he had an obvious interest in seeking out evidence of Russian settlement and its consequences, yet a similar range and scope of subject matter can be found in the photographs of another imperial visitor, S. M. Prokudin-Gorskii. Commissioned by Nicholas II to produce a visual survey of the entire empire, Prokudin-Gorskii visited Turkestan as part of the project in 1911.¹³⁴ The record of his visit favoured the historic cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, but also included numerous photographs of the Murgab Estate (figure 11), and a significant number of images of Spassk and other settlements in the Hungry Steppe (figure 12), and irrigation work carried out under the auspices of GUZZ. Although both men possessed official permission to circumvent the usual bureaucracy and to gain access to sites that may normally have been off limits, their photographs demonstrate a certain congruence between the types of sites that they deemed worthy of photographic reproduction and the increasing breadth and depth of visual representation that these places obtained more broadly, as described in the last three chapters. The Murgab Estate, irrigation schemes and agricultural settlements were new and favoured places, landscapes that were visually emblematic of the environmental impact of Russian settlement. This is not to suggest that such sites were necessarily displacing the more traditional imagery of Samarkand and Bukhara, but that they were gaining prominence, and were seen as places worth visiting by contemporaries (even if Pahlen's eventual conclusions on the Murgab Estate were largely unfavourable).

As Pahlen's expose of the Murgab project demonstrates, such sites had the potential to be rather Potemkinesque. While they may have obtained visual prominence as showcases of the positive effects of Russian settlement and technology, their representation masked a good deal of uncomfortable reality. This desire to visually convey a space or landscape as idealised or utopian was by no means a recent development. Just as Potemkin built a range of palaces, gardens, entertainments, and most famously, sham villages, that were specifically designed to be seen by

¹³² A. Morrison, "'Sowing the seed of national strife in this alien region": The Pahlen report and *pereselenie* in Turkestan, 1908-1911', *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, 2012, 31, pp. 1-5.

¹³³ The photographs can be found in RGIA, f. 1396, op. 1, d. 488a; f. 1396, op. 1, d. 488b; f. 1396, op. 1, d. 488v; f. 1396, op. 1, d.488g. Pahlen is pictured in several of the photographs, but it is unclear at this point whether the images were usually taken by him, or by a member of his retinue.

¹³⁴ More on Prokudin-Gorskii's trip can be found in S. P. Garanina, *Rossiiskaia imperiia Prokudina-Gorskogo, 1905-1916*, Moscow: Krasivaia strana, 2006. Digitised versions of the glass-plate negatives can be found on the Library of Congress website, <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/empire/index.html> [accessed 30 July 2015]. For photographs of Turkestan in particular, see items 21780 to 21900, and for a sample of the Murgab Estate, 20033, 20038, 20040-20045, 20062-20068, 20091, 20139-20142.

Catherine the Great during her tour of Crimea, so the visual elevation of certain symbolic sites in Turkestan was a similar attempt to convey imperial power, ownership, spectacle and prosperity through the transformation of a previously 'alien' landscape.¹³⁵ Although there was a significant dissonance between image and reality, as Panchenko reveals in his dissection of the Potemkin 'myth', deception was not necessarily the object of the exercise.¹³⁶ Rather, Turkestan's new sites acted as markers of the ambitions of the Russian state: visual showcases or models of the future. A more apposite analogy may be that such visually prominent sites took on the appearance of exhibitions, where 'everything seemed to be set up as though it were the model or picture of something, arranged before an observing subject into a system of significance, declaring itself to be a mere object, a mere "signifier" of something further'.¹³⁷ The cultivation of cotton at the Murgab estate, the greenery of Spassk and the villages of Semirech'e, and the railway tracks overlaying Transcaspia's deserts all visually denoted the rooting of Russian settlement and the transformative effect of Russia's human and mechanical endeavours. Collectively all spoke to the appropriation of Central Asia's landscapes, and to the future aspirations of the imperial state.

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Despite its location in the sparsely-populated and super-heated environment of southern Transcaspia, the Murgab Estate was a project that was very firmly in the public eye. Visual material - from photographs sent to the Tsar and images circulated at conferences, to photographs in popular travel guides, and maps, models, and diagrams on display at local and international exhibitions - was the prime medium through which the estate's progress achieved such widespread attention, and served to designate the project as a model experiment which appeared to prove that the Russian state was 'changing the face of nature for the better' through the application of technology.¹³⁸ As observers admitted, 'even very recently, the place where the estate now sits was a desert, without shade or water. Now it is a flourishing oasis ... thanks to the energy and initiative of the estate's management'.¹³⁹ In particular, the project was championed and promoted by the state, chiefly GUZZ and the Appange Department, as a site that visually communicated the ambition and achievements of the Russian imperial mission, and from its similar representation in travel guides and by estate employees, was evidently seen in a similar light by many sub-state actors.

¹³⁵ On Potemkin's villages, see David-Fox, *Showcasing the great experiment*, pp. 7-8; S. Dickinson, 'Russia's first "Orient": Characterizing the Crimea in 1787', *Kritika*, 2002, 3: 1, pp. 8-9; S. Dixon, *Catherine the Great*, London: Profile Books, 2009, p. 286; K. O'Neill, 'Constructing imperial identity in the borderland: Architecture, Islam, and the renovation of the Crimean landscape', *Ab Imperio*, 2006, 2, p. 164; A. M. Panchenko, "'Potemkinskie derevni" kak kul'turnyi mif, XVIII vek, 14, Leningrad: Nauka, 1983, pp. 93-104; R. Wortman, *Scenarios of power: Myth and ceremony in Russian monarchy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, vol. 1, pp. 139-142.

¹³⁶ Panchenko, "'Potemkinskie derevni" kak kul'turnyi mif, pp. 93-104. Panchenko outlines that Catherine was in full knowledge of Potemkin's actions, and a willing participant in the imperial spectacle.

¹³⁷ Mitchell, 'The world as exhibition', p. 222.

¹³⁸ P. Josephson, *Industrialised nature: Brute force technology and the transformation of the natural world*, London: Shearwater Books, 2002, p. 3

¹³⁹ Barts, *Oroshenie v doline reki Murgaba*, p. 168.

Beneath the projection of the model estate however lay a rather glaring dissonance between image and reality, one that was all the more profound for the fact that the Murgab's visual representation was largely controlled by the Russian state, who had a very obvious vested interest in portraying the project as a success. This gulf speaks to a number of issues, not least that the visual was a valued medium because it could be easily used to obscure problems such as corruption and technical bungling, and to mask the more fundamental difficulty that very little progress had been made on developing any far-reaching legislation on land or water laws. Photographs, maps and models provided evidence of success, independently from text, without having to engage with such messy practicalities. The perceived authenticity of photographs allowed suggestions to be made that the estate was a place where nature was not only being managed, but was being entirely transformed into irrigated, cultivated land and a well-planned, luxurious town. As a model, the estate was evidently a prized asset, important in showcasing what could be done in Turkestan and across the empire as a whole, yet the disparity between image and reality also alludes to the fact that the state was in many ways unable to live up to its aspirations. Nevertheless, the *projection* of the Murgab project as a visual showcase was one small constituent of a new environmental narrative in which empty and unproductive land was made useful and fertile, with concomitant social amelioration.

Moreover, the Murgab Estate was only one of a number of new, meaningful sites defined by their strongly visual characteristics that were readily legible symbols of the transformative effects of Russian settlement. While such models and experiments were very clearly functioning projects, they were also used to represent something beyond their original purpose. The Central Asian railway was not simply a means of expediting travel, the Murgab project not just a way of irrigating land, and rural villages were more than places to house incoming settlers. All were important as showcases of the state's capabilities in pursuing technological projects and managing resettlement, and were models for what the future Turkestan should look like, conveyed to both local and international audiences, predominantly by the Russian state. The visual documentation of these sites in many ways portrayed them as heterotopic landscapes, curiously 'in place and out of place': physically located within Turkestan, but part of a new Turkestan that was idealised as the antithesis of what most Russians perceived the existing landscape to be like.¹⁴⁰ Thus the representation of the estate, just like other related projects, reveals part of the process by which space was reframed and redefined, an abstraction of the state's visions for Turkestan into a series of sites of representation, each at root a 'starting point for imagining, inventing and diversifying space'.¹⁴¹ In this sense, models and experiments were portrayed as a kind of real-world exhibition: sites of display that visually suggested the formation of a new, ordered and managed Central Asia. As the following chapter reveals however, the public viewing of visual material in the arena of the *actual* exhibition resulted in a variety of interpretations that took this reimagining of space in new directions, particularly in Turkestan itself.

¹⁴⁰ Johnson, 'The geographies of heterotopia', p. 797.

¹⁴¹ Johnson, 'The geographies of heterotopia', p. 800.

6. Exhibiting Turkestan

The final plate of a leather-bound album dedicated to Tsar Nicholas II displayed a photograph of five men, wearing robes and turbans, standing in a park outside a structure fashioned in the shape of a hollowed-out tree stump (figure 13).¹ Previous pages showed rooms displaying silks, cotton and agricultural produce, an image of the opening ceremony, a prize-winning camel, a Singer sewing machine stand, and a pavilion built to resemble a mountain.² Eclectic as this brief survey may sound, these photographs captured the scale and diversity of the 1909 Tashkent jubilee exhibition, the largest of its type to have ever been held in Turkestan. The album also communicated what an unusual event an exhibition was, juxtaposing elements of the fantastical and the kitsch with mundane items of agricultural and industrial produce. It was, judging by the crowds in the photographs, an important local occasion, attracting visitors of all ethnicities. At the same time, it was clearly an event of value to higher echelons of the imperial state, worthy of being visually commemorated and presented to the Tsar. The album thus froze for posterity a fascinating moment in Turkestan's history; a prime example of how exhibitions could be 'spectacles of tangible fantasy, in which participants forged nations and the empire, both imaginary and material',³ and did so primarily through the production and consumption of visual objects.

The exhibition as an international and national spectacle has generated a good deal of literature, largely centring on British, American and French World's Fairs, but also beginning to incorporate Russian contexts.⁴ As 'centralized and organized ventures juxtaposing industry, machines, decorative arts, commodities and new consumer goods',⁵ exhibitions were opportunities to communicate visually tropes of productivity, modernity, progress and innovation, and were crucial stages on which to perform nationhood. In the imperial context, the exhibition has been

¹ TsGAKFFD SPb, album P357, *XXV-letniaia iubileinaia vystavka Turkestanskogo obshchestva sel'skogo khoziaistva*, Tashkent, 1909, plate 55.

² TsGAKFFD SPb, album P357, *XXV-letniaia iubileinaia vystavka*, plates 18, 38, 5, 37, 6, 11, 33.

³ P. Hoffenberg, *An empire on display: English, Indian, and Australian exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001, p. xv.

⁴ For recent work on exhibitions in the Central Asian context, see D. Brower, *Turkestan and the fate of the Russian empire*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, pp. 45-9, 84-7, and S. Gorshenina, 'La construction d'une image «savante» du Turkestan russe lors des premières expositions «coloniales» dans l'Empire russe: analyse d'une technologie culturelle du pouvoir', in S. Gorshenina & S. Abashin (eds), *Le Turkestan Russe: Une colonie comme les autres?* [Cahiers d'Asie Centrale No. 17-18], Tashkent, Paris: IFÉAC, 2009, pp. 133-178. A small sample of the vast amount of writing on international exhibitions can be found in J. Bradley, 'Pictures at an exhibition: Science, patriotism and civil society in imperial Russia', *SR*, 2008, 67: 4, pp. 934-966; A. Geppert, *Fleeting cities: Imperial expositions in fin-de-siècle Europe*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; P. Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral vistas: The expositions universelles, great exhibitions and world's fairs, 1851-1939*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988; Hoffenberg, *An empire on display*; R. Rydell, *All the world's a fair: Visions of empire at American international expositions, 1876-1916*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

⁵ W. Beinart & L. Hughes, *Environment and empire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 224.

conceptualised as an ‘exercise in colonial knowledge and power’,⁶ manifested as a showcase ‘for carefully appointed displays of European and American technological progress, cultural achievement, as well as imperial dominance’.⁷ Thus the exhibition served a number of functions: a means to construct knowledge about imperial possessions, to promote trade and consumption by commodifying nature, and to reinforce ethnic, racial and national hierarchies.

At such events, vision was privileged above all else. Exhibitions were ‘idealized platforms where cultures could be encapsulated visually’, and as such were designed to be consumed by the eye.⁸ They combined both physical objects such as vegetables, bolts of silk and cotton, with drawn, printed or photographic representations of landscapes, places, sites and objects. These displays were intended by their organisers to be read in a certain way by the observer, and thus were constructed to work on multiple levels, from the tangible objects on display, to representations of things that could not for whatever reason be physically exhibited, to visual depictions of the event itself in the press and in photograph albums. The exhibition was thus a highly complex site of display, a participatory social text, not only ‘authored, or inscribed, by official and private commissioners’, but also “‘read”, or consumed, by visitors’ or viewers.⁹ The objects that formed the foundation of this social text were very often privately-held items, made visible by the exhibition setting, and for the purposes of this thesis, the exhibition marks a confluence of disparate items and objects that might otherwise never have been seen side by side. From the point of view of my preceding discussions, almost all of the physical items considered in the previous chapters found their way to an exhibition, ending up housed and displayed in close proximity, from Karazin’s illustrations, copies of travel literature, guides to the Central Asian railway and items from the Murgab Estate, to models of railway bridges, Glukhovskoi’s maps, irrigation diagrams, the Resettlement Administration’s images of peasant villages and so forth. In a new social setting, these items drawn from or representing Turkestan’s natural and built environments could take on new meanings, in some cases, seen by the public for the first time, and I argue, just like the model site ‘real-world exhibitions’ discussed in chapter five, were all individual facets of a larger picture of Turkestan that was assembled when exhibited en masse.

This chapter thus suggests that the exhibition was an important arena in which over-arching statements could be made about Turkestan as a spatial entity, and can in many ways be conceived of as the most noteworthy visual form of all, in terms of ‘popular and didactic’ social impact.¹⁰ Far more of the local population would attend an exhibition than would buy an illustrated travel guide

⁶ Gorshenina, ‘La construction d’une image «savante»’, p. 133. See also Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral vistas*, chapter three, and for exhibitionary knowledge and power in more Foucauldian context, ‘The exhibitionary complex’, in T. Bennett, *The birth of the museum: History, theory, politics*, London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 59-88.

⁷ M. Neuberger, ‘Introduction: Exhibiting Eastern Europe’, *SR*, 2010, 69: 3, p. 540.

⁸ Z. Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at nineteenth-century world’s fairs*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, p. 11. For an intriguing discussion of vision at the exhibition and links to the ‘reality’ of the outside world, see T. Mitchell, ‘The world as exhibition’, *Comparative studies in society and history*, 1989, 31: 2, pp. 217-236.

⁹ Hoffenberg, *An empire on display* p. xviii. For a more methodological discussion of modes of display, see E. Barker, (ed.), *Contemporary cultures of display*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999, and D. Cherry & F. Cullen, (eds), *Spectacle and display*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.

¹⁰ Barker, *Contemporary cultures of display*, p. 104.

or would see a railway map or irrigation scheme in a different setting. Exhibitions were an accessible stage, did not necessitate a high degree of literacy to comprehend, and for some part, were completely free. Of even greater import, they were considerably more open to contribution and participation than any other form of visual production, with local people and settlers exhibiting alongside GUZZ, the Appanage Department and other branches of the imperial administration.

The following discussion considers what exhibitions reveal about Turkestan's changing place within the empire. It deals firstly with the representation of the region at national and international exhibitions, which largely promoted the image of Turkestan as an exotic commodity frontier. By looking at similar events held on a local scale however, I underscore how the exhibition was an important venue for the ongoing reframing of Turkestan as an imperial and regional territory. The meaning of objects and images was dependent on social setting and spatial location,¹¹ and when on display in Turkestan rather than abroad or in metropolitan Russia, these items were used to construct new narratives, which, while echoing the imperial overtones of the commodity frontier, could also be read in rather different ways. I uncover how local exhibitions were conceived of by Turkestan's politicians, newspapers and amateur societies as visual vehicles to convey messages about the region's achievements and adaptability, and that these visions were closely linked to wider spatial and environmental narratives. Indeed, I conceptualise the exhibition as one of the very few venues in which Turkestan as a space could be deconstructed, selected components reassembled, and the whole reconstituted as a visual microcosm of the original.¹² This new and very physical re-imagining set up various scenarios where metaphorical visions of Turkestan could find visual expression, most popularly seen as a 'granary', 'orangery', 'breadbasket' or 'jewel'. Such visions privileged a view of Turkestan as a particular kind of landscape, a cornucopia of productivity and fertility, represented as a series of abstracted products and raw materials.

At the same time however, such conceptions were not only couched in terms of Turkestan's worth to the imperial centre, but contributed to the articulation of local, as well as imperial identities. The exhibition was a highly interactive and participatory experience in which the motivations of many local contributors may not have been to support the portrayal of Turkestan as an imperial reservoir of raw materials, but were rooted instead in private, financial incentive. Moreover, the event actively forged a sense of community through participation, and strengthened notions of civil society through the involvement of private individuals and local amateur groups. Thus I suggest that co-existing alongside the imperial narrative were multiple other interpretations of the exhibition, not least of which was the opportunity to visually display Turkestan as a 'home'.

¹¹ J. Ryan, *Photography and exploration*, London: Reaktion Books, 2013, p. 18.

¹² See Geppert's remarks that the exhibition was simultaneously a physical space of representation and a representation of space, in Geppert, *Fleeting cities*, pp. 4, 222.



Figure 13. 'Gruppa mestnykh zhitelei u vkhoda v pavil'on lesnogo otdela imeni I. I. Krauze'.
XXV-letniaia iubileinaia vystavka Turkestanskogo obshchestva sel'skogo khoziaistva, Tashkent,
1909, plate 55.

TsGAKFFD SPb, album P357.

Turkestan as commodity frontier

Turkestan participated in Russia's burgeoning world of exhibitions from its founding, featuring at a range of events from the 1867 First Russian Ethnographic Exhibition held in Moscow, to agricultural and trade fairs held in regional and imperial centres through to World's Fairs in the late 1890s and 1900s. The latter represented the pinnacle of the exhibition hierarchy, and were 'phantasmagorical spectacles' that drew visitors from around the world.¹³ To take just two examples, the World's Fairs of 1893 and 1900, Central Asia was showcased as a vital constituent of the Russian empire, in a setting that very much acted as 'a resplendent vehicle of imperial display'.¹⁴ These international exhibitions were ambitious, vibrant and triumphalist affairs, years in the planning, with numerous logistical challenges involving the coordination of action across numerous distant geographies and the successful shipping of exhibits by land and sea to America and Europe.¹⁵ Such global events promoted imperial and national motifs of 'trade, technology and progress ... mixing the exotic with the practical and material, simultaneously glorifying and domesticating'.¹⁶ For Russia (and other participating nations), this was an opportunity to improve one's international image, to court investment and to promote exports. In this context, the scope of the exhibition was extensive yet display space was at a premium. Central Asia took its place in Russia's pavilions alongside other regions of the empire, but exhibits had to be chosen with a good deal of selectivity. There was little point mounting a detailed display of items that could be found in countless other regions of Russia, and thus by and large, it was objects that could not be sourced from elsewhere, or particular regional specialities, that received prominence: cotton, silks, carpets and the like. Coupled with this were ongoing technological projects that were deemed sufficiently impressive to showcase to an international audience, chiefly the Transcaspiian railway, irrigation schemes and the Murgab Estate.

Showcased as a constituent part of imperial Russia, Turkestan was portrayed in primarily economic terms, represented by the raw materials, natural resources and trade links that it could provide to the empire.¹⁷ In many ways, the exhibition thus served to promote an image of the land as a 'commodity frontier'; what Beinart and Hughes define as a colonial region targeted by imperial powers for its raw materials and agricultural commodities such as sugar, cotton, tobacco, cocoa, spices, tea, gold and oil.¹⁸ The 1893 World's Fair in Chicago for instance, held to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America, exhibited samples of Turkestan's crops, silks, cotton and carpets, along with many items that had previously been

¹³ Neuburger, 'Introduction', p. 539.

¹⁴ Beinart & Hughes, *Environment and empire*, p. 224.

¹⁵ See for instance the correspondence regarding which items could and could not be shipped to Chicago, in RGVA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 1635, and f. 705, op. 1, d. 1.

¹⁶ Beinart & Hughes, *Environment and empire*, p. 225.

¹⁷ See for instance the emphasis on only Turkestan's economic significance, in *Podrobnyi ukazatel' po otdelam Vserossiiskoi promyshlennoi i khudozhestvennoi vystavki 1896 g. v Nizhnem-Novgorode. Otdel XIV, Zakaspiiskaia oblast', Sredniaia Aziia, torgovlia Rossii s Persiei*, Moscow: Tip. Russkogo tovarishchestva pechatnogo i izdatel'skogo dela, 1896, p. 1.

¹⁸ Beinart & Hughes, *Environment and empire*, p. 2. The authors did not coin the phrase 'commodity frontier', but use it to 'suggest meanings that are spatial, environmental and socio-economic'. For more detail see footnote 2, p. 2. For a broader discussion of 'commodification', see T. Richards, *The commodity culture of Victorian England: Advertising and spectacle, 1851-1914*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.

displayed at the Central Asian exhibition of 1891 in Moscow.¹⁹ Also included were maps and photographs of Glukhovskoi's Amu-Dar'ia expedition and images of the Transcaspian railway by P. Ia. Piasetskii.²⁰ A similar story could be told of the 1900 exhibition in Paris. As noted in the last chapter, on display were descriptions of the Murgab Estate, diagrams, articles and photographs of the cotton-processing factories at Bairam Ali, and samples of cotton and fruit, all entered on behalf of the Appanage Department.²¹ Geographical and ethnographic maps of Turkestan, photographs and models of the Central Asian railway, examples of new fuel injectors and samples of plants used to shore up the sand,²² photographs of schools in Tashkent, of the Kuropatkin School of Horticulture, samples of silks, carpets, musical instruments from Khiva, cotton, locally-grown fruits and vegetables, and examples of minerals and coal were also included.²³ A special section of the display was dedicated to the riches of Bukhara, showcasing items of jewellery, carpets, weapons and precious stones.²⁴

While such displays had definite ethnographic interest, the main emphasis lay on the human exploitation of nature through technology: the production of crops, mining of natural resources, irrigation of land to grow new plants, and fashioning of raw materials into handicrafts and manufactured products. This was a commoditised view of Turkestan,²⁵ praised for putting on show the 'incredible, fabulous accumulation of riches and wonders' that the region could proffer.²⁶ At the same time, these displays of bountiful nature, coupled with the showcasing of innovative new technical projects, boasted the material and intellectual riches of the imperial domain in a competitive sense: the exhibition was very much the venue for an 'international competition that would assess and compare the stage of technological, economic and artistic development reached by each nation'.²⁷ This quintessentially imperial narrative was very much in keeping with the exhibitions' subtexts of intra-imperial competition, propaganda, and the conceptualisation of empire as an 'instrument of progress'.²⁸ Such events attracted visitors from around the globe, particularly from Europe and America, and thus exhibits catered to the international viewer by placing colonies and metropolises 'in the marketplace'.²⁹ In this light, Turkestan was deployed as a materially wealthy and thus highly valued component of the Russian empire.

¹⁹ *Vsemirnaia Kolumbova vystavka 1893g. v Chikago. Ukazatel' Russkogo otdela*, SPb: Tip. E. Evdokimova, 1893, pp. 209-218, 438-439, 453. See also N. Leonard, *V Chikago na vystavku! Putevoditel' po N'iu-Iorku, Chikago i Vsemirnoi Kolumbovoi vystavke*, SPb: Tip. S. F. Iazdovskogo, 1893.

²⁰ RGVIA, f. 705, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 140-144 ob.

²¹ *Katalog Russkogo otdela Vsemirnoi Parizhskoi vystavki 1900g.*, SPb: Tip. Isidora Gol'dberga, [1900], p. 475.

²² V. M. Verkhovskii, *VI gruppa Russkogo otdela na Vsemirnoi 1900 g. vystavke v Parizhe*, SPb: Tip. br. Panteleevykh, 1902, p. 8.

²³ *TV*, 1900, No. 86, p. 548

²⁴ *TV*, 1900, No. 90, p. 575.

²⁵ Beinart & Hughes, *Environment and empire*, p. 3.

²⁶ *TV*, 1900, No. 90, p. 575.

²⁷ A. Swift, 'Russia and the Great Exhibition of 1851: Representations, perceptions, and a missed opportunity', *JfGO*, 2007, 55: 2, p. 243.

²⁸ Brower, *Turkestan and the fate of the Russian empire*, p. 46. See also J. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and empire: The manipulation of British public opinion, 1880-1960*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984, pp. 96-120.

²⁹ Brower, *Turkestan and the fate of the Russian empire*, p. 84.

Beyond the material exhibits themselves, the visual iconography of the whole exhibition paraphernalia was vital to the imperial narrative. In Paris, Russia's Central Asian collections were housed in her 'Regions' pavilion, a structure located near the Trocadero, designed by the architect R. F. Meltser to resemble the Moscow Kremlin, and home to exhibits from Central Asia, Siberia, the far north and the Caucasus. The symbolism of Russia's distant regions being contained within the Kremlin served as a convenient way to package imperial geography into a 'Russian' skin that cannot have been lost on visitors. In a similar fashion, the official Russian guide to the Chicago exhibition presented an imperial vision of a unified empire on its front cover - drawn by Karazin - that combined the imperial eagle, a train, factory, church, ship, a sheaf of corn and images of the various nationalities of the empire.³⁰ Again, the image served to compress diverse motifs of 'Russia' as an imperial entity into one symbol, an allegory of a productive empire, in much the same way as did the material exhibits inside the pavilions.

Integral to the whole artifice was Turkestan's designated role as an exotic but accessible corner of Russia. Chicago's section devoted to the Russian 'East' was emblazoned with scenes from 'Asiatic Russia', in which views of the Shir-Dor and Tilla-Kari mosques in Samarkand, the Zaravshan river, the mausoleum of Tamerlane, and a street scene in Samarkand represented the vision of a homogenised east.³¹ Echoing 1893's design, the hall at the 1900 Paris exhibition was decorated with five panoramas, the largest of which depicted the main square in Samarkand. It showed crowds of locals in 'brightly coloured robes', mosques, and caravans of camels on a bustling market day, while smaller panoramas portrayed a local teahouse, a bazaar, and views of local buildings. The scale and detail apparently made the painted walls 'like a continuation of the exhibits on display', so that 'the illusion of Central Asian life could be fully sustained'.³² Thus the visual appearance of the pavilions themselves played on Turkestan's unusual, quasi-exotic qualities, and was employed to bring to life a distant, exotic land for the viewer, in a similar fashion to the photography of indigenous towns in travel literature.

A comparable emphasis on Turkestan as a provider of raw materials to both the centre of empire and to other external markets (most notably China and Persia) could be found in national exhibitions. The region had detailed representation at Nizhnii Novgorod's All-Russian Fair in 1896, a grand event that attracted almost one million visitors.³³ On display from Turkestan were goods predominantly from Tashkent, Bukhara and Transcaspia, including silks, wine, cotton,

³⁰ *Vsemirnaia Kolumbova vystavka 1893g. v Chikago*, front cover.

³¹ *Vsemirnaia Kolumbova vystavka 1893g. v Chikago*, p. 209. See Çelik, *Displaying the Orient*, especially chapter three, and S. Leprun, *Le théâtre des colonies: Scénographie, acteurs et discours de l'imaginaire dans les expositions 1855-1937*, Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1986, pp. 106-112, for more on architectural representations of the east at exhibitions.

³² *ZO*, 1899, No. 145, p. 2. See a similar description in *TV*, 1900, No. 86, p. 548.

³³ For documentation regarding which items were offered for display, see RGVIA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 1708. A comprehensive listing of items eventually displayed in the Central Asian section can be found in *Podrobnyi ukazatel' po otdelam Vserossiiskoi promyshlennoi i khudozhestvennoi vystavki 1896 g.*, and for a more general overview of the Fair, see *Al'bom uchastnikov Vserossiiskoi promyshlennoi vystavki v Nizhnem-Novgorode, 1896 g.*, SPb: Tip. Ministerstva putei soobshcheniia, 1896, and *Obshchii ukazatel' Vserossiiskoi promyshlennoi i khudozhestvennoi vystavki 1896 goda v Nizhnem-Novgorode*, Moscow: [n. p.], 1896.

carpets, and plant specimens,³⁴ along with crops, wool, dried fruits, minerals, local handicrafts, ethnographic material on Transcaspia, and animal pelts.³⁵ Even the largest exhibition dedicated solely to the region, the 1891 Central Asian exhibition in Moscow, while undoubtedly having a broad remit to include sections on history and ethnography, retained a powerful emphasis on Turkestan's material resources.³⁶ Although ethnographic material, maps, models of the Transcaspian railway and portraits could all be found on display,³⁷ the overall aim of the exhibition's planners, beyond showcasing the 'particularities of life in Russian Central Asia, the Khanates and Persia', was clearly stated as familiarising the public with 'Central Asia's natural resources, with items of import and export'.³⁸ Thus raw and processed materials - metals, minerals, crops, leather, wool, cotton and silks - took the fore, all examples of local resources and manufacturing 'that will in the future be of particular significance for the development of the region and for Russian trade and industry'.³⁹ Perhaps as a precursor to the decorative styles employed at the Chicago and Paris exhibitions, the halls of Moscow's Historical Museum were bedecked in suitable fashion, with one of the rooms dressed to resemble a Samarkand bazaar, complete with Bukharan and Uzbek merchants selling their wares at stalls, surrounded by painted images of mosques, street scenes and the local citadel, all of which had the effect of 'transporting the visitor to this distant Asiatic region',⁴⁰ and which referenced existing notions about what Central Asia 'looked like' that were prevalent in, for instance, the metropolitan illustrated press.

Thus exhibitions that were held outside Turkestan, whether international or national, had significant commonalities in terms of their visual narrative, overall style and the items on display. Turkestan was an important and integrated component of the empire, able to supply the centre with all kinds of raw and processed materials, which served to embellish the image of a 'rich and profitable colony' that had been formed at previous exhibitions in the 1860s and 1870s.⁴¹ These events were put on for the benefit of the distant viewer - urban Russian society or international crowds - hence the standardised, generic internal decoration that gave an air of visual authenticity and atmosphere to proceedings. This section has been by necessity, rather brief, sufficient I hope to sketch the main trends in the portrayal of Turkestan as a commodity frontier. This is where existing analyses of Turkestan's representation at exhibitions largely end, with Turkestan conceived of as a 'colonised space', and very much part of a wider imperial narrative.⁴² Yet I contend that there is far more to be said about the exhibition as a visual event than simply its

³⁴ *Obshchii ukazatel' Vserossiiskoi promyshlennoi i khudozhestvennoi vystavki 1896 goda*, p. 405.

³⁵ *Podrobnyi ukazatel' po otdelam Vserossiiskoi promyshlennoi i khudozhestvennoi vystavki 1896 g.*, pp. 1-28 of the listings section.

³⁶ There were also several other large national exhibitions at which Turkestan was represented, including the 1892 Russian Geographical Exhibition in Moscow. For more on this event, see *Geograficheskaiia vystavka 1892g. v Moskve. Katalog vystavki*, Moscow: Tip. D. I. Inozemtseva, 1892.

³⁷ For comprehensive listings, see *Katalog Sredne-Aziatskoi vystavki v Moskve*, Moscow: Tip. N. I. Kumanina, 1891.

³⁸ RGVIA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 1428, l. 20. See also *Doklad obshchemu sobraniuu uchreditelei Sredneaziatskoi vystavki v Moskve 1891g.*, Moscow: Tip. M. G. Volchaninova, 1893, p. 3.

³⁹ RGVIA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 1428, l. 21 ob.

⁴⁰ *Doklad obshchemu sobraniuu uchreditelei Sredneaziatskoi vystavki v Moskve 1891g.*, p. 11.

⁴¹ Gorshenina, 'La construction d'une image «savante»', p. 168.

⁴² Gorshenina, 'La construction d'une image «savante»', p. 133.

imperial tone. Very little, if any attention has been given to local exhibitions held in Turkestan itself, and how these occasions intersected with the mounting of national and international events. There were certainly significant continuities in the over-arching narratives on display, but I argue below that employing a local focus reveals that the exhibition as a visual medium was more than a vehicle for imperialism. Local interests, of both first and second generation Russian settlers and indigenous inhabitants were far more evident, as was the multi-faceted nature of the exhibition setting itself as a visual crucible for multiple readings of Turkestan.

Local exhibitions and their organisers

Turkestan's representation at national and international fairs did not go unnoticed by local society. While comparatively few were able to experience these distant events personally, many were able to read about them in the local press. *Turkestanskije vedomosti* serialised a regular report on the 1900 World Fair, while Governor General Dukhovskoi visited Paris with his family to inspect Turkestan's visual portrayal at first hand.⁴³ Such events paled into comparison however with Turkestan's own burgeoning exhibition world, which, while on a far smaller physical scale, generated fevered comment, anticipation, debate and participation. The first major exhibition took place in 1886, organised by the Turkestan Horticultural Society,⁴⁴ with a second taking place in 1890, the popularity of which paved the way for subsequent regional exhibitions, most notably in 1909 and 1913. These events were usually held in Tashkent, a logical choice given the city's status as Turkestan's administrative capital. The largest event to take place outside Tashkent was the 1913 fair in Vernyi, and usefully underscores how the visual production of the exhibition could subtly change depending on its geographic location.

Commencing in 1886, the majority of exhibitions were held in Tashkent's well-appointed city garden. Surrounded by shady trees, fountains and flower beds, the exhibition unfolded as a network of temporary and permanent pavilions, stalls and hallways, decorated with flags, bunting and flowers. The contents of these pavilions showcased predominantly agricultural and manufacturing work, arranged in sections along pre-defined lines: crop cultivation; cotton, silks and bee keeping; livestock, horses and birds; horticulture and wine brewing; forestry; hunting and fishing; mining; handicrafts and factory-made produce; irrigation; and engineering projects. Larger occasions merited the inclusion of myriad other sections, including pavilions of private Russian, international and Turkestani producers, agricultural equipment, examples of regional flora and fauna, historical displays, railway pavilions, resettlement material, ethnographic exhibits, along with scientific, artistic, photographic and literary sections.⁴⁵ Compared to the

⁴³ TV, 1900, Nos 49-90, 'Parizhskie pis'ma'.

⁴⁴ Previous exhibitions had been held in 1878 and 1885, but do not seem to have been on the same scale as these later events.

⁴⁵ For detailed commentaries on the setting and organisation of these events, along with voluminous lists of items on display and section categories, see the accompanying exhibition guides: *Katalog-putevoditel' Turkestanskoi XXV letn. iubileinoi sel'skokhoziaistvennoi, nauchnoi i promyshlennoi vystavki*, Tashkent: Tip. O. A. Portseva, 1909; N. A. Maev, *Turkestanskaia vystavka 1886 goda*, Tashkent: Turkestanskii otdel imperatorskogo obshchestva sadovodstva, 1886; N. A. Maev, *Turkestanskaia vystavka 1890g. Putevoditel' po vystavke i ee otdelem*, Tashkent: Tip. S. I. Lakhtina, 1890; S. Petukhov, *Obzor Semirechenskoi oblastnoi sel'sko-*

World's Fairs, these local events could encompass a far greater variety of products, from a more diverse range of contributors. No longer limited to selecting merely the region's most representative objects, organisers could display a huge assortment of items - some, such as cotton and silks, the mainstay of the Central Asian economy for many centuries, others, such as experimental local brie and pistachio oil, rather more innovative in nature.

The organisers in question were a mixture of prominent local administrators within the state apparatus and representatives from local agricultural and technical societies.⁴⁶ These societies played a pivotal role in the staging of such events by liaising with regional dignitaries to propose new events, request funding, and seek general assistance.⁴⁷ They did however receive a good deal of material and financial support from local government, and a whole panoply of individuals sat on the honorary oversight committees, including in 1909, Krivoshein and the Emir of Bukhara.⁴⁸ As mentioned above, the 1886 event was organised by the Turkestan branch of the Russian Horticultural society, headed by I. I. Krauze; the 1890 event, held to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the capture of Tashkent, organised by N. I. Grodekov, Governor of Syr-Dar'ia *oblast'*;⁴⁹ 1909 by the Turkestan Agricultural society, to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary;⁵⁰ and 1913 by M. A. Fol'baum, the Governor of Semirech'e and S. N. Veletskii, the *oblast's* head of resettlement.⁵¹

Under the guidance of these individuals and amateur societies, Turkestan's exhibitions were far more authentic than their national and international counterparts. While it may have been difficult to believe 'that here, in the heart of Paris could be found the riches of Kokand's bazaars, the fruits of Andizhan's fields, and the rarities of Samarkand's ancient mosques',⁵² it was much less a flight of fancy to see similar types of exhibits gathered together in Tashkent. Although Turkestan's exhibitions did attract visitors from far away (most notably Witte in 1890), the vast majority of spectators must have been local people, for whom the sight of cotton, silks, irrigation paraphernalia and the like were in no way the exotic commodities that they had been when exhibited nationally or internationally, but rather, were everyday products. Nevertheless, just as at the World's Fairs, these were not simply picturesque displays of melons, silks and tomatoes, but curated messages designed to be read by the viewer. Exhibitions were conceived of by their planners as a stage on which to visually communicate a series of ideas about Turkestan as a place, on both local and imperial scales. In order to fully articulate the narrative of the exhibition, organisers produced commentaries, published in local newspapers, in guides to the event and in

khoziaistvennoi i promyshlennoi vystavki, 17 sentiabria 1913 goda v oznamenovanie 300-letii tsarstvovaniia Doma Romanovykh, Vernyi: Tip. Semirechenskogo oblastnogo pravleniia, 1914.

⁴⁶ For a discussion of the main local societies, see B. V. Lunin, *Nauchnye obshchestva Turkestana i ikh progressivnaia deiatel'nost'. Konets XIX-nachalo XX v.*, Tashkent: Izd. Akademii nauk UzSSR, 1962.

⁴⁷ See for instance proposals sent to the Governor General in 1898, in RGVIA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 2658, ll. 3-5.

⁴⁸ See the detailed liaison between the state and the society over the 1909 exhibition, in RGVIA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 3782.

⁴⁹ RGVIA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 1367, ll. 6-9.

⁵⁰ It had initially been known as the Turkestan branch of the Russian Horticultural Society until 1895.

⁵¹ RGIA, f. 391, op. 4, d. 1673, l. 3, and TsGARK, f. 311, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 46-48 ob.

⁵² *TV*, 1900, No. 71, p. 446.

the local agricultural journal. These texts form part of what Gilbert terms a 'legacy of meaning': a written version of the exhibition narrative as it was intended to be received by the viewer in an attempt to control the message and shape its reception.⁵³

The exhibition was ostensibly designed to showcase the natural and material wealth of Turkestan, yet encompassed a number of more specific, and often intersecting goals, clearly articulated by planners in their records. Early attempts at popular exhibitions began with the fairly modest aspiration of familiarising 'both Russian and native inhabitants of Turkestan with the state of local industry', via the visual display of representative objects.⁵⁴ By 1890 however, the intentions of the organisers were altogether more grandiose. To mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the capture of Tashkent, 'agricultural and industrial products' were to be gathered together so as to 'clearly (and visually) demonstrate the successes of Russian culture in Turkestan for the twenty-five year period'.⁵⁵ By producing a 'picture of Turkestan's riches', the event was designed to frame the economic and cultural progress that had been achieved under Russian rule, and to stimulate local industrial growth.⁵⁶ Similar aims were stated for the 1909 Tashkent exhibition and the 1913 Vernyi event, which were to 'demonstrate all that the region was capable of, in the present, and point to its future development'.⁵⁷

Thus the exhibition as a public spectacle served several different functions. It elaborated a version of Russia's triumphalist narrative of transformation, by visually displaying the innovations and productivity that Russian rule had brought. The military-historical section at the 1890 exhibition drew visitors' attention to the 'heroic' act that had 'freed locals from the yoke of Muslim rule' by displaying Russian weapons, images of battle and so forth.⁵⁸ In a similar fashion, the Central Asian railway was a convenient vehicle to convey visually Russia's technological 'civilising' of territory, and as such was a prominent component of the exhibitions. The railway pavilion in 1890 contained maps and photographs of the line, scale models, examples of telephone and telegraph equipment, signals and illustrations of stations, all of which had been curated so as to demonstrate Russia's triumph over the 'half-dead slumber' of the Central Asian environment.⁵⁹ Above all, the visual collection of natural and material wealth was to illustrate that the Russian presence had 'founded a new era in the history of the region, having brought about deep-seated changes to local economic life'.⁶⁰ The exhibition also had practical import; it was a means to 'strengthen trade, develop local industry, and to bring together the European consumer and Turkestani producers'.⁶¹ Thus 'new horizons for local producers' could be fostered, while at the same time innovative new

⁵³ J. Gilbert, *Whose Fair? Experience, memory, and the history of the Great St. Louis Exposition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009, p. 37.

⁵⁴ Maev, *Turkestanskaia vystavka 1886 goda*, p. 5.

⁵⁵ RGVIA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 1367, l. 6 ob.

⁵⁶ RGVIA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 2658, ll. 3-3 ob.

⁵⁷ RGIA, f. 391, op. 4, d. 1673, l. 2 ob.

⁵⁸ Maev, *Turkestanskaia vystavka 1890g.*, pp. 3-6.

⁵⁹ Maev, *Turkestanskaia vystavka 1890g.*, p. 84. A similar metaphor of a 'step by step battle in this rippling sea of shifting sands' could be found in descriptions of the railway pavilion at the 1909 exhibition in *TV*, 1909, No. 198, p. 862.

⁶⁰ RGIA, f. 391, op. 4, d. 1673, l. 2.

⁶¹ RGVIA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 2658, l. 4.

products could be introduced to the market.⁶² As-yet-untapped resources were also a target for visual display, and the industrial and mining pavilions were full of geological maps, samples of coal, salt, minerals and maps of deposits that had yet to be mined, underscoring the future potential of local industry.⁶³ Beyond trade and economic interests, the exhibition was also to be of use to the general public, either intellectually, in terms of the Russian narrative of progress, or of practical educational benefit. The 1909 exhibition introduced visitors to a pavilion full of irrigation paraphernalia 'so that the public at large could understand' its science and utility,⁶⁴ while in 1913, visitors could attend a section devoted to agricultural practice that showcased models and diagrams of new houses, samples of linoleum, cement, and other substances deemed to be of use to local inhabitants.⁶⁵

Most crucially, the visual content of the exhibition was used to make statements about Turkestan's role within the empire. A particularly striking reading of the exhibition was provided in 1909, when *Turkestanskije vedomosti* opened its coverage of the jubilee exhibition by proclaiming that 'today is a significant day, not only for Tashkent, but for the whole region. Today Turkestan sits an exam, its school leaving certificate [*attestat zrelosti*'], and presents clear proof of its cultural development'.⁶⁶ The organisers were clearly taken with the idea of the exhibition as a visual riposte to an unwritten test, as the educational metaphor appeared a number of times: 'the exhibition is not just an exam, but also a school for those who want to learn something, it is the medium through which the light rays of agriculture, industry, science and art are refracted'.⁶⁷ Furthermore, it was to be not only a 'test based on our past activities, but an indicator of potential for the workers of the future'.⁶⁸ Such events thus provided an opportunity for organisers to make the case for what Turkestan represented to the rest of the empire, in the form of a visual answer to the 'exam' concerning the region's 'ever closer rapprochement with the heart of Russia'.⁶⁹

The wider significance of Turkestan to the Russian empire was most commonly expressed in the form of spatial and economic metaphors; vocabularies that were fed by the visual evidence of the agricultural, industrial, scientific and artistic wealth displayed at the exhibition. The period of the fair was a time when vivid metaphors could be deployed. As the 1913 exhibition got underway, the local newspaper reminded its readers in the daily commentary on the event that '*Novoe vremia* writes that "the wonderful climate and fertile soils of Turkestan make this region our California"'.⁷⁰ The image of a productive garden seemed to be the logical conclusion to be drawn from the evidence of the eye, as apples, pears, apricots, pomegranates, cherries, figs, melons and grapes, just like those from a 'far off tropical land',⁷¹ gave the compiler of the official guide to the

⁶² *TV*, 1909, No. 195, p. 843.

⁶³ *TSKh*, 1910, No. 1, p. 25.

⁶⁴ *TSKh*, 1910, No. 1, p. 5.

⁶⁵ *SOV*, 1913, No. 218, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁶ *TV*, 1909, No. 195, p. 843.

⁶⁷ *TV*, 1909, No. 196, p. 850.

⁶⁸ *TSKh*, 1910, No. 1, p. 31.

⁶⁹ *TSKh*, 1910, No. 1, p. 30.

⁷⁰ *SOV*, 1913, No. 199, p. 4.

⁷¹ Maev, *Turkestanskaia vystavka 1890g.*, p. 34.

1890 exhibition leeway to comment that Turkestan must 'surely be the land of fruit'.⁷² Commentaries rhapsodised over the agricultural items on display, and noted how these objects were not only numerous in quantity, but noteworthy in terms of size, diversity and taste. In Vernyi, one visitor was astounded to find a parsnip of one metre (!) in diameter,⁷³ meanwhile specimens of peas, aubergines, tobacco, watermelons and peppers were habitually described as being 'marvellous' in appearance and flavour,⁷⁴ and seemingly everyday products appeared in myriad forms.⁷⁵

The visual variety and abundance of such products portrayed a picture of both bountiful nature and of the productive exploitation of the land's resources. The seeming potential of this representation was articulated perhaps most famously by Witte, who, visiting the 1890 exhibition, proclaimed that Turkestan was the 'jewel in the crown of the Russian Tsar'.⁷⁶ Witte's thoughts were echoed by those who resided in the region. On the basis of the 1909 event, the President of the local Agricultural Society, R. R. Shreder, labelled Turkestan a 'precious pearl of the Russian empire'.⁷⁷ In other quarters, the image of Turkestan's fertility found form in similar metaphors, most commonly a 'garden', a 'granary', or in Krivoshein's words, an 'orangery'.⁷⁸ Accordingly, Turkestan's role within the empire was as a provider of agricultural products, a type of commodity frontier predicated around the vision of a fertile, productive land that was discussed in chapter four. This was by no means a vision unique to Turkestan; other regions of the imperial domain were also conceived of as 'lands of promise' and 'el dorados', while the exhibition has also been noted as an important venue for the anointing of 'jewels' of other empires.⁷⁹

For the local societies and regional Governors who were keen to promote Turkestan as a land of plenty, one particular substance stood out - cotton. While securing access to Central Asia's cotton fields may not have been one of the primary motivations for the conquest in the 1860s,⁸⁰ Russian administrators and entrepreneurs were certainly keen to develop the cotton-growing, picking and

⁷² Maev, *Turkestanskaia vystavka 1890g.*, p. 21.

⁷³ Petukhov, *Obzor vystavki*, p. 9.

⁷⁴ *SOV*, 1913, No. 202, pp. 1-4, and *SOV*, 1913, No. 204, p. 1. See also *TSKh*, 1910, No. 1, p. 9.

⁷⁵ The 1909 exhibition boasted 100 types of locally-grown potato, according to *TV*, 1909, No. 204, p. 899, and the 1890 event hosted thirty-five varieties of apple, according to Maev, *Turkestanskaia vystavka 1890g.*, p. 34.

⁷⁶ Brower, *Turkestan and the fate of the Russian empire*, p. 85.

⁷⁷ *TSKh*, 1909, No. 12, p. 892.

⁷⁸ A. V. Krivoshein, *Zapiska Glavnoupravliaiushchego zemleustroistvom i zemledeliem o poezdke v Turkestanskii krai v 1912 godu*, SPb: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1912, p. 76.

⁷⁹ See for instance similar portrayals of Siberia as a 'land of promise', in J. Hartley, "'A land of limitless possibilities': British commerce and trade in Siberia in the early twentieth century", *Sibirica*, 2014, 13: 3, pp. 3-4; the Primor'e region as a 'granary', in M. Sokolsky, 'Between predation and protection: Forests and forestry in late Tsarist Primor'e', *Sibirica*, 2014, 13: 2, p. 35; the Far East as a 'Russian Mississippi' and an 'el dorado', in M. Bassin, *Imperial visions: Nationalist imagination and geographical expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840-1864*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; and Russia's European steppes as 'fertile gardens', in W. Sunderland, *Taming the wild field: Colonization and empire on the Russian steppe*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004, particularly pp. 94, 224. There are also striking parallels with the Soviet period, for instance the construction of an image of Sochi as a 'jewel in the crown' of the Soviet state, in J. Conterio, 'Inventing the subtropics: An environmental history of Sochi, 1929-36', *Kritika*, 2015, 16: 1, pp. 91-120. See Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral vistas*, for the visual treatment of India as a 'jewel' in the crown of the British empire, pp. 55, 59-62.

⁸⁰ Morrison suggests that the previous emphasis on cotton as a mobilising factor behind the conquest may be overblown, in A. Morrison, 'Killing the cotton canard and getting rid of the Great Game: Rewriting the Russian conquest of Central Asia, 1814-1895', *CAS*, 2014, 33: 2, pp. 131-142.

processing industry from the 1880s onwards.⁸¹ Exhibits of cotton plants, processed cotton, lint and other products, photographs of cotton processing factories - including at Bairam Ali - and of experiments with new types of seeds featured at all local exhibitions, and allowed more specific economic claims to be made about Turkestan's role vis-à-vis the imperial centre. As regards cotton, and on a smaller scale, silk, the exhibition was a public venue to make the case that Turkestan was increasingly supplying a significant proportion of Russia's material needs.⁸² In the case of cotton, this claim was important, given that it would theoretically end the empire's dependence on imported American crops. Indeed, by 1910, Turkestan met fifty per cent of the empire's cotton requirements, stimulated by the use of the new 'Upland' variety of American cotton.⁸³ As early as 1886, this particular plant had appeared at the Tashkent exhibition, grown by the director of the local prison (and head of the Horticultural Society) I. I. Krauze as an experiment in the Tashkent prison garden.⁸⁴ Exhibitions offered the opportunity for local growers to display their wares, and for visitors from Russia's largest textile mills to inspect the state of the industry.⁸⁵ In economic terms, cotton was clearly an important lens through which Turkestan was seen. The 1890 exhibition guide trumpeted the plant as 'God's finest gift to our Turkestan',⁸⁶ while the 1909 guide labelled it 'the cornerstone of the region's future economic development'.⁸⁷ The visual evidence of the exhibition thus supported claims, such as those made by a GUZZ-sponsored study in 1913, that Turkestan was 'the land of cotton', and interestingly the study even reproduced a photograph of the cotton pavilion at the 1909 exhibition to reinforce the point.⁸⁸

Similar assertions could not be made at the 1913 exhibition, given the unsuitable conditions for cotton growing in Semirech'e. Instead, a subtly different narrative was advanced which envisaged Semirech'e as an isolated 'granary' or 'breadbasket' that had untapped potential to meet local demand in Turkestan as well as wider needs across Russia.⁸⁹ Observers readily connected the many 'wonderful' examples of fruits, cereals and vegetables on display to the region's wider role in the imperial domain, making assertions that the local 'favourable conditions' (climate and soil) meant that 'Semirech'e must really be destined to be a rich grain granary not just for neighbouring

⁸¹ S. Thompstone, 'Russian imperialism and the commercialization of the Central Asian cotton trade', *Textile History*, 1995, 26: 2, pp. 233-257, and J. Whitman, 'Turkestan cotton in imperial Russia', *American Slavic and East European Review*, 1956, 15: 2, pp. 190-205. For detailed contemporary accounts, see S. Poniatovskii, *Opyt izucheniia khlopkovodstva v Turkestane i Zakaspiiskoi oblasti*, SPb: Tip. V. F. Kirshbauma, 1913, and N. P. Verkhovskoi, *Khlopkovodstvo v Turkestane i perevozka khlopka po Tashkentskoi i Sredne-Aziatskoi zheleznym dorogam*, SPb: Tip. Ministerstva putei soobshcheniia, 1910.

⁸² According to Maev, *Turkestanskaia vystavka 1886 goda*, p. 34, Turkestan already supplied the majority of Russia's silk output as early as 1886.

⁸³ J. Obertreiss, "'Mertvye" i "kul'turnye" zemli: Diskursy uchenykh i imperskaia politika v Srednei Azii, 1880-e - 1991 gg.', *Ab Imperio*, 2008, 4, p. 196.

⁸⁴ Maev, *Turkestanskaia vystavka 1886 goda*, p. 38.

⁸⁵ Thompstone notes the interest of Russian textile firms, including S. Morozov and the Bolshaia Iaroslavskaiia textile mills, in the region, in Thompstone, 'Russian imperialism', p. 233. The latter company had its own pavilion at several of the exhibitions.

⁸⁶ Maev, *Turkestanskaia vystavka 1890g.*, p. 121.

⁸⁷ *Katalog-putevoditel' Turkestanskoi vystavki*, p. 27.

⁸⁸ Poniatovskii, *Opyt izucheniia khlopkovodstva v Turkestane*, p. 135. The claim 'Turkestan, kak strana khlopka', can be found in the title of part one. Krivoshein makes a similar statement in Krivoshein, *Zapiska*, p. 76.

⁸⁹ See for instance Petukhov, *Obzor vystavki*, p. 8.

Turkestan but possibly also for Russia'.⁹⁰ By providing visual evidence of Semirech'e's bountiful landscapes, the exhibition reinforced the local narratives discussed in chapter two that prefigured the region as a grain supply depot that would allow more land to be given over to cotton in Turkestan's remaining *oblasti*.

Such suggestions were, of course, far from altruistic. The period of the Semirech'e exhibition was characterised by a good deal of lobbying for local interests, chiefly with respect to the development of the region's railway concessions. The organisers clearly saw the event as a pivotal moment for both Semirech'e and the wider region of Turkestan: the organising committee, headed by Semirech'e's Governor and resettlement official, appealed to GUZZ for financial assistance, calling for the department to lend support to this 'distant, but bountiful region, at the moment of its economic self-definition'.⁹¹ Crucial to this 'self-definition' was that the display of riches at the exhibition was carefully positioned within a narrative of spatial adversity. The local newspaper's reports on the event noted that 'only here [the exhibition] is it possible to grasp the huge amount of interest that there is in our region, cut off from the cultured world and deprived of the most elementary comforts of life, and what kind of huge future it will have with the onset of more "normal" conditions of life'.⁹² The writer noted that the exhibition gave the impression that 'we have both the people and the opportunity to transform Semirech'e into a richly flowering corner of Russia'.⁹³ Later reflections on the exhibition's successes continued in much the same vein: 'despite the peripheral position of Semirech'e, the remoteness from the centre, the lack of a railway connection, the region's comparative youth, even under these conditions, all of the types of agriculture [on display] were not inferior, and sometimes were even superior in their development ... to that of some provinces of European Russia'.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, the exhibition was used to make explicit the link between spatial dislocation and the need for a railway. The official exhibition guide was careful to note that 'with the extension of the railway, Semirech'e will become an important supplier to the Russian, and perhaps foreign, fruit market',⁹⁵ and such claims were echoed in Turkestan's agricultural journal.⁹⁶ The riches of fruits, vegetables and cereals on display could only be made available to Russia with the continuation of the railway to Vernyi and beyond, a project which, as discussed in chapter two, had largely stalled by the early 1900s.

Thus woven into the visual narrative of the exhibition was a series of local claims, reliant upon the conceptualisation of Semirech'e as a 'cut-off' corner of both Russia and Turkestan. The evidence of fruits, vegetables and so forth was not simply suggestive that these were resources that Turkestan could supply to the imperial centre, but was used locally to make convincing cases for better infrastructure and for concessions to be extracted from St Petersburg. These assertions referenced ideas already invoked by some of Semirech'e's most prominent individuals, including

⁹⁰ *SOV*, 1913, No. 202, pp. 3-4. See also Petukhov, *Obzor vystavki*, p. 8

⁹¹ RGIA, f. 391, op. 4, d. 1673, l. 3. See a similar letter to the Resettlement Administration, l. 12.

⁹² *SOV*, 1913, No. 200, p. 3.

⁹³ *SOV*, 1913, No. 200, p. 3.

⁹⁴ *SOV*, 1913, No. 233, p. 2.

⁹⁵ Petukhov, *Obzor vystavki*, p. 12.

⁹⁶ *TSKh*, 1913, No. 2, p. 156.

Vernyi's mayor Ia. S. Shchepkin, head of local resettlement activities Veletskii, and P. Gurde, Vernyi's architect and engineer, that Semirech'e was a rich but isolated land in chronic need of investment. The rhetoric of the exhibition, linked explicitly to the evidence of the visual display, echoed and replicated the distinct imagery created by these men. Shchepkin had written to Pahlen in 1909 that Semirech'e was 'the richest place in the world' in terms of its natural resources, and that these riches urgently needed to be 'opened up' by means of a new railway,⁹⁷ while in the 1890s, Gurde published several pamphlets to lobby for the transformation of the region's 'utterly isolated position from neighbouring *oblasti*' into a new role as a supplier of grains, rice and meat to the rest of Turkestan, enabling more land to be turned over to cotton,⁹⁸ and Veletskii had put forward a similar argument for the railway's utility in turning the 'distant *okraina*' into a centre of economic development and Russian colonisation.⁹⁹ Given the latter's role as both head of resettlement and the chief organiser of the exhibition, the event was very clearly a stage on which to advance narratives of local interest.

Participation and the social body

Turkestan's exhibitions were opportunities to couch the region as a series of metaphors, most frequently conceived of through the prism of the land's utility to the rest of the empire. Yet as seen above, there were variations on this theme that incorporated more nuanced and localised ideas of spatial identity. Indeed, the various levels of the exhibition's visibility - from items on display and visual metaphors of breadbaskets and orangeries in texts, to image-making that recorded the exhibition itself - demonstrate that the meanings of the exhibition were far more diverse than simply portraying Turkestan as an imperial commodity frontier. Key to the varied readings of the exhibition 'text' were the people who participated in it. Organisers, catalogue compilers and newspaper columnists may have conceived of the exhibition in a certain way, reading it as an opportunity to promote visually Turkestan's progress and utility, but what is unclear is whether these ideas were legible to those who attended. Recent historiography on fairs and exhibitions has made fascinating inroads into the individual and collective experiences of such events, using diary and oral evidence to suggest that visitors in fact derived multiple meanings from the exhibition, based on their own experiences and preconceptions.¹⁰⁰ In Turkestan's case, very little recoverable material has been found of visitors' reactions to the various exhibitions, yet nevertheless, I suggest below that certain scenarios demonstrate that local viewers drew a range of contrasting messages from the visual displays put before them.

⁹⁷ RGIA, f. 1396, op. 1, d. 223, ll. 1 ob-2 ob.

⁹⁸ P. V. Gurde, *Mineral'nye bogatstva Semirechenskoi oblasti, v sviazi s voprosom o provedenii zheleznoi dorogi Tashkent-Sibir', cherez Semirechenskuiu, Semipalatinskuiu oblasti i Altaiskii okrug*, Vernyi: Tip. Semirechenskogo oblastnogo pravleniia, 1898, p. 2. See a related argument in P. V. Gurde, *Nekotorye dannye po torgovle v Semirechenskoi oblasti, v sviazi s voprosom o soedinenii Zakaspiiskoi zheleznoi dorogi s velikim Sibirskim putem, cherez Semirechenskuiu i Semipalatinskuiu oblasti i Altaiskii okrug*, Vernyi: Tip. Semirechenskogo oblastnogo pravleniia, 1898.

⁹⁹ S. N. Veletskii, *Zheleznaia doroga v Semirech'e*, [Vernyi]: Tip. Semirechenskogo oblastnogo pravleniia, 1910, pp. 27-30. The text formed a speech given to assembled local farmers and the Semirech'e branch of the Russian Mining Society on 6 March 1910.

¹⁰⁰ Perhaps the best example of this is Gilbert, *Whose Fair?*.

Readings of exhibitions were dependent on their consumption. In this respect, visitors were active participants; buying programmes, inspecting pavilions and purchasing products for sale. For many, the event may have simply been a fun day out, as the grounds were packed with entertainments to occupy the visitor for many hours. Turkestan's exhibitions were, in their own way, no less phantasmagorical than their illustrious siblings, the World's Fairs, and were spectacles of 'pleasure' as well as 'progress'.¹⁰¹ The physical space of the exhibition grounds, always located within urban municipal parks, lent the event an attractive aesthetic that drew in the crowds. In Tashkent, the gardens and pavilions were remarked upon for their pleasing appearance, while in Vernyi, the decorative pavilions and stalls 'would attract attention even if they were at exhibitions in the largest Russian towns'.¹⁰² The pavilions were carefully planned to provide the event with a sense of identity. In 1913, the majority were designed by A. P. Zenkov, architect of Vernyi's cathedral and official engineer of Semirech'e, to fit a distinctly 'Russian' theme, and made use of various elements of vernacular Russian wooden architecture, in an interesting reversal of the 'exotic' and 'oriental' themes of Turkestan at the national and international events discussed above.¹⁰³ Similar 'Russian' styles could be found in Tashkent, along with more bombastically-themed structures that included a mining pavilion built in the form of a mountain, and a distillery's in the shape of a wine bottle. All had a certain kitsch appeal that added to the surreal, 'theme park-esque' experience.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the items on display had considerable aesthetic appeal themselves, with multi-coloured rows of fruits and vegetables, pyramids of cotton, jams, and silks that all made for a 'beautiful picture'.¹⁰⁵ Thus visitors were doubtless attracted by the visual appeal of these events, regardless of their message.

The fantastical atmosphere of the exhibition space was reinforced by the multitude of additional experiences available. In 1909, as well as taking in the individual pavilions, spectators could dine in numerous pop-up restaurants, apparently including Russia's first vegetarian canteen,¹⁰⁶ drink in a beer hall, listen to a balalaika orchestra, attend lectures by invited speakers, and join in guided evening walks around the exhibition territory. By all accounts, the grounds at night, illuminated by electric light, presented a 'magical picture'.¹⁰⁷ The event was so popular that the organisers put on sale unlimited entrance tickets for the exhibition season: visitors were making multiple visits, and seemingly some were even sleeping in the exhibition grounds.¹⁰⁸ Visitor numbers underscore the popularity of such events. 20,000 people were estimated to have visited in 1886,¹⁰⁹ rising to 158,500 in 1909, a number all the more remarkable given that the Russian population of Tashkent in 1910 was only 54,500.¹¹⁰ Little is known about the social composition of the visitors, but it

¹⁰¹ M. Neuburger, 'Fair encounters: Bulgaria and the "West" at international exhibitions from Plovdiv to St. Louis', *SR*, 2010, 69: 3, p. 547.

¹⁰² *SOV*, 1913, No. 201, p. 1.

¹⁰³ See the original sketches in TsGARK, f. 48, op. 1, d. 865, for instance ll. 11, 61, 83.

¹⁰⁴ A similar allusion is made in Bradley, 'Pictures at an exhibition', pp. 953-954.

¹⁰⁵ Petukhov, *Obzor vystavki*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁶ *TV*, 1909 No. 198, p. 863.

¹⁰⁷ *TV*, 1909, No. 198, p. 863.

¹⁰⁸ *TV*, 1909 No. 199, p. 871.

¹⁰⁹ Maev, *Turkestanskaia vystavka 1886 goda*, p. 78.

¹¹⁰ RGVIA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 3782, l. 125 ob.

seems to have encompassed both Russian and indigenous guests. *Turkestanskije vedomosti* noted with delight that local Uzbek women could be seen attending the exhibition, which was unusual given the strictures of Sharia law.¹¹¹

Due to a lack of substantive evidence, it remains beyond the capacity of this study to establish whether the majority of these visitors 'read' the exhibition in the ways intended by its organisers, or whether many simply viewed it as a fun way to while away an afternoon. Yet certain sources do reveal that the visual display was open to a multitude of interpretations. One P. I. Shreider, journeying from Tashkent to Przheval'sk (formerly Karakol) in order to take the waters at Lake Issyk-Kul, wrote an intriguing account of his travels that took in the Tashkent exhibitions.¹¹² Echoing the existing exhibition narratives of organisers and the local press, he wrote 'we have been to various exhibitions in Tashkent, which are decked out with elegant pavilions, set within the alleys of the municipal garden, and decorated with flags, flower garlands and so forth. In the windows, all types of agricultural produce, handicrafts, silk, wool, paper products, and even jewellery, are beautifully arranged and laid out'.¹¹³ On this basis, he noted, the viewer was led to believe that Turkestan was 'a Russian America', awash with natural and man-made riches.¹¹⁴ Where the majority of exhibition commentaries came to a natural, triumphalist end however, Shreider proceeded to lambast the entire enterprise. He continued, 'in fact, we see an "exhibition" in only the most superficial sense of the word ... put together for the compilation of albums and high-brow descriptions about the "activities of the *krai*". These exhibitions served only as 'an open reproach, demonstrating that the riches of the region are completely wasted on us for the time being (and let's hope that it is only for the time being). We do not want, or do not know how to use them [natural resources]', and instead have to rely on caravans of imports from Russia and Siberia. 'Look at a geological map of Turkestan: gold ... iron, lead, coal ... graphite, salt ... marble, turquoise ... marked in all possible colours', yet all largely unexploited.¹¹⁵

Shreider's comments rather blew apart the carefully-crafted message of Turkestan's exhibitions (although ironically, while casting aspersions on the duplicitous visual presentation, he pointed to another value-laden visual source - a map - to validate his argument). To paraphrase his remarks, the exhibitions were all style but no substance, given Russia's inability to properly exploit the riches of the land. Listing textiles and other manufactured goods as examples of products that could be made within Turkestan, but instead had to be imported at huge cost, Shreider vocally criticised Russia's 'progressive' credentials in the region (whether he believed this was a result of deliberate tsarist policy, or lack of technical knowledge or finance is unclear).¹¹⁶ His comments very much pre-empted Gurde's later observations that Semirech'e's natural resources of coal,

¹¹¹ *TV*, 1909, No. 211, p. 943.

¹¹² P. I. Shreider, *Po okraïne. Putevye ocherki*, SPb: Tip. V. V. Komarova, 1893.

¹¹³ Shreider, *Po okraïne*, p. 188.

¹¹⁴ Shreider, *Po okraïne*, p. 189.

¹¹⁵ Shreider, *Po okraïne*, p. 189.

¹¹⁶ This point was well-made. Despite producing huge quantities of raw cotton for instance, Turkestan had almost no local textile industry, as the vast majority of picked cotton was exported immediately to Russia. See Thompstone, 'Russian imperialism', p. 251.

minerals and metals 'lie untouched in the bowels of the earth'.¹¹⁷ Moreover, further echoes of the point can be found in other contemporary readings of the exhibition. The paucity of manufactured goods at the Vernyi event was found to be symbolic of the 'embryonic state' of local industry, as 'the remoteness of Semirech'e from cultured centres, the lack of good, quick and convenient transport links, have made it so that the whole of local industry is unable to access external markets'.¹¹⁸ Thus it is evident that the exhibition could be used to make derogatory points about the state of the colonial venture via a process of negative attribution, by highlighting items that were not on display. Shreider's remarks served as a sharp critique of Turkestan's development under imperial rule. Simultaneously, they neatly lay bare the tension between the exhibition as a representative medium and the reality of what the exhibits were intended to display. His exposé of the event's superficiality drew attention to issues of truth, trust, accuracy and authenticity that surround any form of visual display, and acts as a valuable reminder that visitors did not unquestioningly accept visual evidence at face value. The neatly-arranged products, images and models did not necessarily convert into a message that was apparent to all, in fact, on the basis of Shreider's testimony, they could actively serve to highlight the gulf between the image that the exhibition's organisers sought to construct, and an individual's direct experiences.

The multiple functions of the exhibition beyond that of advancing the organisers' narratives can also be seen in the actions of other visitors, a good number of whom would likely be exhibitors, their colleagues or relations. Alongside state-run departments and institutions, private individuals and commercial enterprises contributed the bulk of the exhibition's substantive components. In the case of the latter two groups, the motivation to participate cannot have been solely, if at all, the desire to contribute to the conceptual message set up by the organisers. Rather, the exhibition was a venue for local and international firms to advertise their wares. Large companies such as Singer and Nobel commandeered their own private pavilions in Tashkent and Vernyi, while small local businesses exhibited their products in shared facilities. Private firms participating in the Vernyi exhibition included the local beer-brewing factory of I. D. Lutmanov, leather craftsmen, a sausage producer and a typographer. In Tashkent, numerous entries could be found from distilleries, Uzbek silk artisans, cotton and tobacco processing factories and paper manufacturers. It seems sensible to suggest that the motivations of the majority, if not all, of these companies and individuals must have been primarily financial: the exhibition provided a captive audience to whom products were advertised and sold. For foreign firms such as Singer, it offered a new market to infiltrate, while growing local businesses were presented with an opportunity to make contacts and develop a reputation. On an individual level, the competitive aspect of the exhibition may also have been a motivation to participate. Prizes were awarded to entrants, who consisted, notably, of a significant number of non-Russians. The 1886 exhibition recorded only 139 Russian exhibitors, but 586 'native' contributors.¹¹⁹ Prizes were awarded across ethnic lines: in Vernyi for instance, while the local 'horticultural pioneer' M. Moiseev was awarded a prize for the variety and

¹¹⁷ Gurde, *Mineral'nye bogatstva Semirechenskoi oblasti*, p. 19.

¹¹⁸ Petukhov, *Obzor vystavki*, pp. 60-61.

¹¹⁹ Maev, *Turkestanskaia vystavka 1886 goda*, p. 77.

quality of his produce, a gold medal was given to K. Mido, a local Dungan, for the excellent quality of his rice, wheat, barley, peas and corn. The medal listings show that other awards were given to a variety of ethnic Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Dungan locals.¹²⁰ Thus private imperatives, whether competitive or commercial, also shaped the content of what could be seen at these exhibitions, and may well have been much more in the forefront of many exhibitors' minds than the spatial and imperial narratives conceived of by the organisers.

Underlying the conceptualisation of the exhibition as a stage for private display was something rather more significant. The exhibition was an unusual entity, as, in visual terms at least, it was the product of a broad cross-section of society, from peasants, handicraft workers and farmers, to agronomists and engineers, drawn from both Russian and indigenous populations. Thus these events were remarkable moments when local society gathered together both to view the exhibition display and contribute to its construction. In this sense, the exhibition was a 'temporal materialization of the "social body"': a communal event in which spectators forged common bonds and common memories through their participation, regardless of social or ethnic identity.¹²¹ To some degree, the exhibition transcended the politics of the everyday, and was an 'imaginary environment, in which to overcome (or evade) some of the great divisions in society', an opportunity that was particularly apposite in the physically divided city of Tashkent.¹²² It is possible therefore that these acts of visual display contributed to the shaping of local ideas of identity and belonging among spectators, even as the overall message curated by organisers remained more resolutely imperial in nature. Central to these localised interests was the involvement of the Agricultural and Technical Societies, which acted as bridges between the military administration and society at large. The institution of the exhibition provided an opportunity for 'civic groups to enter the public arena',¹²³ strengthening local civil society and Turkestan's burgeoning public sphere.¹²⁴

The significance of the exhibition as an arena where local people could contribute to putting Turkestan on display is also clearly evident in the visual record of these events. Producing photographic images of the exhibition was a common means of providing a visual tour of the grounds as a 'substitute for the experience itself', either for those who could not attend in person, or as a lasting visual memento for those who had participated.¹²⁵ These images were reproduced in a variety of formats, from exhibition guidebooks and in the case of the 1909 event, the

¹²⁰ *Spisok nagrad po Semirechenskoi sel'sko-khoziaistvennoi i promyshlennoi vystavke v pamiat 300-letia tsarstvovaniia Doma Romanovykh, sostoiavsheisia v g. Vernom s 17 po 30 sentiabria 1913g.*, Vernyi: Tip. Semirechenskogo oblastnogo pravleniia, 1913. See also TsGARK, f. 311, op. 1, d. 16. A similar listing for the 1909 exhibition can be found in *TSKh*, 1910, supplement to No. 1, pp. 1-51.

¹²¹ Cherry & Cullen, *Spectacle and display*, p. 82.

¹²² Gilbert, *Whose Fair?*, p. 188.

¹²³ Bradley, 'Pictures at an exhibition', p. 966.

¹²⁴ Bradley makes a convincing argument that the activities of learned and amateur societies played a pivotal role in the growth of the public sphere in imperial Russia, in J. Bradley, *Voluntary associations in tsarist Russia: Science, patriotism, and civil society*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009, as does Evtuhov in C. Evtuhov, *Portrait of a Russian province: Economy, society, and civilization in nineteenth-century Nizhnii Novgorod*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011, particularly chapters six and ten.

¹²⁵ Gilbert, *Whose Fair?*, p. 102.

dedicated exhibition newspaper,¹²⁶ to accounts in Turkestan's agricultural journal,¹²⁷ and specially commissioned albums. In this context, photographers occupied a curious position, both displaying their own wares, and paid to capture the event as it unfolded, and thus at the intersection of the exhibition's commercial and ideological purposes. In 1913, well-known Vernyi-based photographers the Leibin family won two awards, with P. A. Leibin commended for his fifty-seven images of the Vernyi environ, including glaciers, lakes, mountains and portraits of ethnic Kyrgyz.¹²⁸ At the same time, the family was paid over 350 rubles by the event organisers to prepare albums of the exhibition for various parties, one of which was sent to Krivoshein, one to the office of the Turkestan Governor General, and loose-leaf photographs to the organising committee.¹²⁹ Similarly at the 1909 exhibition, the photographer I. K. Lozinskii had his own small pavilion, and at the same time produced the album, dedicated to the Tsar, that opened this chapter. In fact, the compilation of commemorative albums appears to have been common practice both locally and nationally, with an album made of Russia's contributions to the 1893 World's Fair,¹³⁰ and one of the 1891 Central Asian exhibition in Moscow. Copies of the latter were presented to the Tsar, to unidentified ministers, and to the Emir of Bukhara,¹³¹ while twenty-eight loose-leaf photographs of the 1890 exhibition were also dispatched by its organiser, Grodekov, to the Chief of the Main Staff N. N. Obruchev.¹³²

In one sense, this practice served to enshrine an ephemeral event in perpetuity. Organisers could look back on the images as evidence of their achievements. The dispatch of images and albums to local and national figures is suggestive however that this practice was invested with greater political significance, sending evidence of Turkestan's productivity and accomplishments to men such as Krivoshein who set so much store in exactly these qualities in their own calculations for the empire's social and economic future. At the same time, such collections also had much to say about local society, and demonstrated that visitors were both observers of the display and were themselves objects of observation, 'being gazed upon and returning the gaze'.¹³³ The 1909 album portrayed people just as much as the exhibits themselves, whether posed portraits of the organising committee, or crowd scenes in the exhibition grounds.¹³⁴ The visual record thus depicted the audience as an integral part of the exhibition, and captured the shared social experience that was underway. Images appeared to show a society of both Russian settlers and indigenous locals participating in the visual production of Turkestan. Judging from such images, and from the ethnically mixed nature of participants listed in guides and awards material, it seems that the exhibition to some degree subsumed both settler and indigenous societies, uniting both groups in an extremely unusual moment where all could collectively construct and consume a

¹²⁶ *Vestnik Turkestanskoi sel'skokhoziaistvennoi, promyshlennoi i nauchnoi vystavki 1909g.* Complete copies can be found in RGVA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 3782.

¹²⁷ *TSKh*, 1910, No. 1, pp. 1-31.

¹²⁸ *Spisok nagrad po Semirechenskoi sel'sko-khoziaistvennoi i promyshlennoi vystavke*, p. 9.

¹²⁹ TsGARK, f. 41, op. 1, d. 701, and f. 311, op. 1, d. 13, ll. 4-6, 39.

¹³⁰ RGVA, f. 705, op. 1, d. 1, l. 28 ob.

¹³¹ *Doklad obshchemu sobraniuu uchreditel'ei Sredne-Aziatskoi vystavki v Moskve 1891g.*, p. 23.

¹³² RGVA, f. 400, op. 1, d. 1367, l. 35.

¹³³ Hoffenberg, *An empire on display*, p. 29.

¹³⁴ TsGAKFFD SPb, album P357, *XXV-letniaia iubileinaia vystavka*, for instance plates 4, 7, 8, 37, 47, 55.

popular version of Turkestan. Thus the act of visual display not only mobilised society by bringing people together, it actively created society, if only within the walls of the exhibition grounds.

A fascinating example of the growing importance of visual display to local senses of self was a project that began life as an entry for the 1900 Paris exhibition. In 1899, a local aide-de-camp in the military administration, P. P. Rodstvennyi, placed an appeal in several of Turkestan's popular newspapers.¹³⁵ The letter concerned the need for a 'more suitable and varied illustration of our region in photographs at the forthcoming Paris exhibition'. Rodstvennyi noted that visitors to the World's Fair should be able to 'see a truthfully drawn portrait of Russia's Central Asian possessions', and that 'even our compatriots beyond the Urals and the Caspian know very little about us and want to know more'.¹³⁶ The call was to 'all inhabitants', regardless of profession, anyone who had ventured 'into the many little-known corners of Turkestan with a camera in their hand'.¹³⁷ If every amateur photographer in the region were to submit their favourite images or negatives, then a valuable base of materials could be gathered, the appeal suggested.

Rodstvennyi's plans were strikingly ambitious in scope. He stated that the goal was no less than to create a 'second *Turkestanskii Al'bom*', adding that it was thirty years since the original had been made, and asking 'why not repeat this successful venture thirty years later?'.¹³⁸ This direct comparison had intriguing undertones. As discussed in chapter one, the original *Turkestanskii Al'bom* had been very much an imperial project in the sense of visualising a newly conquered land and appropriating its territory visually through a small circle of photographers under Kaufman's direct patronage.¹³⁹ Indeed, Sonntag makes the case for its modelling on other imperial surveys such as Napoleon's *Description de l' Egypte*.¹⁴⁰ What Rodstvennyi proposed was to be a far more democratic affair. The call was addressed to all local inhabitants with an interest in photography. All contributors were to have their names attributed, and a catalogue was to be compiled in French and Russian with the full details of each participant. Meanwhile, implicit in Rodstvennyi's appeal was that the existing visual image of Turkestan was somehow insufficient, perhaps too controlled by the state. Of particular interest was his reference to the 'many little-known corners of Turkestan': the project was to be both highly collaborative and to re-frame the image of the region towards less 'seen' places. In this sense, the project had the potential to be a genuinely socially-produced piece of visual representation. Several weeks after the launch of the appeal, the project's evident popularity necessitated its evolution. Rodstvennyi proposed that before the images left for Paris, a travelling exhibition, the first of its kind, should be mounted in Turkestan

¹³⁵ *Russkii Turkestan*, 1899, No. 70, pages unknown; *SOV*, 1899, No. 58, pp. 377-378; *TV*, 1899, No. 48, pp. 292-293. The appeal can also be found in TsGARK, f. 94, op. 1, d. 315, ll. 108-109.

¹³⁶ TsGARK, f. 94, op. 1, d. 315, l. 108 ob.

¹³⁷ TsGARK, f. 94, op. 1, d. 315, l. 108.

¹³⁸ TsGARK, f. 94, op. 1, d. 315, l. 109.

¹³⁹ See H. Sonntag, 'Genesis of the Turkestan Album 1871-1872: The role of Russian military photography, mapping, albums and exhibitions on Central Asia', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2011.

¹⁴⁰ H. Sonntag, 'Albums as visual technologies of empire: Kaufman's "Turkestan Album" and Napoleon's "Description of Egypt"', paper given at the *Picturing Empires: Photography and social change in nineteenth-century multi-ethnic environments conference*, University of Basel, 27-29 August 2014.

itself. Rather tellingly, he wrote to *Turkestanskii vedomosti's* readers, 'we are sure that ... this rich collection, illustrating the distant and neglected corners of our native land, will be of much more interest to each of us, than to the tourist who has already seen so much in Paris'.¹⁴¹ Thus the project, first conceived of in terms of the foreign or Russian viewer external to Turkestan, turned into something of far greater local significance: a chance to see Turkestan through the eyes of its inhabitants, without outside mediation.

The exhibition opened in Tashkent's city garden on 19 September 1899.¹⁴² By this time, Rodstvennyi had received over 4000 images and negatives from all quarters of Turkestan.¹⁴³ In the opening address, the speaker noted that the event - the first of its kind in Turkestan - was rather unlike usual exhibitions, which traditionally gathered together a wealth of different exhibits of practical use. Instead, the display was formed only of 'un-real objects' (*'ne-realnykh predmetov'*), as in place of tangible, physical exhibits, there was only their photographic representation. These images captured views and subjects that may not normally have been recorded, giving the visitor a 'much fuller picture of the various sides of our Turkestan', by collectively illustrating not simply history, archaeology and ethnography, but agriculture, astronomy, architecture, irrigation and geography.¹⁴⁴ The exhibition's reception and subsequent evolution is largely unknown. It appears to have been fairly popular in terms of attendance, with 5000 tickets sold in Tashkent and 1500 free tickets given out,¹⁴⁵ while the display later moved to Kokand and Novyi Margelan (and possibly to other sites). I have found little evidence of whether the images ever made it to the World's Fair in Paris. A selection of photographs was bound into an album entitled *Po Turkestanu*, apparently printed in Dresden in three volumes, but I have been unable to locate a copy.¹⁴⁶ What is known is that the work that went in to the organising of the exhibition led to the formation of Turkestan's first amateur photographic society.

Despite this frustratingly incomplete picture, the episode raises some fascinating suggestions. Firstly, Rodstvennyi clearly felt that the existing image of Turkestan was deficient, and was motivated to give greater visual prominence to unusual or unseen parts of the region.¹⁴⁷ The 'second Turkestan album' seemed clearly conceived so as to help Turkestan emerge more fully as a place, filling in some of the 'blank' spots that were often passed over in favour of the region's more usual attractions. Secondly, the project was based on popular participation. This was not a state-controlled or high-brow project, and cameras were evidently fairly widespread, judging by the number of images received. Photographic representation was a new and far more accessible way for local inhabitants to contribute to crafting the image of their surroundings, compared to

¹⁴¹ *TV*, 1899, No. 59, p. 359.

¹⁴² *TV*, 1899, No. 74, pp. 453-454.

¹⁴³ *TV*, 1899, No. 74, p. 454.

¹⁴⁴ *TV*, 1899, No. 74, p. 454.

¹⁴⁵ *TV*, 1899, No. 80, p. 493.

¹⁴⁶ *TV*, 1901, No. 67, p. 371. Since concluding my archival research, I have found evidence that the album may be held at the Russian State Documentary Film and Photo Archive, Krasnogorsk.

¹⁴⁷ According to *TV*, 1901, No. 54, p. 294, Rodstvennyi had previously accompanied an expedition to the Pamirs and put together a panorama of the journey, formed from over 1000 images, which documented the journey every half a mile.

other visual and textual media. The formation of a local photographic society as a direct result of the project underscores the influence of exhibitions as a force to encourage collective participation and forge institutions of civil society. Unfortunately it remains impossible to ascertain at this point whether any of the 4000 photographs were contributed by indigenous inhabitants, or whether the project was conducted solely within Russian settler society. It seems clear however, if only on the level of the latter, that this visual project was an instance where individuals contributed to a growing local consciousness in which Turkestan could be popularly framed in its own right, rather than in relation to the imperial centre, and underscored the emergence of a local entity distinct from the body of empire.¹⁴⁸ Thirdly, a comparison between the conception of the first and second Turkestan albums reveals the evolution of attitudes towards the land itself. Rodstvennyi placed emphasis on displaying images of our 'native land' or 'homeland' (*'rodnoi krai'*), evidence perhaps that the participants in the project no longer thought of themselves as visualising a strange, profoundly alien region, but rather strove to describe visually the mundane, remote and little-seen corners of a land that they called home.

*

The exhibition was a gloriously visual spectacle, a public stage upon which Turkestan was displayed on multiple local, national and international scales. Such events offered the opportunity to use items of material culture, from photographs, maps and models, to crops, graphic materials and mineral samples, to present Turkestan's human and physical environments to the public. On an international, and to many extents, a national level, Turkestan's presence at World's Fairs and large-scale exhibitions was in the guise of a colonised commodity frontier, framed as a useful and productive part of the empire, exotic but accessible, with terrain that could provide riches of jewels, cotton and silks, and landscapes that were being transformed by projects such as the Murgab Imperial Estate and the Transcaspian railway. In this sense, Turkestan was portrayed as an inherently imperial space, where valleys, steppes, hills and rivers, and the people contained therein, provided their assets for the benefit of the imperial centre.

While exhibitions by their nature instil such hierarchies, encoding 'relationships between colonizer and colonized', it is important to remember that this was not the only context within which the exhibition operated.¹⁴⁹ An image of a display of wheat or cotton presented to Krivoshein, the Tsar or the Governor General, or the same item displayed physically in Moscow, Paris or Chicago would probably have been read in an entirely different fashion by those who produced it, exhibited it, or gazed upon it in Tashkent. Exhibitions held in Turkestan itself reveal that the idea of the region as an imperial space was being developed in far greater detail than at the international or national events, and with increasing levels of nuance. Organisers aimed to bring Turkestan to the attention of the imperial heartland, making the case for the region as a

¹⁴⁸ Evtuhov makes a similar argument in Evtuhov, *Portrait of a Russian province*, p. 225. See also S. Smith-Peter, 'Bringing the provinces into focus: Subnational spaces in the recent historiography of Russia', *Kritika*, 2011, 12: 4, pp. 835-848.

¹⁴⁹ Neuburger, 'Fair encounters', p. 548.

productive component of the realm, but at the same time used visual material to craft local spatial narratives, to lobby for financial support, and to campaign for better infrastructure. Thus the public display of visual material was used to create and reflect numerous interweaving conceptions of Turkestan, as an isolated land, a fertile landscape, a place of untapped potential, or a weakly developed region in chronic need of investment.

Meanwhile, an essential component of the exhibition, audience and participants, attended local events with a variety of motivations, and took away multiple interpretations, some of which demonstrated that viewers were just as likely to see through the carefully-fashioned spatial narratives of the organising committees as they were to endorse them. Large numbers of Russian and indigenous traders, farmers and skilled workers exhibited their wares, and I have argued that they were motivated far more by commercial interests than by imperial rhetoric. Moreover, within Turkestan, the exhibition was a site where increasingly local as well as imperial concepts of space were being 'actively created, interpreted, consumed and mediated'.¹⁵⁰ The act of collective display was one of the very few occasions when society could be mobilised to participate in a mass visual event, making visible a social body constructed on its own terms, rather than framed in relation to the imperial centre. If the exhibition can be read as 'displaying and exploring the parameters of the national self' (the imperial Russian self in this case), a counter-reading is that it was also a stage on which to explore other, local selves, as exemplified by Rodstvennyi's plan to disentangle Turkestan from the image of the 'east', and re-frame it as a native home.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Hoffenberg, *An empire on display*, p. 27.

¹⁵¹ Neuburger, 'Fair encounters', p. 569.

Conclusion

In the same summer as the exhibition in Vernyi, a resettlement official from Krivoshein's staff at GUZZ named V. P. Voshchinin made his way to Turkestan on the Central Asian railway. The findings of his trip, published the following year, made for provocative reading. Having toured towns and villages, including Spassk in the Hungry Steppe, Blagodatnyi, Ivanovsk and other small settlements in the border region between Semirech'e and Andizhan, he claimed that 'in the high foothills, in the fertile valleys, and in the formerly barren but now productive steppes, the Russian people are starting to settle ... a "new" Turkestan is growing and gaining strength'.¹ Providing little in the way of numerical or factual evidence, Voshchinin's assertions relied heavily on the power of vision, from the verbose proclamation that 'the 'life-giving rays of the Russian sun' were 'reaching ever deeper into the heart of this foreign land', and 'illuminating ever brighter the old Asia', to his descriptions of the landscapes that he visited.² Indeed, it was the visual appearance of the new settlements that had persuaded the visitor that these sites were indeed a new Turkestan; they looked Russian, with their wooden cottages, tree-lined streets and mixed populations of settlers from Voronezh, Kharkov, Poltava and Siberia. Voshchinin remarked that 'it was as if I had returned to my homeland'.³ Most compellingly, he provided tens of photographs as evidence of this new world, images that juxtaposed 'the fields of "old" Turkestan', and life in "old" Tashkent' with groups of 'the "new" Turkestanis' (Russian peasant families), settlers tending sheep or gathering the harvest, irrigation canals and thatched cottages.⁴ Echoing his superior's ambitions, Voshchinin announced that this 'new and young' land was a 'second Turkestan' that would be 'settled exclusively by Russians', paving the way for a great blossoming of the region's landscapes 'of which the former rulers of this land - the Persians, Scythians, Chinese and Arabs - had never dreamed'.⁵

In many ways, this thesis has been an examination of what enabled Voshchinin to make such a brazen statement, only forty-four years after Turkestan and its landscapes had been described as being less familiar than the face of the moon. The past chapters have investigated how a range of people within the imperial system, from administrators to settlers, scientists to city-builders, sought to adapt to life in a 'vast, alien and almost exclusively Muslim territory' that looked very different to the landscapes of home.⁶ In doing so, my arguments have demonstrated that the environment was central to multifaceted attempts by Russian society to incorporate a land at one

¹ V. P. Voshchinin, *Ocherki novogo Turkestana: Svet i teni russkoi kolonizatsii*, SPb: Tip. "Nash vek", 1914, pp. 11-12.

² Voshchinin, *Ocherki novogo Turkestana*, p. 86.

³ Voshchinin, *Ocherki novogo Turkestana*, pp. 43-44.

⁴ Voshchinin, *Ocherki novogo Turkestana*, pp. 11, 7, 17, 44, 60, 27, 49 respectively.

⁵ Voshchinin, *Ocherki novogo Turkestana*, pp. 19, 86. Voshchinin's comments were strongly supportive of the new Turkestan, but at times critical of the peasant settlers themselves.

⁶ A. Morrison, 'Killing the cotton canard and getting rid of the Great Game: Rewriting the Russian conquest of Central Asia, 1814-1895', *CAS*, 2014, 33: 2, p. 133.

time popularly conceived of as a 'vast waste' into the body of empire, through the building of settlements, planting of trees, laying of tracks and construction of irrigation schemes in assorted deserts, valleys, fields and rivers. These environments formed an important discursive space where Russia's imperial mission in Central Asia took physical form, and where ideas about the land, and of Russia's role in it, collided with the material landscape itself.

This thesis has probed the relationship between Turkestan as a physical terrain and Turkestan as a cognitive space in the minds of a variety of state and sub-state actors, and has revealed that the two scales were closely intertwined. While ideas about the desirability of a modern, productive, connected new province very clearly precipitated the creation of hydrotechnical projects, railways and cities, interventions such as these in the landscape also allowed greater scope for the subsequent evolution of Turkestan as a mental space. Images, and more specifically, the display of images, have provided the interface through which to investigate this development of Turkestan as both physical and mental space. These sources - from photographs and maps to cartoons, models and other items of visual culture - act as valuable evidence of how empire existed simultaneously as a material and imaginative entity, underscore the interconnectedness of the two, and speak to the entanglement of environment and empire on multiple local and imperial planes.

Indeed, visual material has emerged as a potent means by which evolving ideas about Turkestan as an imperial space were expressed; used to document the environment as it metamorphosed, but also deployed as a crucial medium through which meaning could be inscribed onto this land, and through which future visions for subsequent development could be projected. When displayed at exhibitions, in printed publications, albums, circulated reports and so forth, images were used to make, support or dispute any number of claims. Photographs of the Murgab Estate and of the Transcaspian railway were used to authenticate Russian notions that their technological superiority was bringing Turkestan into the 'modern' world, and photographs of Tashkent or of peasant villages in Semirech'e validated ideas that an 'alien' realm was being transformed into a 'civilised' corner of Russia. Photographic material was a particularly significant means of making certain arguments, given that such images not only rendered the environment visible and knowable, but held 'privileged status' as a way of 'incarnating and circulating information', due to their perceived fidelity and impartiality.⁷ Moreover, their mimetic qualities as 'doppelgangers of the real' gave images a suggestive power that words perhaps did not command so fully.⁸ Photographs were a useful way of communicating information in a compact, legible and succinct form, and lent themselves to clear narrative frameworks, when carefully selected, reprinted or displayed. Maps and photographs could be deployed to project new visions onto the land, some of which would be realised and others not, and many bore substantial similarities to later schemes to transform Central Asian space that were realised in the Soviet period. As

⁷ D. Bleichmar, *Visible empire: Botanical expeditions and visual culture in the Hispanic Enlightenment*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012, p. 18.

⁸ C. Campbell, *Agitating images: Photography against history in indigenous Siberia*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014, p. 212.

demonstrated in chapters three and four, such sources could be used to segregate and exclude, and to attach certain symbolic meaning to terrain via its visual appearance, either appropriating or conversely, disowning certain landscapes. At their most potent, images not only documented the environment or projected visions onto it, but were actively constitutive of it. In certain contexts, for instance the exhibition or resettlement material, the visual representations of particular new sites allowed what were fairly limited interventions to take on far broader geographical dimensions. Thus physical change and the representation of such actions were closely intertwined. In representing change, images - particularly photographs - also directly fabricated such developments, contributing to the creation and diffusion of powerful new spatial narratives, and ultimately, to the re-making of space itself.

By focusing on visual material that was used to represent Turkestan's built and natural environments and of Russian interventions in them, and using the criterion of public reproduction - display in an exhibition, publication in a geographic guide, compilation in an album - this thesis has by necessity prioritised certain landscapes over others. This is by no means a comprehensive survey of Russian imagery of Turkestan, and there are plenty of sites and places not discussed in the previous chapters that may have merited inclusion. Yet my approach, while privileging certain landscapes, offers an insight into why it was exactly these types of places that were deemed to be of particular value by contemporary Russians, and which were frequently seen in a variety of contexts. By looking at material in the public domain, the chapters also encompass a broad cross-section of society beyond simply the Russian state, which was the primary actor in the majority of environmental projects. Visual material reveals that settlers, travellers, administrators, explorers, scientists, engineers and so forth could complicate and sometimes contest the spatial narratives of the tsarist state. Moreover, this focus of analysis speaks to the importance of landscape and associated tropes of modernity and connectivity as important weapons in the process of legitimising Russia's presence on Central Asian soil, and is suggestive of the growing importance of the environment as a key site for the evolution of local and imperial identities.

The evidence of the various visual and textual materials presented in this thesis gives rise to three broad points of conclusion:

Firstly, following the initial period of conquest, Russians gradually reappraised their ideas about Turkestan as a geographic space at the periphery of empire. Prevailing concepts of the region as a distant, backward, isolated, oriental and static land underwent significant evolution, linked in part to environmental intervention. In their place, new ideas about Turkestan's role within the empire emerged, which characterised it as a connected part of the imperial community, a vital bridge to Asia, a fertile breadbasket, and a rich commodity frontier. Such new conceptions of space were fed by a range of visually prominent sites and landscapes that were intended to be visually representative of the 'civilising' transformation that the Russian presence was enacting in the new colony. The divided city, railway lines, the Murgab Estate, agricultural villages, urban gardens and irrigation projects were important objects of show; key sites and sometimes fictive spaces that

appeared to demonstrate the greening, watering, settling and technological improving of the land. In this sense, photographic, cartographic and other visual materials were used to appropriate Turkestan's terrain into familiar modes of seeing and known landscape conventions, deployed in particular by administrators, resettlement officials and engineers within the imperial state system to construct a new and recognisable world on the printed page.

Visual material also reveals the projection of future visions onto the land, from long distance railways spanning continents and grandiose irrigation schemes, to a fertile, green, agricultural colony, proposed by those both living in Turkestan and in the imperial centre. Turkestan's discursively 'vast' and 'inhospitable' environment was in David Moon's words, a 'fertile ground' for the remaking of space, and the visual representation of this land tells us a good deal in particular about the state's ambitions for the continued evolution of Turkestan as an imperial territory.⁹ As noted above, images were not only a crucial component in the mental construction of space, but also in its physical production, used to document the evolving appearance of rural land, and to drive forward the state's visions for a modern, connected and fruitful Turkestan into reality. The photographs deployed by GUZZ and the Resettlement Administration served actively to produce new types of space, unifying disparate sites into singular landscapes, producing the ethnically-homogenous, agricultural 'new Turkestan' of which Krivoshein and Voshchinin dreamed, and encouraging increasing numbers of prospective peasant migrants to physically recreate the world that they saw on the printed page. In this context, the visual record - often only loosely rooted in factual reality - offers a powerful insight into the future aspirations of the Russian state, particularly those of prominent figures such as Krivoshein, who would have been in an extremely influential position to further implement his plans, had the First World War not intervened.¹⁰

Images were thus at the heart of the remaking of space, both physically and mentally, and encompassed the more stereotypical compositions of travellers who flocked to see the bustling heart of Central Asia in Bukhara and Samarkand, but also challenged existing notions about what the region traditionally looked like. These new conceptions of Turkestan as a productive and modern outpost of empire circulated on multiple local, national and international scales, speaking to the range of audiences that visual depictions of Turkestan were intended to reach. While almost all images were produced locally in Turkestan, those deployed by the state for instance targeted peasants moving across the empire as well as those living in Central Asia, and also had a more distant audience in other imperial capitals, as material depicting the 'transformation' of Turkestan surfaced at a variety of international exhibitions. The imperial state was evidently keen to prove its capacities not only in the immediate locality and within the wider empire, but also to external

⁹ D. Moon, 'The steppe as fertile ground for innovation in conceptualising human-nature relationships', *SEER*, 2015, 93: 1, pp. 16-38.

¹⁰ Sunderland suggests that the Resettlement Administration could have turned into a fully-fledged colonial ministry, in W. Sunderland, 'The Ministry of Asiatic Russia: The Colonial Office that never was but might have been', *Slavic Review*, 2010, 69: 1, pp. 120-150. See also P. Holquist, *Making war, forging revolution: Russia's continuum of crisis, 1914-1921*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002, pp. 17-20, for more on Krivoshein's career at the Ministry of Agriculture post-1914.

observers, and Turkestan's landscapes offered a potent site for such pretensions and performances of self-image to be enacted.¹¹

Indeed, the display and dissemination of visual material suggestive of the improvement or transformation of the land was part of a wider environmental narrative that had parallels across Russia and other empires. While the constraints of this study have not facilitated a sustained element of comparative analysis, a number of references made in the past chapters are worthy of note. Firstly, the actions of the state in appropriating terrain in Turkestan through the planting of trees, clearing of land and building of settlements bore clear resemblance to projects to transform other discursively 'empty', 'dead' or 'barren' landscapes across the empire, including Crimea, the European steppe, and the Far East. Many of the visual and textual narratives discussed above for instance, appeared to present a version of Russian agricultural settlement in the grasslands north of the Black and Caspian seas, that by the nineteenth-century 'belonged to the outsiders who had colonized them, reinvented them, and so naturalized their possession that it seemed hard to believe that the plains could ever have belonged to anyone else'.¹² The setting was different, the suggested scene was not. Similarly, such narratives of transformation had long-standing pedigree: Potemkin had noted in 1786 that New Russia (Novorossia) had 'been turned from a place of uninhabited steppes into a garden of abundance'.¹³ Moreover, many of the environmentally-driven spatial practices and representations of Turkestan were paralleled in numerous other imperial domains, from the gardens of hill stations in British India and the pervasive discourse of 'dead, unproductive land' instituted by the French in North Africa, to the use of the exhibition to display colonies as 'jewels in the crown', and the planting of imported crops and foliage by the Chinese in Xinjiang. Thus in broader perspective, much of what has been discussed was not particularly unique to Turkestan, and while a huge amount of work remains to be done on the topic, my findings certainly point towards the non-particularist nature of the Russian empire in these select respects.

Secondly, the mental transformation of Turkestan from an isolated, liminal and alien place into a bounded, productive realm of empire was not a straightforward narrative of change. The evolution of imperial space was a complex process, littered with contradictory and contested understandings of Turkestan, and of the environmental interventions underway in it. At root, the primacy of certain key sites used to make claims about the appropriation of Central Asia's terrain resulted in the elevation of some landscapes at the expense of others. Only some places participated in the re-shaping of space that was underway, as the production of a 'new' Turkestan by necessity left an 'old' Turkestan behind, visualised very clearly by Voshchinin's photographs of camels in the steppe, the old quarter of Tashkent, and groups of local Uzbeks, Bukharans and Mullas. Thus while some valued spaces experienced profound mental and physical reassessments,

¹¹ See J. Sahadeo, 'Home and away: Why the Asian periphery matters in Russian history', *Kritika*, 2015, 16: 2, pp. 375-388, for more on the importance of Central Asia to Russian self-image.

¹² W. Sunderland, *Taming the wild field: Colonization and empire on the Russian steppe*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004, p. 228.

¹³ Quoted in Sunderland, *Taming the wild field*, p. 94.

others barely changed at all, remaining rooted in the previous 'dead' and 'backward' realm, and acting as a useful visual foil for the emergence of newer sites. Turkestan was thus no longer a monolithic colonial territory, but was a series of increasingly fragmented landscapes. Meanwhile, the visualisation of these model sites, while pointing to the state's desire to irrigate the land, build European-style urban settlements and populate the region with peasant farmers, also highlights the inherent contradictions of such projects. Irrigation schemes were underway but with no real legislative provision for water ownership and usage, the state encouraged resettlement (particularly post-1907) while little of the necessary land reform had been enacted, resettlement officials boasted about the creation of an ethnically-homogenous rural land whose population was actually composed of over ninety per cent non-Russian nomads, and urban administrators lauded their superior, spatially-segregated towns, all the while settlers criticised the urban fabric for its dirt and poor sanitation.

As chapters two, three and six in particular have demonstrated, if there was no single narrative about *where* Turkestan was, there was also plenty of negotiation about *what* kind of space it should be. Just as Turkestan was not a visually cohesive entity, 'Russians' were not a homogenous group who all thought alike. While the imperial incomers all largely continued to conceive of themselves as very different from the locals whose landscapes they shared, a range of groups and actors within settler society took part in the development of new spatial narratives. Even within the Russian administration, conflicting views could easily be found. S. N. Veletskii, head of resettlement in Semirech'e urged for 'intensive colonisation' as a way to expedite the transformation of the region into a truly Russian land,¹⁴ while Pahlen advised the opposite, advocating the slowing of rural colonisation, the current pace of which would result not in the creation of a paradisiacal Russian agricultural colony, but would only 'sow the seeds of national strife'.¹⁵ Pahlen's judgement was to prove the more apposite.¹⁶ Furthermore, while technocrats in the imperial centre, such as Krivoshein and Voshchinin viewed Turkestan as an abstract colonial space to be transformed and filled with peasant settlers, the views of those who lived there often varied. Indeed, many of these members of 'Russian' settler society were not Russian at all. Gurde was French, Poklevskii-Kozell Polish, many peasant settlers were from Poltava, and when Voshchinin noted that visiting the rural villages made him feel as if he had returned to his homeland, he revealed that this land was in fact Ukraine.

The lived experience of Turkestan gave rise to different relationships with the land and subtly different notions of space. Local politicians at times thought in terms of their town or *oblast'* rather than of Turkestan as a whole. Urban settlers in Tashkent used visual material to ridicule the symbolism of the divided city, and architects, engineers and entrepreneurs in Semirech'e fought

¹⁴ RGIA, f. 391, op. 5, d. 116, ll. 68-69 ob.

¹⁵ A. Morrison, "'Sowing the seed of national strife in this alien region": The Pahlen report and *pereselenie* in Turkestan, 1908-1911', *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, 2012, 31, pp. 1-29.

¹⁶ The continued seizure of nomadic land was an important factor in the infamous 1916 revolt. For more see D. Brower, 'Kyrgyz nomads and Russian pioneers: Colonization and ethnic conflict in the Turkestan revolt of 1916', *JfGO*, 1996, 44: 1, pp. 41-53.

the inactivity of the state by lobbying for a railway that would serve their own interests. Still more intriguingly, the local exhibition emerged as a space where by the turn of the century, visual articulations of a more regional consciousness, a recognition of Turkestan as a 'native homeland', rather than a colonial outpost were being made. Such claims allude to the fact that visual material was an important medium through which new, spatially-rooted senses of self were being expressed, and on an admittedly small scale, are suggestive of the emergence of a new, 'Turkestani' identity amongst the settler community. These ideas did not necessarily always directly contradict those of the state, and in some cases dovetailed rather nicely, but they acted to bring into existence conceptions of Turkestan as a local space on its own terms, as well as an imperial territory.¹⁷ Moreover, as seen in the case of the Semirech'e railway, the rise of articulated senses of local space and territorial identity could have disintegrating as well as integrating significance for Turkestan's place in the empire, as elites in peripheral *oblasti* began to look outward beyond the imperial borders rather than inwards to the metropolitan centre. Thus the spatial visions of the state were negotiated both within and without the administrative apparatus, resulting in an ever-diversifying range of local and imperial opinions on how Russians conceived of Turkestan as a space, and of Turkestan's role within the empire.

Thirdly, the gradual fragmentation of Turkestan in the Russian spatial imagination is suggestive of a more fundamental shift in how the region was appraised as an imperial space. While studies of Turkestan very often revolve around its populated centres, this thesis has demonstrated that using visual material as a prism reveals a rather different 'geography of power'.¹⁸ Often the landscapes that were the most visually symbolic - usually those particularly championed by the state - were those where the traces of past centuries were at their least, chiefly the nomadic areas of Semirech'e, and sparsely-populated regions of the Kara Kum desert and the Hungry Steppe. While the Russian quarters of major cities, particularly Tashkent, remained important sites for the visualisation of Russian power, these other regions were in many ways the easiest landscapes to appropriate, being either thinly populated or home to nomads whose itinerant lifestyle made it simpler - in the Russian mind - to erase the fact that a complex other world had pre-dated the Russian 'transformation' of these lands by many centuries. Thus ideas of a 'new Turkestan' were based to a large extent on the visual exclusion of the indigenous population, a strategy that was more effective away from the populated cordon of settled life that stretched from west to east across the centre of Turkestan.

The visual attention devoted to what were in many cases geographically peripheral regions gives us cause to reassess how we consider Turkestan's physical and symbolic geography, challenging the traditional 'geography of power' by pointing to an alternative way of looking at Turkestan as a

¹⁷ For more on the production of 'local' space in broader context, and the local as a unit 'that can range from a village or city up to a province', see S. Smith-Peter, 'Bringing the provinces into focus: Subnational spaces in the recent historiography of Russia', *Kritika*, 2011, 12: 4, pp. 835-848, quote p. 835.

¹⁸ A. Remnev, 'Siberia and the Russian Far East in the imperial geography of power', in J. Burbank, M. von Hagen & A. Remnev (eds), *Russian empire: Space, people, power, 1700-1930*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007, pp. 425-454.

space. These predominantly nomadic regions at the periphery of the usual 'core' zone of Samarkand, Fergana and southern Syr-Dar'ia have traditionally proved to be the most difficult to fit into Turkestan, both at the time, and by historians, as discussed in chapter one. But in many ways, it was precisely these liminal areas that were the key arena for new visual conceptualisations of a 'Russian Turkestan'. These were important landscapes, particularly in the case of Semirech'e, where the mental perception of Central Asian space was rapidly evolving. Thus an environmental-visual rather than administrative perspective reveals a reorientation of space; a move away from traditional Tashkent-centric narratives of rule, towards alternative networks of power and vision, beyond the fixed borders of the map.

To my mind, this reassessment of space is significant. Peripheral landscapes were clearly convenient sites because they were less open, particularly in visual terms, to counter-narratives. These regions possessed fewer existing settled inhabitants, and were home by and large to a less varied selection of settlers (predominantly Russian peasants) than Turkestan's urban core. They were thus 'safer' areas where uncomfortable questions about the 'superior' nature of Russian colonial rule were less likely to be raised than in towns where local and imperial settled communities lived in close proximity. This in turn begs the question of whether the increasing emphasis on an agricultural periphery reveals that the main settled cordon of Turkestan had been deemed unassimilable. The turn towards the east appears in many ways, from the perspective of this thesis, to have been an expression of resignation that Russians were not capable of enacting change in populated areas, for reasons of their numerical inadequacy, the questionable capacities of Russian 'civilisation', or as discussed in chapter three, fear of the implications of such actions.

Turkestan was a progressively fragmenting space that from the turn of the twentieth century saw the emergence of a new visual world. Although in administrative (and many other) terms, cities remained hugely important locations, the rural east was increasingly a more symbolic site of the future. It was here that the illusion of a settler world, populated with recognisable symbols - trees, churches and peasants - was being enacted. Thus the visual projection of this new realm perhaps precipitated a more fundamental realignment of space: not only the mental production of a 'new Turkestan', but a geographic and administrative separation of Turkestan's periphery from its core. Attempts by the state to create a corner of Russia in Central Asia left behind an Islamic heartland that largely appeared to be beyond imperial control even by 1914, while to the east, new visions of Turkestan saw the rise of a land not seen as an internal, colonial Orient, but a frontier region visually conceived of in similar terms to neighbouring parts of Siberia and the northern Kazakh steppe. Indeed, there are signs that had world war not intervened, Semirech'e may well have been split away from Turkestan. Pahlen had already recommended such an action, alongside the introduction of *zemstva* and elements of civilian rule. Noting its remote geography, ethnography, the presence of Cossack villages and its similarities with more northerly *oblasti*, Pahlen advised that it would be desirable to 'remove Semirech'e from the Turkestan Governor Generalship, and

instead to make it an independent administrative entity'.¹⁹ Similar notions were also entertained by others who supported ideas for Semirech'e to be a wholly autonomous province.²⁰ Thus attempts to transform and control Turkestan's nature, and the visual representations of these actions, were rather ironically suggestive of the destruction of Turkestan as a bounded spatial entity. The quest to re-make imperial space threatened the dissolution of existing territorial divisions.

Most intriguingly, the production and re-framing of Central Asia into a constituent of empire was consequential not only for the physical and mental evolution of Turkestan as a local and imperial territory (and one that would begin to be sub-divided into five new national republics in 1924), but for the ongoing self-fashioning of Russia and the Russian empire itself. The 'new Turkestan', portrayed so convincingly in images, relied on a curious hybrid of 'rossiiskii' and 'russkii' symbolism: inherently 'imperial' in nature, yet portrayed as being an assimilated component of an 'organic', 'national' body.²¹ Efforts to alter and represent nature thus not only changed the local physical landscape, but were expressions of the continuing formulation and performance of what 'Russia' was, and what it looked like in the early years of the twentieth century.²² By negotiating space in Central Asia, Russians were also developing the idea and image of their nation and empire. The relationships between image, environment and empire were thus closely interwoven, with visual material a potent interface between material landscapes and cognitive designs on space. This thesis has demonstrated how images reveal a partial reframing of space in Central Asia, driving, and driven by, environmental change. These findings are important; they show that visual material was, and should be, conceived of as an important medium through which space is fashioned, both physically and imaginatively, and more broadly, that the making and unmaking of space was a central mechanism of Russian imperialism.

¹⁹ RGIA, f. 1396, op. 1, d. 305, ll. 36-39.

²⁰ A. P. Kuplast, *Semirechenskaia oblast'*, Poltava: [n. p.], 1910, p. 2.

²¹ Bassin notes this dichotomy in Siberia: 'was this immense realm a part of Russia in an organic national sense (and hence russkii) or was it Russia by virtue of its status as a resource-rich imperial domain (rossiiskii)?', in M. Bassin, C. Ely & M. Stockdale, (eds), *Space, place and power in modern Russia: Issues in the new spatial history*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010, p. 12.

²² See parallels in broader perspective in Sahadeo, 'Home and away'.

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