

All-Russian and Turkestan Exhibitions as a reflection of the Russian colonisation in Central Asia: The case of Semirechye in the 2nd half of the 19th century

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Abstract

Exhibitions and fairs devoted to industry, agriculture, and the arts were a major phenomenon in European countries in the 19th century, and Russia was no exception. This article demonstrates the considerable human and financial resources that were mobilised to organise exhibitions in Turkestan and Russia from the 1870s onwards. The main motivation was to promote Turkestan's potential in order to justify the investments necessary for its administration and modernisation. Semirechye was therefore primarily represented by its products, with Russian entrepreneurs always being highlighted. The image of the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz remained associated with the nomadic way of life, focusing on exotic themes such as mobility, horses, yurts, and eagle hunting. As Russian knowledge of Turkestan developed, Central Asians gradually became marginalised, and the colonial view of indigenous societies and cultures was reinforced. The authors examine how Central Asians attempted to make their voices heard and promote their interests at these exhibitions, which were also designed to introduce the Russian population to the newly conquered territories thereby strengthening the unity of the Empire. The resulting expansion of knowledge about Central Asia was intended to aid in the exploitation of natural resources and the good governance of populations. The necessary modernization could only imply the disappearance of an indigenous heritage deemed archaic. Scientific societies were keen to preserve this heritage, and most of the ethnographic objects on display were kept in museums.

Keywords: Turkestan, Semirechye, ethnography, exhibition, colonial empire, knowledge, modernisation

Résumé

Les expositions consacrées à l'industrie, à l'agriculture et aux arts ont connu un essor considérable dans les pays européens au XIX^e siècle, et la Russie n'a pas fait exception. Cet article montre les ressources humaines et financières considérables qui ont été mobilisées pour organiser des expositions au Turkestan et en Russie à partir des années 1870. L'objectif principal était de promouvoir le potentiel du Turkestan afin de justifier les investissements nécessaires à son administration et à sa modernisation. Le Semirechye était donc principalement représenté par ses produits, les entrepreneurs russes étant toujours mis en avant. L'image des Kazakhs et des Kyrgyz restait associée au mode de vie nomade, mettant l'accent sur des thèmes exotiques, tels que la mobilité, les chevaux, les yourtes et la chasse à l'aigle. À mesure que les Russes apprenaient à mieux connaître le Turkestan, les Centrasiatiques ont été progressivement marginalisés et la vision coloniale des sociétés et des cultures autochtones s'est renforcée. Les auteurs examinent comment les Centrasiatiques ont tenté de faire entendre leur voix et de promouvoir leurs intérêts lors de ces expositions. Ces moments étaient également destinés à présenter à la population russe les territoires nouvellement conquis, renforçant ainsi l'unité de l'Empire. L'approfondissement des connaissances sur l'Asie centrale qui en a résulté visait à faciliter l'exploitation des ressources naturelles et la bonne gouvernance des populations. La modernisation nécessaire ne pouvait qu'impliquer la disparition d'un patrimoine autochtone jugé archaïque. Les sociétés scientifiques étaient soucieuses de préserver ce patrimoine, et la plupart des objets ethnographiques exposés étaient conservés dans des musées.

Mots-clés : Turkestan, Semirechye, ethnographie, exposition, empire colonial, savoir, modernisation

Introduction

Exhibitions and fairs devoted to industry, agriculture, and the arts were a major phenomenon in European countries in the 19th century. Russia, which organised its first exhibition in 1829, was no exception. The period beginning with the reforms of the 1860s saw greater initiative given to scientific societies and various associations, which played a crucial role in the process (Корепа́нова 2005). It also coincided with the end of the conquest of Central Asia and the establishment of a colonial regime in the administrative entity that the Russian authorities chose to call Turkestan. Although the Turkestan Governor-Generalship remained on the sidelines for the first Russian ethnographic exhibition in 1867, this was no longer the case thereafter. The influence of the 1867 exhibition was nevertheless significant and was felt through the arrival in the region of several of its organisers. The links with Moscow University and the Society of Devotees of Natural Scientists and Anthropologists were also crucial during the 1870's.

Turkestan was thus represented at major All-Russian exhibitions from the 1870s onwards. Like other regions of the Empire, local administrations organised exhibitions in Turkestan, as well as in Moscow and Saint-Petersburg. The majority of these were devoted to promoting economic development in all areas (industry, agriculture, livestock farming, crafts), which was the main interest of the Russian central and local authorities. The purpose of participating in All-Russian exhibitions was to show the advantages that Russia could derive from its Central Asian colony. Those organised locally were intended to boost various sectors while attracting Russian entrepreneurs and investors. The numerous expeditions carried out from the 1860s onwards described in detail the region's various products and frequently emphasized the decline of certain industries, the need to modernise them, or the introduction of new industries. The dissemination of knowledge about the region and its peoples, highlighted in the ethnographic exhibition, was also continued. However, the economic aspect largely prevailed, as it was essential to justify the expenses imposed by the Turkestani colony with potential benefits for the Empire.

This article focuses on the presentation of Turkestan's products, with a particular emphasis on the Semirechye oblast, as well as the representation of Central Asian territories and populations in these various exhibitions. The organising committees of exhibitions and fairs never included Central Asians, who were considered to be auxiliaries or intermediaries for obtaining objects or presenting specific products. The initiative came from the tsarist administration or scientific societies, and the committee members were either civil servants or specialists and scientists.

These exhibitions relied on the involvement of regional administrations and the participation of European and Central Asian merchants and entrepreneurs. Here, we will discuss how the exhibitions reflect colonial society and the "modernisation" of the economy. The transformation of Turkestan was supported by the local authorities and took place in a context of competition between different economic actors, who had connections in the Turkestan administration and in Russian industrial and commercial circles. While several Central Asians were honoured at the 1867 ethnographic exhibition, subsequent exhibitions mostly relegated them to anonymity. The collections on display were credited to the European members of the many expeditions that followed over the next few decades. Central Asians were no longer the primary contributors to knowledge about the region's cultures. The relationship with Central Asia and the development of knowledge became more strongly colonial.

Our research aims to continue the work of Georgii Chabrov carried out in the 1950s and 1960s. The two main sources are catalogues and albums compiled for exhibitions and archive collections in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. For all major exhibitions, catalogues and guides were published describing their organisation and listing the names, titles and products of participants. These publications were often supplemented by photo albums, mainly produced for High-ranking officials

and certain prominent figures. The themes addressed at these events were studied by civil servants, military personnel and scientists, who published the results of their research in Turkestan.

The fonds of the Chancellery of the Governor-General of Turkestan in the State Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Центральный Государственный Архив Республики Узбекистан, ф. И-1 Канцелярия Туркестанского генерал-губернатора) and that of the Semirechye oblast Administration (Центральный Государственный Архив Республики Казахстан, ф. 44 Семиреченское Областное Правление) were mainly studied.

Create an image of the newly conquered Turkestan for the Russians: Kaufman and Vereshchagin

The first governor-general of Turkestan, Konstantin von Kaufman (1818-1882), was heavily involved in promoting the territory under his charge until his death. He arrived in Tashkent after the Russian ethnographic exhibition and the Paris World's Fair, but he had had the opportunity to visit the Moscow exhibition and meet some of the organisers (Котомина 2024, 206-207). He was aware of its importance for the image of Central Asia. As early as the summer of 1867, he began searching for an artist to illustrate future military campaigns and the new Russian territory.

Vasilii Vereshchagin (1842-1904), a young painter who had returned from studying art in Paris, volunteered and was recruited. He arrived in Tashkent in the fall of 1877 and the following spring was sent on a mission across Turkestan by Kaufman (Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2009). He took part in the capture of Samarkand, then left the region for health reasons. At the very beginning of 1869, he met Kaufman again in Saint-Petersburg and convinced him to support an exhibition of his paintings, which was held between March and April of that year within the walls of the Ministry of Public Domains. The exhibition included several works by Vereshchagin, as well as costumes, weapons, various objects, and the mineralogical and zoological collections gathered by Nikolai Severtsov's (1927-1885) expedition in 1865-1868 (Асанова 2023). Kaufman inaugurated the exhibition and organised a visit by Tsar Alexander II. It was a great success. Vereshchagin's paintings left an image of a depraved Orient – opium smokers and bashaws before their admirers – and of a bloody conquest – “After the Victory” and “After the Defeat.” It was the first exhibition entirely devoted to Turkestan and organised in Russia.

Although some paintings have been the subject of controversy, this initial success encouraged Kaufman and Vereshchagin to repeat the experiment. As soon as the exhibition closed, Kaufman rehired the artist, who was placed under the authority of General Kolpakovskii (1819-1896), governor of the Semirechye oblast. During the year he spent in Turkestan, he explored more specifically this oblast. Upon his return to Russia, Kaufman granted him three years of funding to transform the sketches and drawings he had made in the field into paintings. The Turkestan series was completed in 1873 and several solo exhibitions followed in London in 1873 and in Saint-Petersburg and Moscow in 1874. Unlike Vladimir Plotnikov and Pavel Kosharov's drawing albums presented at the Russian ethnographic exhibition of 1867 and forgotten for decades, Vereshchagin's paintings shaped the imagination about Turkestan and remain iconic images.

During his stay in Semirechye, Vereshchagin mainly depicted the Kyrgyz people, to whom he devoted several paintings, unlike the other populations of the region. In 1867, he met in Saint-Petersburg Baitik Kanaev (1820-1886), *bii* (political leader) of the Kyrgyz Solto lineage group, which occupied the region of present-day Bishkek along the Chu River. Vereshchagin took advantage of the arrival of a delegation from Turkestan in Saint-Petersburg in early 1867 to get closer to Baitik Kanaev. Even before the creation of the Governor-Generalship of Turkestan, the Central Asian elites had insisted on being received by Tsar Alexander II in order to secure their positions in the new political balance. This initiative, supported by the governors of Turkestan and Orenburg,

Chernaev and Kryzhanovskii, offered those who had chosen to collaborate with the Russians in the campaigns against the Kokand Khanate the opportunity to be recognised by the new colonial power.¹ The painting “Rich *Kirgiz*² Hunter with a Falcon” depicts Baitik Kanaev (Figure 1). The importance of direct relations is evident here. Support for Vereshchagin was important for Baitik in terms of his relations with Kolpakovskii and, beyond that, with the regional Tsarist administration. The decorations and awards granted by the various governors and the reports on the loyalty of the Central Asians included, among other things, the assistance provided to official expeditions and missions.

Having been welcomed among the Solto thanks to Baytik, Vereshchagin presents in his ‘*Kirgiz*’ paintings a rather pastoral image far removed from the outdated and orientalist atmosphere of the ‘Uzbek’ paintings. The aim is not to show poverty or a backward society, but to recreate a nomadic space around the elements that are most striking to a European: the yurt, nomadism, horses, and hunting. The titles are quite evocative: “*Kirgiz* yurts (кибитки) on the Chu River,” (Figure 2) “Wintering in the Chu River Valley,” “*Kirgiz* migration,” “*Kirgiz*”, “From the mountains to the valleys,” “Lake Issyk-Kul.” The generic term *Kirgiz* (киргиз) is used in the titles of the paintings, thus providing an overall representation of both the Kazakhs and the Kyrgyz. No names are given for his models, again with the aim of providing a generic illustration of the nomadic way of life. Vereshchagin’s realistic style corresponded to the desire to authentically portray Central Asian societies, which was later reflected in the use of photography.

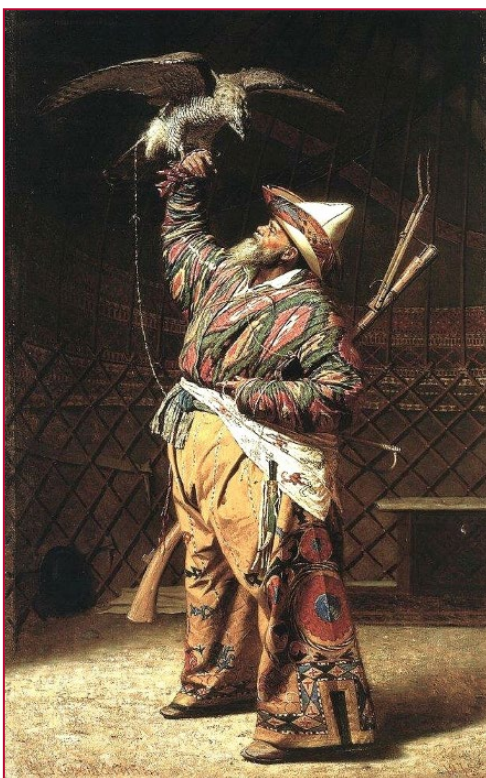


Figure 1. “A wealthy *Kirgiz* hunter with a falcon”
(by Vasilii Vereshchagin, 1871)

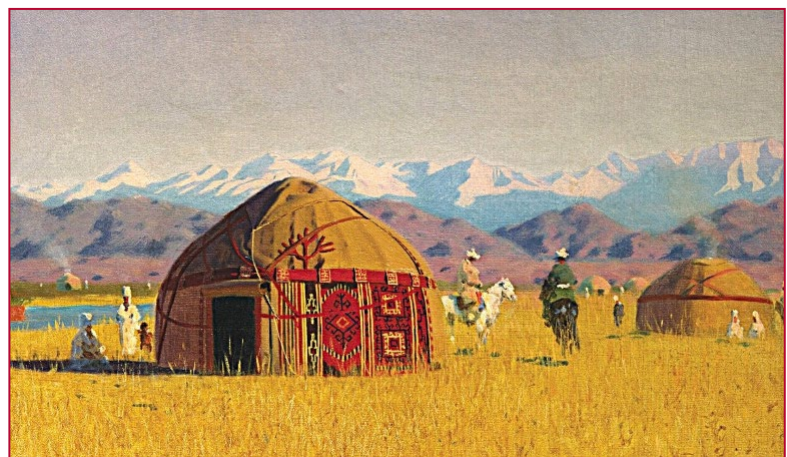


Figure 2. “*Kirgiz* yurt on the banks of the Chu River”
(by Vasilii Vereshchagin, 1869-1870)

- ¹ The delegation included 10 Uzbeks (Sarts), 6 Kazakhs, and 1 Kyrgyz. The list of participants is provided in the article by Raigul Hazretalikyzy et al. devoted to this delegation. Among the 17 delegates were Baitik Kanaev, Said Azimbai Muhammadbaev (1825-1881), and Mulla Nazar Bakymbaev from Ura-Tyube, both of whom were involved in business. (Хазреталикызы 2020).
- ² The use of the term *Kirgiz* corresponds to the usage in Russian sources to refer primarily to Kazakhs, with whom the Kyrgyz may possibly be associated. It is the case in this specific case.

Introducing Turkestan's economic potential: 1870 and 1872 All-Russian Exhibitions

Although this artistic project was close to his heart, Kaufman was primarily interested in promoting Turkestan's economic potential and raising awareness of the region. Kaufman's early years of service in Central Asia coincided with two empire-wide initiatives, the All-Russian Exhibition of Manufactured Goods in 1870 and the Polytechnic Exhibition in 1872. For both, a committee was appointed to prepare a specific Turkestan section. The first exhibition focused almost exclusively on the economic aspect, while the scope of the second was much broader.

The preparation of the exhibition of manufactured goods planned for Saint-Petersburg in 1870 was the first opportunity to showcase Turkestan's products and resources. The initiative for the exhibition came from the Department of Trade and Industry of the Ministry of Finance. A Tashkent committee was appointed in 1868, chaired by Lieutenant Colonel Aleksandr Gluhovskii (1838-1912), who had participated in the campaign against the Emirate of Bukhara in 1866 and was subsequently attached to the General Staff. He was the author of a memorandum in 1867, the purpose of which was to defend the position of strengthening the Russian presence in Central Asia.³ The main figure in the Tashkent committee, however, was Appolon Kushakevich (1827-1882), head of the Khodzhent uezd, who was responsible for preparing the Turkestan section of the exhibition. Like the Caucasus and Siberia, all the products and objects from Turkestan were exhibited in the same space and not divided into product categories like those from the Russian regions.

Kushakevich, an amateur entomologist, set about studying this new territory, its population, and its economy as soon as he arrived in Hodzhent (Кушакевич 1871). The city was a very active commercial and economic centre before the Russian conquest, with a predominantly Tajik population. The uezd, on the other hand, was very mixed, also including Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, and Kurama (a composite group, mainly sedentarised Kyrgyz, often descended from marriages with Tajiks). In order to prepare the Turkestan section for the 1870 exhibition, he took advantage of a visit by Kaufman to the Hodzhent uezd in September 1869 to present the region's products. Nikolai Maev (1835-1896), appointed by Kaufman as editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Туркестанские ведомости* (Turkestan News) in 1869, accompanied the delegation and described the exhibition:

In a spacious, large room and under a canopy in the garden, samples of various products of the Hodzhent district, household items of the natives, utensils, gold and silver jewelry, etc. were systematically arranged. The Governor-General examined the exhibited samples in great detail, asked the exhibitors-Sarts about the success of the first attempts to grow American cotton in the Hodzhent district, about the simple technical methods used by the natives in sorting and cleaning cotton and in unwinding silk cocoons. [...] In order to encourage the native exhibitors who had brought their works to the exhibition, the Governor-General ordered a committee, composed of the exhibitors themselves and of several persons appointed by the Governor-General, to discuss together the qualities of the works exhibited and then to distribute all the objects on display in a general list according to their usefulness. Five exhibitors were given rewards by the Governor-General, namely: for silk fabrics, for unwinding silk, paper fabrics, clay products and for tanning leather (Маев 1870, 252-255).

Kushakevich had as his deputy (младший помощник уездного начальника) the chief *qazy* (Muslim judge: казы-келян) of the city, Mulla Nazar Bakybaev, who was of Kurama origin. He had been mufti of Ura-Tyube, a city located further south of Hodzhent and conducted commercial business between Bukhara and Kokand. Described by Maev as respected and honored by all, Mulla Nazar officially, who had been part of the Turkestani delegation to Saint-Petersburg in 1867,

³ Глуховской Александр, 1867. *Записка о значении Бухарского ханства для России и о необходимости принятия решительных мер для прочного водворения нашего влияния в Средней Азии* [Note on the importance of the Bukhara Khanate for Russia and the need to take decisive measures to firmly establish our influence in Central Asia], Санкт-Петербург.

welcomed Kaufman upon his arrival in Hodzhent. He most likely served as Kushakevich's liaison with the local population to gather exhibitors.

In 1869, Russian entrepreneurs had already begun to open businesses in Turkestan. One of them had settled in Hodzhent, but he was not represented at the exhibition, which was devoted to Central Asian products. Kaufman visited the business of Mihail Hludov (1843-1885) the next day. The son of a millionaire Moscow entrepreneur, Hludov had an adventurous spirit and voluntarily joined Turkestan even before the conquest of Tashkent, participating in military campaigns. He was close to Chernaev, then Kaufman, and in 1867 opened a silk factory in Hodzhent, which had long been an important centre for cocoon production. In his highly paternalistic text, Maev contrasts the artisanal techniques of the Central Asians with the industrial and modern techniques of Hludov's factory. Only the master craftsmen were praised for the finesse of their work.

Following the event in Hodzhent, a rehearsal for the Turkestan section at the Saint-Petersburg All-Russian Manufactured Products Exhibition took place in Tashkent in January 1870 (Чабров 1966, 44). Finally, the Turkestan section presented 312 exhibitors in the Russian capital out of the 3 122 that participated in the All-Russian exhibition between 15 May and 1 August 1870. The mineralogical, zoological, and ethnographic collections gathered in the Hodzhent *uezd* and in Tashkent were displayed alongside various products from the General-Governorship. Only two exhibitors, young entrepreneurs from Moscow, were included in the section by product class, namely the textile industry for silk production: Aleksei Hludov and Ivan Pervushin (1842-1871) (Указатель 1870, 75). The latter was sent to Turkestan in 1866 by his father, an important Moscow merchant, to develop his business, and opened his silk factory in Tashkent in 1868. Both received an award for their product, but their silk factory quickly went into decline.

The Turkestan section offered a wide range of resources and products from the region: cotton, wool, linen, silk, wood, as well as clothing, ironwork, cutlery, glassware, earthenware, and finally tobacco, spices, and flour (Указатель 1870, 6). The Semirechye oblast was represented in particular by Kyrgyz and Kazakh women's handicrafts (felt, headdresses, and embroidery) and by animal skins from hunting.⁴ Cotton attracted particular attention, even though the Russian authorities had not yet imagined transforming Turkestan into a major cotton-producing area. The material, harvested from seeds known as Tashkenti and American, was presented in raw and cleaned form and was considered to be of lower quality than cotton from the Caucasus because of Central Asian dry climate. The production centres were the regions of Dzhizak, Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent, and in the Semirechye oblast with the two main active cities of Kopal and Tokmak. Four exhibitors, two Tatars from Tashkent, one Russian, and one Kurama from Hodzhent, are named for cotton: Sharafii-bai,⁵ Hodzha Yunus [Alim-Hodzha Yunusov] who had been already a contributor to the 1867 ethnographic exhibition, Popov, and Mulla Nazar (Всероссийская 1870, 97). During discussions on the economic development of the Empire, two visions of the prospects for cotton development in Central Asia clashed, one calling for support for the improvement of techniques and seeds, and the other believing that it was preferable to concentrate efforts in regions more suitable for this culture. The different exhibition played a role in the choice made to transform Turkestan in a cotton colony.

During the exhibition, the main interest was in Turkestan's raw materials: textiles, mineral resources, wood (haloxylon: саксаул), leather, skins, and furs. The raw materials were considered from the perspective of industrial development. Textiles attracted particular attention, with 700

⁴ Центральный Государственный Архив Республики Узбекистана, ф. И-596, оп. I, д. 28, лл. 2-5.

⁵ Sharafii-bai [Sharafiddin Zeinagobiddinov], a Tatar merchant originally from the Kasymov uezd, had settled in Tashkent long before the Russian conquest. Even under the Kokand Khanate, he was considered the protector of the Tatars, many of whom were fleeing to Tashkent to avoid Russian military service. Wealthy and influential, he collaborated with the new Russian authorities and was elected in 1868 as the first president of the Chamber of Commerce of the indigenous part of Tashkent. That same year, he had a mosque built.

exhibitors representing this sector alone. Central Asian techniques, generally considered too artisanal, were not in line with plans for the economic modernisation. The main important and recognised activity among the Kyrgyz and Kazakh nomads was hunting.

A year later, alongside the exhibitions described above, preparations were underway for the Polytechnic exhibition which was to be held at the Manege in Moscow from May to September 1872. It was organised on the initiative of Anatolii Bogdanov (1834-1896) and the Society of Devotees of Natural Science, Anthropology and Ethnography, who received support from the Moscow City Duma and Moscow's commercial and industrial circles. The aim was to depict Russia and its Empire with the idea of opening a Museum of Applied Knowledge, similar to the project of opening an ethnographic museum following the 1867 Ethnographic exhibition (Михайловская 1968):

To show a clear picture of the state of crafts and trades in the Russian Empire and on its outskirts. Particular attention at the exhibition was given to such types of trades as: gardening and vegetable cultivation; winemaking; tobacco growing; sericulture; beekeeping; fishing; poultry farming; hunting for animals and birds; as well as various types of production based on manual labor (Zakirova 2024, 4).

From the outset, it was planned to organise the exhibition around two main sections, one devoted to natural resources (physical geography, geology, botany, and zoology) and history, and the second one to techniques for agriculture and industry.

Kaufman selected the key members of the Turkestan committee responsible for preparing the section devoted to the region. The Society of Devotees was heavily involved. Convinced of his leading role, Kaufman had secured in 1871 the creation of a Turkestan section of the Society, of which he was the honorary president. Aleksei Fedchenko (1844-1873), a member of the Society, whom he had met in Moscow in 1867, had undertaken expeditions to Central Asia with his wife Olga Fedchenko (1845-1921) and took charge of the committee. Two of the Society's founders, Dmitrii Shchurovskii and Anatolii Bogdanov, were included, alongside other members, including Vasilii Oshanin (1844-1917), a specialist on silk production, and Ieronym Krauze (1845-1909), pharmacist established in Tashkent in 1871 who began his study of medicinal plants. Conversely, no Central Asians were co-opted. Unlike the Ethnographic exhibition of 1867, the collections were all attributed to Europeans (civil servants, scientists, and military personnel). Numerous expeditions, whose purpose was to collect information on Central Asia in all fields, had been carried out since the mid-1860s. Apart from these collections, all of the objects on display were purchased with the budget allocated by the Tsarist administration of Turkestan.

The exhibition was a success, welcoming 750 000 visitors, more than twice the attendance of the 1870 exhibition. The impression made by the Turkestan section on the Russian public is described by Vladimir Iversen (1845-1900), naturalist and silk industry specialist working at the Imperial Free Economic Society:

Among all the natural and history departments, the Caucasian and Turkestan sections left the greatest impression on visitors to the exhibition. This is due to the fact that both departments introduced not a certain branch of knowledge and technology that, strictly speaking, does not have a homeland, but the nature and technical production of a certain area of the locality. In addition, the Caucasus and Turkestan – territories that relatively recently became part of the Russian Empire – are distinguished by their original physiognomy, luxurious nature, and virgin development of technical production (Иверсен 1873, 507).

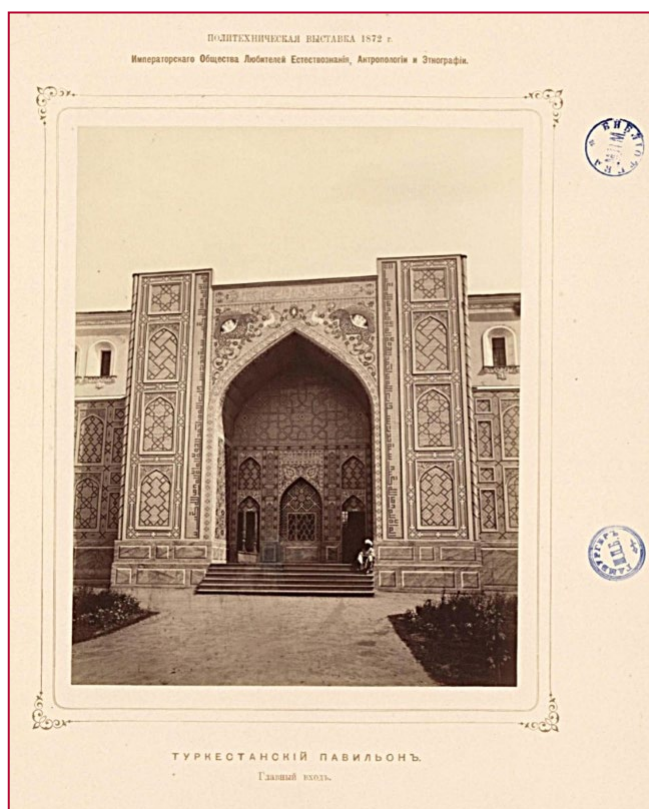


Figure 3. Turkestan pavilion at the Moscow Polytechnical exhibition in 1872

In order to make an impression on Muscovites, the facade of the Turkestan pavilion was a 1:2.5 scale reproduction of the Shirdor *medrese*, part of the monumental ensemble of Registan in Samarkand (Figure 3). The wooden structure of the building was covered with canvas painted from sketches by Dmitrii Ivanov (1846-1924), a member of the Turkestan committee who was geologist, geographer, explorer of the Ussuri region and Turkestan and artist (Nikitin 2023, 134). The Turkestan section was itself divided into subsections: anthropology, agriculture, technology, ethnography, and military. The Turkestan section reused many objects exhibited in 1870, which were supplemented mainly through Kolpakovskii for Semirechye.

The agricultural section prepared by Mihail Brodovskii (1838-?), agronomist who arrived in Turkestan in 1867, included agricultural tools, with the indigenous terminology indicated alongside the Russian equivalent. A single mannequin wielding a ketmen (hoe), a central tool for farmers in Central Asia, was included

in the section. Livestock, on the other hand, received no special attention, and this relative lack of interest was a constant feature of the Russian Empire. The animals presented were linked to their function in mobility for riding and packing (camel, horse, ox, yak, and donkey).

The technical section was more developed and Semirechye was well represented. The leading European entrepreneurs were honoured with samples of their products. Most of the factories presented belonged to these entrepreneurs in Vernyi, Tokmak, and Pishpek: breweries, tanneries, soap factories, oil mills, and modern mills simply called Russian mills. The main indigenous production on display was that related to reeds, which were described as economical, simple, and multifunctional. They were used for yurts, roofs, pipes, and “*chii*” (чий). “*Chii*,” works of craftsmanship and artistry, are reeds assembled and woven with felt. They came in two main forms: wall hangings to decorate and insulate yurts, or panels to separate women’s and men’s spaces.

In general, the Central Asian products that attracted public attention were handicrafts, as had been the case in 1870. Iversen provides a list of those he considered most remarkable:

The most advanced handicraft industries in the region include: 1) carpet making; 2) embroidery on cloth with silk, gold, silver and sequins; 3) reed products, which, due to the lack of forests, are widely used in the region for covering houses, making fences and yurts, grain sacks, etc., baskets, chibouks and various small crafts; 4) products made of marble and other limestones; 5) production of variegated and relief tiles; 6) turned and mosaic wooden products with metal carving, very fine and painstaking products; 7) production of tin, copper, brass, cast iron and clay utensils and various household utensils of unique shapes; 8) the production of luxurious weapons decorated with turquoise and other stones, horse blankets, harness, carpets, shoes with decorations made of forged silver and gold, and, finally, 9) the production of boards for printing designs on paper fabrics (Иверсен 1873, 523-524).

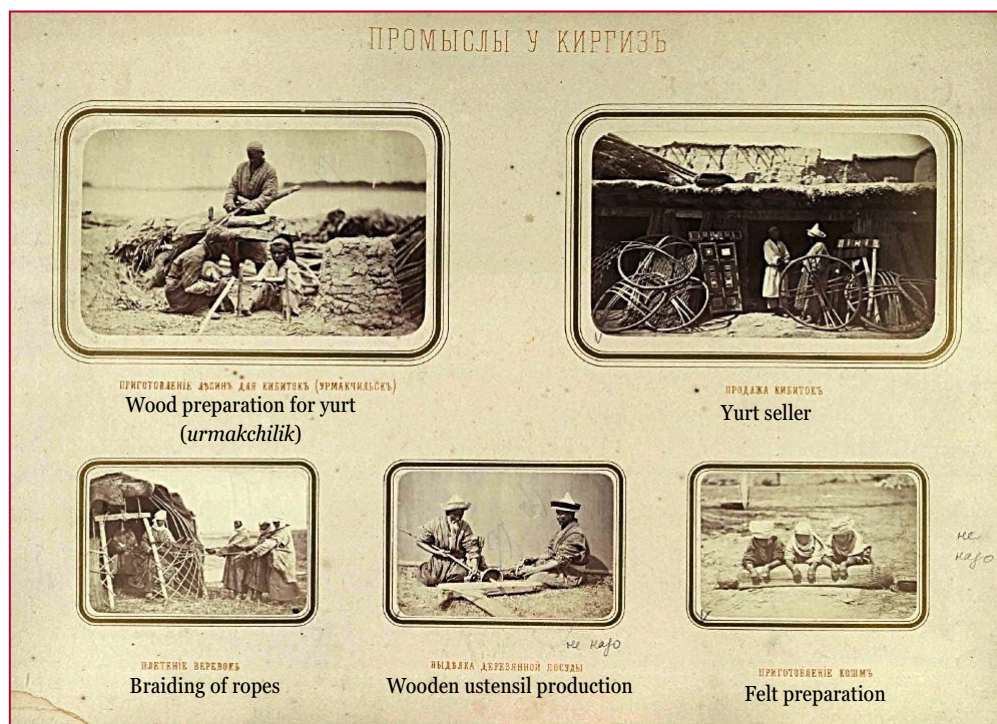


Figure 4. Kirgiz craft industries (Туркестанский альбом)

Numerous raw materials were presented to demonstrate economic prospects, and textile fibres were once again highlighted. Alongside the usual wool, hemp, and flax, a new fibre appeared: kendyr (*Apocynum pictum*),⁶ which was the subject of growing interest in Russia. The samples came mainly from Semirechye, where this plant was found and used by Kazakhs and Kyrgyz.

The ethnographic section was placed under the direction of Yurii Yuzhakov, who had written an ethnographic essay on the Sarts and Tajiks in 1867 (Южаков 1867). It was organised around scenes with mannequins, similar to the 1867 Ethnographic exhibition. The first scene featured a Kirgiz with camels and a Sart on a donkey. Nomadism and the mobility it implies were a fascinating theme for the Russian public. The scene was accompanied by a caption:

The Kirgiz are a nomadic people. In winter, they nomadise in the lowlands near rivers, reed-covered lakes, and in the sands where bushes suitable for heating and grass for feeding livestock grow [...]. In spring, they go to the steppe for fresh grass, and as summer approaches, they climb higher into the mountains, reaching the snow line in midsummer. [...] In autumn, they descend again, thus nomadising throughout the year and providing their herds with food. When they migrate, camels are their only means of transport for all their belongings, children, and elderly women (Общее обозрение... 1872, 73).

Another large-scale scene, entitled “Kirgiz in the Yurt”, is dedicated to the Kazakhs: the father and his eldest son are eating mutton, the *baibishe* – the first wife – is coaxing a little boy; the daughter-in-law and her daughter watch a *dzhigit* [young man] playing the tambur, a day labourer

⁶ “It is known in the East under the name of kendyr and is used in Central Asia for the preparation of very fine and durable fabric. The length of the kendyr stem on the shores of Lake Balkhash reaches four or more arshins. The fibers of kendyr are used by the Kirgiz only for the manufacture of ropes, which are very durable. Coming to wintering grounds in late autumn, the Kirgiz find the plant already fully ripe. Kendyr is crushed like hemp; the fibre easily separates from the wood, since the plant is collected in late autumn, even in winter from under the snow. From a pood, 3-5 pounds of fibre are obtained. Experiments in weaving with kendyr have been very successful. Kendyr takes bleaching well, has a shiny, silky appearance and can be excellently used for the preparation of fabrics. The fleshy root of the Kakhetian A. Juventus Lour. returns youth, according to native doctors, if used for a long time” (Андреевский Иван, 1890. *Энциклопедический словарь Брокгауза и Ефрона*, Т.1а, СПб : 917).

sits in front of the yurt door, and the father's second daughter-in-law prepares *kumys* [fermented mare's milk]; finally, a young bride wears the *saukale* [saukele: headdress worn by young married women]. The caption mentions "the yurt or *kibitka*, surprisingly well suited to the nomadic lifestyle". Polygamy being a recurring theme, it is specified that a poor *Kirgiz* has only one yurt, while a rich *Kirgiz* may have several for each of his wives. It adds, "some *Kirgiz* have up to seven wives, so every day of the week is occupied" (*Общее обозрение...* 1872, 76)

The mention of the tambur is noteworthy. This term generally refers to a long-necked lute, but it is mainly used among sedentary populations.⁷ The name of the Kazakh long-necked lute is the "dombra," and the Kyrgyz three-stringed lute, unlike the tambur and the dombra, is called "komuz." August Eichhorn (1844-?), a German musician who was one of the first to collect Uzbek and Kazakh music in the early 1870s, was tasked with presenting Central Asian musical instruments. As a musicologist, he associated the dombra with the tambur and chose the term used by the Uzbeks, whom he had mainly frequented. None of the musical instruments on display came from Semirechye (*Общее обозрение...* 1872, 82).

Instead of the albums of drawings that had been exhibited at the 1867 ethnographic exhibition, Kaufman decided to have a photographic album produced. Photography was considered the best medium for preserving the memory of an endangered heritage and for ensuring the authenticity of the representation of Central Asian peoples and societies. Fedchenko believed that photography helped to preserve the features of traditional life that were disappearing under the pressure of modernisation (Горшенина 2021, 53).

The *Туркестанский альбом* (Turkestan Album) was compiled in 1871-1872 under the direction of Aleksandr Kun (1840-1888). A graduate of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish languages from the University of Saint-Petersburg, he was appointed to Central Asia in 1868, where he conducted ethnographic research and collected statistical data under Kaufman's instructions. He enlisted the services of Grigorii Kirvtsov, a military photographer who had documented the campaigns against Khiva and Kokand, and later Nikolai Nehoroshev, a professional photographer with a studio in Tashkent. This project was quite unique in its scope, comprising approximately 1 400 photographs divided into six volumes (two archaeological volumes, two ethnographic volumes, one volume on economic activities, and one volume on military campaigns). Semirechye is conspicuously absent from this album, with only two clearly identified photographs included in the military volume: the forts of Tokmak and Pishpek.

The ethnographic volumes illustrate the different populations and their ways of life. The desire to be as close as possible to the realities on the ground is evident in the distinction between Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, referred to respectively as "*kirgizy* (kozak)"/"*kirgizki-kazachki*" and "*kara-kirgizy*" (Figure 5). For Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, photographs of different types of populations are presented with only a first name. This is a form of humanisation compared to the practice of noting only ethnic affiliation in the caption. However, it is very difficult to identify the people photographed with only their first name. Tajiks and "Sarts," on the other hand, are often identified by their first name and their function, with images of important figures such as the son of the Khan of Kokand or *qazi* (islamic judge). The themes of the photos echo those already seen in the exhibition itself, namely nomadism and the omnipresence of yurts.

The exhibits of some departments testified to the mutual influence of the Russian and Central Asian peoples in the field of economy and material culture. Thus, in the military department, clothes of Russian soldiers, sewn from local materials, their means of transportation (*arba*), dwelling (*yurt*), borrowed from local peoples, were exhibited (Чабров 1957, 44). Other materials reflected the

⁷ In the absence of an image and a more precise description of the instrument in the scene, it is not possible to determine whether it was actually a tambur or a dombra.

gradual spread among the indigenous inhabitants of the region of household and other products of Russian manufacture (iron plows, harrow, chest, lantern, etc.). Thus, the Turkestan department of the Polytechnic Exhibition acquainted the Russian public with the life, wealth and nature of Central Asia and the characteristic features of the way of life of its multinational population.



Figure 5. Types of people from the Turkestan region: *Kirgizy* (Kozak)

An in-between: The 1870s-1880s exhibitions with limited representation of Central Asia

This series of exhibitions organised in the early years of the Turkestan General-Governorship gave way to smaller-scale exhibitions in Tashkent and Russia between the late 1870s and the 1880s. After Kaufman and his administration's significant involvement in the 1872 exhibition, the resources mobilised for subsequent events were much more modest.

In 1878, the Turkestan Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition was held in Tashkent.⁸ Objects collected from local industrialists, merchants, peasants, and indigenous peoples were widely displayed. Its exhibition halls contained many items from Semirechye. For example, tobacco and honey were presented from the Pishpek district, as well as samples of chiya, lasso, braid, and thread made by Kyrgyz craftswomen.⁹

In 1879, a small collection of "local antiquities and objects of daily life and the population" from the region was presented at the anthropological exhibition at Moscow University.¹⁰ And in 1882, the Turkestan region participated in the All-Russian Art and Industry Exhibition in Moscow, where it sought to showcase the "successes" of the empire's industrial development on its periphery. According to visitors, the Central Asian section was weak and of little interest (Чабров 1970, 17).

⁸ Российский Государственный Военно-Исторический Архив, ф. 400, Аз. часть, оп. 1, д. 2658, л. 13.

⁹ Центральный Государственный Архив Республики Казахстан, ф. И-44, оп. 1, д. 286, л. 2.

¹⁰ ЦГА РУз, ф. И-1, оп. 15, д. 303, лл. 8-10.

However, the contribution of this exhibition and other similar exhibitions to familiarising the Russian public with certain aspects of the culture and life of the peoples of Central Asia cannot be completely denied.

In 1885, a gardening and farming exhibition was organised in Tashkent thanks to funding from the local horticultural society. The main objective was to “inform the general public about everything that had been achieved so far in the Turkestan region in terms of plant cultivation”,¹¹ to disseminate improved methods of fruit tree cultivation more widely, and to “serve as an intermediary between local and European gardeners” (Смирнов 1887, 147). Local and imported fruits, vegetables, and berries were widely exhibited, along with demonstrations of fruit cultivation and drying methods, which contributed to some extent to the spread of gardening and agriculture and the development of cultural contacts between workers of various nationalities in the region. In September 1886, the next Turkestan exhibition opened in Tashkent to familiarise newcomers and residents with the state of industry and agriculture in the region; approximately 20 000 visitors attended the exhibition. A total of 725 exhibitors participated in the exhibition, including 139 Russians and 586 representatives of the local population. The latter showed increased interest in exhibitions among the indigenous populations. Several exhibits came from various regions inhabited by Kazakhs and Kyrgyz. Visitors particularly appreciated the petroleum products, mountain wax, asphalt, and coal from the Maily-Saya region (Маев 1886, 77).

Visitors were enchanted by the creations of local jewellers and artisans. Some of their objects, such as a chest of drawers made of sycamore wood, a sideboard and a desk made of walnut, chests, a silver samovar, an original cigarette case, and others, bore witness to the constant interaction between European and local craftsmen (Маев 1886, 25-26). Recognising the entrepreneurial spirit of Central Asian craftsmen, the organisers noted that they were already competing with Russian craftsmen (Маев 1886, 77). A tearoom was open during the exhibition, attracting many visitors, including settlers and indigenous people (Маев 1886, 48).

All these exhibitions were part of the development of a new colonial society in the Russian Central Asia. Knowledge on the Other was spreading and a different approach to the economic resources of the region was emerging. They were some mutual exchanges, but the Central Asians had to adapt to the needs of the colonial authorities and to the new market rules, where Russians were always privileged. Livestock production remained underrepresented.

Economic and scientific colonisation: The two last large exhibitions with Central Asia pavilion in 1890 and 1896

A window on colonial Turkestan: The 1890 Tashkent Exhibition

Two large-scale exhibitions were finally held in 1890 in Tashkent, and in 1896 in Nizhny Novgorod. The 1890 Tashkent Agricultural and Industrial exhibition was the result of three years of work and its ambition was to affirm the results of Tsarist domination in Central Asia, with the Trans-Caspian Railway as its highlight. The exhibition was intended to serve as a showcase for its colonial policy, and foreign correspondents were invited to attend and report on it. Among the most famous guests were French photographer Paul Nadar (1856-1939) and journalist and specialist in African transportation Edouard Blanc (1858-1923), who documented the exhibition (Bernard 2007). The latter related in his report of the mission to Central Asia: “We see that the Russians, with great reason, have sought by all means to inspire in their subjects of Turkestan a high idea of the civilisation and power of the European nations of which they are the representatives. They do not neglect to initiate them into the historical glories of the West” (Blanc 1895, 913).

¹¹ РГВИА, ф. 398, оп. 49, д. 16308, л. 1.



Figure 6. Kirgiz yurts at the 1890 Tashkent Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition

The Governor-General of Turkestan, Nikolai Rozenbah (1836-1901), who succeeded Mihail Chernaev¹² in 1884, launched the initiative for this exhibition in 1888. Under his authority, the Trans-Caspian Railway reached Samarkand, and construction began on the section to Tashkent. However, he was replaced in 1889 by Baron Aleksandr Vrevskii (1834-1910), who had never previously served in Central Asia. Thus, it was Nikolai Grodekov (1843-1913), governor of the Syr-Darya oblast since 1883, who took over as head of the exhibition's organising committee. He was assisted by veterans of Turkestan, several of whom had participated in the organisation of the exhibitions of the 1870s: Oshanin, Maev, and Brodovskii. The venue chosen was the city park in the Russian part of the city. The theme of military conquests was once again honoured with a giant statue of a Russian soldier triumphing over weapons taken from the defeated Central Asians. The military and historical section was thus placed at the centre of the exhibition.

The discourse on Central Asians has changed compared to previous exhibitions: Russian influence is presented as even more essential to a backward indigenous society and economy. Greater emphasis is placed on the rudimentary nature of local production. Craftsmanship is now characterised by a lack of refinement, and agriculture by a lack of diversification. Maev explains in his exhibition guide: "We cannot name a single [indigenous] craft product that is out of the ordinary" (Maev 1890, 150). He notes that: "Despite the abundance and richness of the semi-tropical flora of Central Asia, refined horticulture remained at a particularly low level until the arrival of the Russians" (Maev 1890, 18). According to the exhibition organisers, it was only integration into the Russian Empire that allowed the introduction of new activities, such as beekeeping, which was established by the Cossacks in Semirechye before spreading to Turkestan. Since the early 20th century Russian authors have explained that the first beehives were installed in Kopal in 1848 (Шавров 1911). This Russian perception was based on a specific conception of beekeeping that was not the one adopted in Central Asia. Honey was known in Central Asia long before the arrival of the Russians. The word honey – "bal" – already appears in Mahmud al-Kashgari's 11th-century dictionary of Turkic languages, which links it to the Turkic Qypchaq and Oguz peoples from Central Asia (Махмуд ал-Кашгари 2005, 856).

¹² Mihail Chernaev had been recalled to Turkestan after the death of Kaufman in 1882.

Russian entrepreneurs were once again honoured, with the three leading names being Nikolai Ivanov (1836-1906), Hludov, and Pervushin, who had been present in Central Asia since the mid-1860s and had each created economic empires. The sectors mentioned were textiles, mining, agriculture, and beverages. Business had not always been flourishing, and criticism focused mainly on Central Asia's backwardness. Pervushin's lead smelter quickly ceased operations, the main reason given being that "the smelting itself used a primitive *Kirgiz* method" (Maev 1890, 75). Some local entrepreneurs are also mentioned through their own pavilions, without being particularly valued and none were Kazakh or Kyrgyz.

The Semirechye oblast, which was placed under the authority of the new General Governorship of the Steppes in 1882,¹³ was very poorly represented. General Grigory Ivanov (1841-1913), who participated in numerous military campaigns in Central Asia, became governor of the oblast in 1887. He was not nearly as active or involved in relations with the Central Asian populations as Kolpakovskii. Moreover, the distance from the administrative centre of the General Governorship of the Steppes based in Omsk did not facilitate the participation of the Semirechye administration. Conversely, Grodekov, who was in charge of organising the exhibition, called on his contacts in the Syr-Darya oblast. Most of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz products on display came from this oblast, and for Semirechye, the hub was the Aulie-Ata market located in the Syr-Darya oblast on the border with Semirechye.

At the 1890 exhibition, livestock farming occupied a significant place with a pavilion dedicated to presenting the different breeds of animals. The negative assessment of the economic activities of Central Asians was also evident in this sector: "Before the establishment of Russian rule in Central Asia, indigenous livestock farming, among both nomads and sedentary peoples, was in an unenviable state" (Maev 1890, 152). The live animals came from Tashkent and Aulie-Ata and were no longer presented solely for their mobility. The entire livestock population was represented. There was great interest in animals that did not exist in Russia, such as yaks and amble ox. The latter was introduced by the Dungans who had recently settled in the uyezds of Vernyi, Tokmak, and Aulie-Ata.

Although the main sheep breeds of the nomads' livestock were presented, the focus was mainly on horses. Their quality was discussed, comparing in particular, according to usage, the '*Kirgiz*' horse, the Turkmen 'argamak' horse, and the hybrid of the two called 'karabair' (Figure 7). Fermented mare's milk, "kumys," was praised, but there was no mention of horse meat, delicacy for nomads but not consumed by Russians. Horses were also presented by the two existing stud farms in Turkestan, the former Kaplan stud farm bought in 1879 by Nikolai Ivanov (1836-1906) (Шахназаров 1898, 124-128) and that of the Uzbek Said-Gani Azimbaev.¹⁴ In his works on horse breeding in Turkestan, Vladimir Kolosvskii gives a description of Said-Gani's stud farm.

In 1880, in Tashkent itself, a horse breeding farm was established by Said-Gani Said Azimbaev, an honourable citizen, who owned a plot of land measuring 300 dessiatines on the Salar Canal. When it opened, the stud farm had only two Turkmen stallions and five Karabair mares, but by 1886 its stock had been divided into hand-raised and pasture-raised horses, with a total of eight stallions, 20 mares and 39 foals. The horses were good riding breeds mainly local, although the stud also had one Orlov trotter. At the Turkestan Agricultural Exhibition of 1886 in Tashkent, Said-Gani exhibited 13 fine

¹³ This decision was linked to the appointment of Kolpakovskii, who had ruled the Semirechye oblast since its creation, as head of the new General-Governorship of the Steppes in 1882. This administrative transfer was cancelled in 1897 and the Semirechye returned to the authority of the General-Governorship of Turkestan.

¹⁴ Said Gani Azimbaev (1866-?), son of Said Azimbai Muhammadbaev, was, along with his elder brother Said-Karim, one of the most important Uzbek merchants and entrepreneurs. They were particularly active in construction and public works, having built, among other things, the Cathedral of St. Sergius of Radonezh in Tashkent. They were also public figures. The first Russian-indigenous school in the Asian part of Tashkent was opened in 1884 in one of Said Gani's houses.

horses, which attracted considerable interest as the result of breeding local breeds themselves with more careful selection of studs (Колосовский 1910, 51).

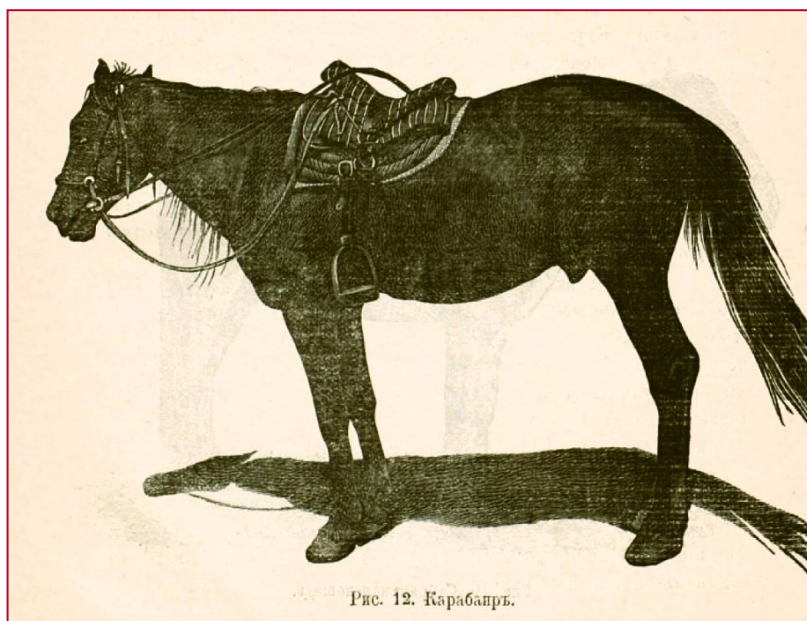


Figure 7. Karabair horse (Шахназаров 1898, 110)

With regard to Semirechye, fishing and hunting were mentioned. “Fishing is an exclusively Russian and *Kirgiz* activity” (Маев 1890, 48). Semirechye, rich in lakes and rivers, had a thriving fishing industry with markets in Kopal and Vernyi, the two main towns in the region. Conversely, hunting was not considered a developed activity, whereas previous exhibitions had highlighted the skins and furs obtained from hunting in Central Asia:

Hunting in Turkestan is not a widespread economic activity that provides a stable income for the population (with the exception of pheasants in Syr-Darya); it is practiced by the indigenous people either out of necessity to protect their families, herds, and fields from attacks by predators, or for entertainment accessible only to the wealthy (falconry). [...] With the arrival of the Russians, hunting began to be practiced in a more equitable manner” (Маев 1890, 37).

The only hunting practice that caught the attention of the Russians was falconry. This type of hunting was described in detail and was associated with the Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. Its exotic nature for a European audience resulted in a fascination that never waned; Vereshchagin had already dedicated one of his now classic paintings to an eagle hunter. Edouard Blanc related it longly in his article: “During the Tashkent exhibition, one of the sections was specially reserved for hunting [and] featured the first specimens of the most distinguished falconry teams of Turkestan” (Blanc 1895, 917). He also contradicted Maev’s derogatory speech: “Of all the arts, the most celebrated and characteristic in Central Asia is undoubtedly falconry. It is practiced not only by the great lords, [...] but by all the natives, rich and poor, high and low, whatever their social status” (Blanc 1895, 916).

This 1890 exhibition, which attracted visitors from Europe, was entirely devoted to the glory of the Russian Empire and its ability to modernise colonies considered backward. Knowledge of the peoples and the region benefited from a specific section dedicated to “scientific work for the study of Central Asia,” but only Russian and European names were mentioned. It celebrated the development of Russian science and did not include any ethnographic collections.

1891 Central Asian Exhibition in Moscow

The following year saw the only exhibition devoted exclusively to Central Asia in Russia itself. It opened on 11 May 1891, in the buildings of the Moscow Historical Museum and ran for six months until 19 November. The installation of the exhibition began in February 1891, but due to the insufficient space allocated, the exhibits were displayed “in cramped small display cases with insufficient lighting” (*Доклад...* 1893, 17). The first hall housed the military history department, which contained items of uniform and weapons of Russian troops and local peoples, photographs of localities, portraits of administrative and military figures, both Russian and local. The second hall housed samples of natural resources and raw materials. Behind it, a Central Asian bazaar was organised with stalls selling products of Turkestan artisans, who also demonstrated the process of their manufacture here. Further on, products of local handicraft and factory industries were exhibited. In the fifth hall, various maps of the Turkestan region were exhibited, and in the last hall, ethnographic collections (*Доклад...* 1893, 9-11), mannequins of representatives of various peoples, including a Kyrgyz dressed in national clothing with a pointed felt hat with slits on both sides (*Средне-Азиатская...* 1891). The exhibition stands also contained other exhibits, such as samples of petroleum products and minerals from the southern regions of nowadays Kyrgyzstan (*Каталог...* 1891, 57), magnetic sand, flax, and a number of items from the Issyk-Kul region. A separate display case (No. 11) contained collections sent from the city of Przhevalsk in the Semirechye region (*Каталог...* 1891, 60-71).

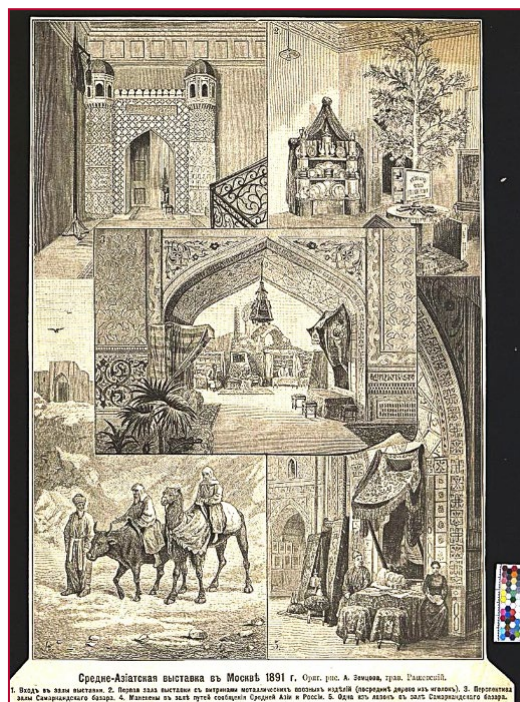


Figure 8. 1891 Central Asian Exhibition in Moscow

The exhibition was visited by about 250 thousand people, including students from Moscow educational institutions, some foreign scientists, and tourists. In a separate hall, with the aim of “better acquaintance with those regions from a scientific point of view,” public readings were held with “foggy” pictures, dedicated to the history, geography, flora, fauna, and natural resources of Central Asia (*Доклад...* 1893, 16-17). A catalogue of the exhibits was compiled, and informational and advertising messages were published in Moscow newspapers, outlining the contents of the exhibits and the activities of the exhibition committee.

1896 Nizhny Novgorod Industrial and Arts Exhibition

The 1896 Nizhny Novgorod Industrial and Arts Exhibition was the largest exhibition organised before 1917. It was held under the patronage of Nicholas II and under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance. Sergei Witte, Minister of Finance, chaired the organising committee. The resources made available by the state were unprecedented compared to previous budgets. The aim was clearly to demonstrate the cohesion of the Empire and the development of its economy in relation to other European powers. The introduction to the album dedicated to the exhibition made this intention clear: “In Western Europe, exhibitions have lost their profound significance and are mostly the subject of speculation for the benefit of some joint-stock company, where the state plays a secondary role. Substantial Russian exhibitions are still necessary as a link with our less civilised peripheries” (*Альбом...* 1896, 6).

The exhibitors included private entrepreneurs and government agencies. Central Asians were still virtually absent from the private participants. Their economic activities were presented in the sections devoted to the region. Even more clearly than before, indigenous entrepreneurs were not considered a driving force for the Empire's economic development and were unable to gain visibility beyond Central Asia. They only really appeared at local exhibitions in Turkestan or in the Semirechye oblast. The only non-Russian exhibitors from Semirechye to be named and awarded were the merchants Vali-Ahun Yuldashev (1839-1916), Uyghur from Ili, and Isak Gabdulvaliev (1839-1911), a Tashkent native of Kazan Tatar origin who opened his company in Vernyi in 1871. Their participation did not reveal the extent of their business. The exhibits consisted of wild animal skins and costumes of "natives". Their flourishing activities were not mentioned. Vali-Ahun Yuldashev, a merchant of the first guild, was the almost exclusive supplier to the Russian armies on the Russian-Chinese border and controlled a significant part of trade with China. He founded the city of Dzharkent in the east of the Semirechye oblast, being the main real estate developer. Extremely wealthy and influential, he owned trading posts, land, and mills, and was very enterprising in many sectors (mining, transportation, etc.). Isak Abdulvaliev was also a wealthy merchant and entrepreneur with highly diversified economic activities in Semirechye.

In 1896, the Central Asian regions were still under the jurisdiction of several administrations: the Turkestan General-Governorship of Turkestan, the General Governorship of the Steppes, the Regional Administration of Turgai, and the Caucasus Administration for the Transcaspian oblast. Two sections were dedicated to these regions, the first entitled Central Asia (Средняя Азия) and Trade between Russia and Persia, and the second called Siberia and Trade with China and Japan. Semirechye was represented in the second section. Both had separate pavilions. The Central Asian pavilion (Figure 9), designed by Aleksandr Pomerantsev (1849-1918), the exhibition's main architect, featured a Moorish style foreign to the region. The architect, unfamiliar with Central Asian heritage, had decided to distance himself from previous pavilions that copied the monuments of Samarkand. The Siberian pavilion was inspired by Russian Siberian log architecture (Figure 10).



Figure 9. Central Asian pavilion (1896 Nizhny-Novgorod Industrial and Art Exhibition)



Figure 10. Siberian pavilion (1896 Nizhny-Novgorod Industrial and Art Exhibition)

Nikolai Zabugin (1845-1900), head of customs duties at the Ministry of Finance, chaired the organising committee for the section for Central Asia and trade between Russia and Persia. The Siberian section was coordinated by Petr Semenov (1827-1914), vice-president of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society (IRGO), who had led two famous expeditions to Central Asia in 1856-58 and 1888. He had studied the southern part of Semirechye in particular and had become an influential figure in the corridors of power. A senator since 1882, he had been director of the Central Statistics Committee and in 1896 chaired the main commission for the general census. The subsection in charge of the Steppe General-Governorship was headed by Georgii Katanaev (1848-1921), president of the Western Siberia section of the IRGO. Preparations began in 1895 in collaboration with Petr Semenov, the governor-general of the steppes Maksim Taube (1826-1910), who was also a member of the West Siberian branch of the IRGO, and numerous other interlocutors.

Katanaev came from a Cossack family in the Akmolinsk region and was therefore familiar with Central Asia. He developed an initial program for the exhibition that covered the usual themes, featuring everyday objects, costumes, and yurts. Once again, no Central Asians were credited for the objects on display. As with the 1890 exhibition, it was Russian science and its practitioners who were highlighted. The documentation on the way of life of the Semirechye populations was based on the work of Nikolai Pantusov (1849-1909), an orientalist who was recruited in Turkestan in 1872 and worked in the administration of the Semirechye oblast from 1885 to 1904 (Горбуров 2016). The ethnographic collection on the Dungan (Chinese muslim), Taranchi (Uyghur), and *Kirgiz* peoples was assembled by the West Siberian section of the IRGO. Both Siberian and Central Asian pavilion installed yurts.

The rich expositions were displayed haphazardly and could not give a complete picture of any region. The provenance of the exhibitors from Semirechye showed a shift in the oblast with the new prevalence of Vernyi and Pishpek over Kopal and Tokmak. Along with other exhibits, three stones with inscriptions brought from Issyk-Kul were displayed here (Селиванов 1896).

“A large carpet made by *Kirgiz* women from the Andijan district” aroused noticeable interest among visitors.¹⁵ Several Central Asian-type dwellings were displayed around the pavilion; there was also a yurt where a national orchestra of nine musicians played, composed by an expert in the history and culture of the region, Nil Lykoshin (1860-1922) (Лыкошин 1896). Officer and civil servant in the Turkestan administration, he was also an orientalist who was one of the founders of the circle of Turkestan archaeology enthusiasts.

Preparing the exhibition in connection with scientific societies and orientalist circles, Katanaev received precise instructions from the turkologist Vasilii Radlov (1837-1918), member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences and director of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography-Kunstkamera since 1894: “It is desirable to have as complete a collection of photographs of the *Kirgiz* as possible, *en face et en profile*. Photographs of groups representing various scenes from the *Kirgiz* way of life, yurt, feasts, folk festivals, gatherings, weddings, etc.” (Дорошенко 2021, 118). Photography became important, and Katanaev employed the services of military photographer and topographer Nikolai Krekov (1857-1921).

Originally from Omsk, Krekov was a member of the West Siberian branch of the IRGO and carried out an expedition to the steppes and Semirechye in 1894-1895. Three albums, comprising 300 prints and entitled “Семиреченские казаки” (Cossacks from Semirechye), “Виды территории Семиреченской области и Кульджинского района” (Views from the Semirechye region and the district of Kuldzha) and “Типы народностей” (Ethnic types), were exhibited. These photographs have the interest of showing the different populations of the Russian-Chinese border region with portraits representing the ethnic diversity of Semirechye (Figure 11). However, it remains a reflection of the colonial view of these populations. Unlike Kun’s Turkestan album, which seemed to take a step towards recognising an individual quality by indicating the first name, the captions only indicate the origin of the people, and the subjects remain completely exotic. The only exceptions concern deposed sovereigns.¹⁶

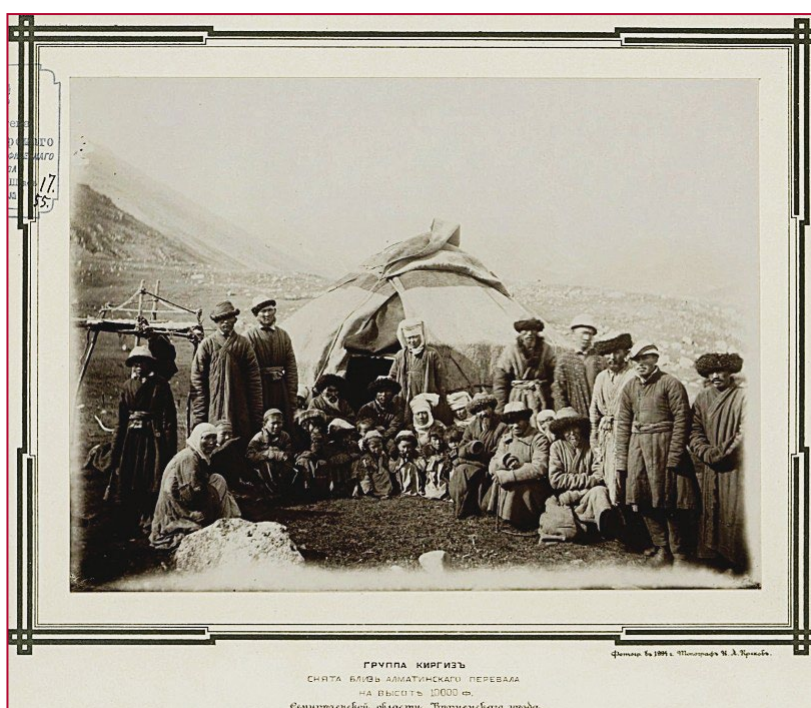


Figure 11. Group of *Kirgiz* near the Almaty pass at 10 000 feet. Semirechye oblast, Vernyi uезд (By Nikolai Krekov, *Фотографический альбом...* 1894)

As Georgii Chabrov correctly noted, the exhibition in Nizhny Novgorod was the last large All-Russian exhibition in which the Turkestan region, and consequently Semirechye, benefited from a specific department with their own pavilion. Turkestan was subsequently represented at three more All-Russian handicraft and industrial exhibitions in 1902, 1907 and 1913 (Чабров 1970, 33-34). But the exhibits presented in them were meager, and only museum collections were on display, as well as, to some extent, the products of individual merchants.

¹⁵ ЦГА РУз, ф.И-1, оп. 17, д.10, л.364.

¹⁶ Krekov included in one of his albums a full-length portrait of Sultan Abil-ogly (Alyakhan Abil-ogly), the ruler of Ili who surrendered to the Russians in 1871 and was held captive in Vernyi.

Conclusion

The organisation of exhibitions in Turkestan and Russia mobilised considerable human and financial resources from the 1870s onward. The initiative fell primarily to state institutions, particularly the Ministry of Finance, regional administrations, and Moscow University, but scientific societies were also very active. The Society of Devotees to Natural Science, Anthropology and Ethnography, and the Imperial Russian Geographical Society were the main organisations involved, even creating local branches.

The main motivation for those mobilised in Central Asia was to promote Turkestan's potential in order to justify the investments necessary for its administration and modernisation. This was the major achievement of the first Governor-General, Konstantin von Kaufman. His goal was to attract investors from Russia, basing his colonial project on the modernisation of Turkestan.

The colonial society that developed from the 1870s onward incorporated Central Asians very little into the modernisation process. Native entrepreneurs and merchants only had the opportunity to showcase their products at exhibitions held in Central Asia. At all those held in Russia, it was Russian entrepreneurs who were honoured. The young businessmen who arrived in the late 1860s, Ivanov, Hludov, and Pervushin, were able to create economic empires there. The Central Asians, who were equally successful in business, always remained in the background. However, no Kazakh or Kyrgyz managed to compete with the Russian merchants or those from Tatars, Uzbeks, and Uyghurs.

This situation was reinforced around the 1890s with the growing Russian discourse on the backwardness of Central Asian societies and cultures. The relative valorisation of refined crafts and certain elements of cultural heritage gave way to a general vision of underdevelopment and a rudimentary economy. Central Asian production methods and techniques were largely discredited and, for some, invisible. Russian colonisation imported a vision of modernity that disrupted existing balances without being more rational. The environment and experience of local cultures were rarely taken into consideration. The numerous failures of Russian entrepreneurs in cotton, silk, livestock breeding, mining, etc. did not lead to a questioning of the modernisation model. The phenomenon of endemic corruption in the Tsarist administration in Turkestan does not appear directly in the study presented in the exhibitions and has not yet been sufficiently analysed to understand its role in the transformations of the region between the 19th and 20th centuries.

Semirechye was presented rather haphazardly at various exhibitions. Kolpakovskii played a crucial role in ensuring the region was well represented during his long tenure as Governor-General. The change of authority with the creation of the Steppe General-Governorship worked against him due to the region's distance from the administrative centre in Omsk. From then on, the Aulie-Ata market in the Syr Darya played a significant role in Semirechye's participation in exhibitions. Throughout the second half of the 19th century, Semirechye was closely associated with beekeeping, tobacco growing, livestock breeding, and hunting.

The Russian image of Central Asia and its nomadic and sedentary populations took root fairly quickly and evolved little despite the proliferation of ethnographic and scientific expeditions. Representations of nomads focused on exotic themes: mobility, horses, yurts, and eagle hunting. The main point of change was the military domain. Kazakh and Kyrgyz weapons exhibited in the early years tended to disappear, and the military sections of the exhibitions were strengthened and reserved for the Russian conquest. The idea, deeply rooted in Tsarist and Soviet historiography, of a voluntary attachment of the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz to the Russian Empire appeared clearly in 1895 in the words reported by Edouard Blanc: "The *Kirgiz* have, for the most part, given themselves voluntarily to Russia and they have no inclination to revolt" (Blanc 1895, 911). He added, "This

antipathy of the natives of Central Asia for firearms, not only when they are directed against them, but even when they have to use them, is very peculiar” (Blanc 1895, 917).

The exhibitions were also designed to introduce the Russian population to the newly conquered territories in order to strengthen the unity of the Empire. This task was quite well accomplished in the sense that Turkestan began to exist in the Russian imagination, with the limitations of these representations. 19th-century European science also sought to develop the knowledge necessary for the progress of societies. This knowledge was intended to aid in the exploitation of natural resources and the good governance of populations. The Turkestan sections of the exhibitions strove to highlight the raw materials available in the region. The idea was to ensure their exploitation with so-called modern techniques. The necessary modernisation could only imply the disappearance of an indigenous heritage deemed archaic. Scientific societies were keen to preserve this heritage, and most of the ethnographic objects on display were kept in museums. The exhibitions provided an opportunity to collect numerous objects and create images (drawings, paintings, and photographs) to preserve a memory of the future “past.” Photography immediately established itself as the best guarantor of the authenticity of this memory. The knowledge developed about the populations and territory of Central Asia was always formed in a relationship between Europeans and Central Asians. It appears in these exhibitions that the indigenous interlocutors were also invisible to the benefit of the Europeans, who published the results of their expeditions, often with numerous biases regarding their understanding of Central Asian societies.

The result was the relative abundance of Russian-language sources on Central Asia from the 1870s onward, and the lack of local sources. The exhibitions thus offer a distorted picture of Central Asia and Semirechye and teach us much about the colonial society that emerged after the Russian conquest and the discourses carried by the Russians.

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