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A Critique of Alexander Samoilovich (1880–1938) and the Process of an “Imperial Visitor’s” Evolution

Anton Ikhsanov

INTRODUCTION

The modern epoch is connected to the increased pace of intercultural interaction. In numerous spheres of human activity, the communication field between representatives of different cultures has become a part of everyday life. The necessity to provide an academic study of this phenomenon has led to the emergence of a specific branch of science titled “intercultural communication” and has changed the direction of anthropological studies, the methodology of history, and sociology.¹

However, the basis for this change of approach was not only a “cultural turn” and an attempt to enrich the “toolkit” by the newest methods of social sciences. One of the foundations for this shift to a new field of studies was self-reflection by historians and anthropologists. According to Maria Todorova, the ability to acknowledge the possibility of a scholar’s self-transformation by contact with the Other (and the dual nature of this process) is an ultimate indicator of this development by any branch of science.² Asian and African studies are not exceptions.

Moreover, Subaltern studies and Asian studies initially have a common goal—to give Others an opportunity to speak. However, there is a methodological gap between them. While Asian studies provide an external analysis based on texts that are reflected mostly by outsiders (which led to Orientalism as part of a knowledge formation process), Subaltern studies underline the subject’s subordination and its own reflection in colonial or post-colonial conditions.³ However, is this idea so explicit?

Despite the widespread tendency to pay particular attention to local sources written in Turkic, Persian, and Arabic, some scholars must use works written by Imperial or Soviet ethnographers and Orientalists as the basis of their research. This activity requires the comprehension of differences in language, ideological concepts, methods of works, narratives, and the inclusion of

1 Gerard Delanty and Engin F. Isin, eds., *Handbook of Historical Sociology* (London: SAGE Publications, 2003).

2 Maria Todorova, “Est’ li russkaia dusha u russkogo orientalizma? Dopolnenie k sporu Nataliela Naita i Adiba Halida,” in *Rossiiskaia imperiia v zarubezhnoi istoriografii* (Moscow, 2005), pp. 345–359.

3 Sergei Abashin, “Drugaiia istoriia: ‘Russkogo Turkestana’?” *Ab Imperio* 3 (2018), pp. 410–415.

a scholar in the formal and informal institutional background. However, these scholars use this knowledge on the positivist merits (as all scholars do as a part of archive explorations⁴), but without the considerations mentioned above.

This article does not pretend to criticize or to pay tribute to the theoretical discussion on the nature of colonial knowledge and the way it should be treated. Its main aim is to track the change in a scholar's methodological approach toward his local assistants that actually affected both sides of this interaction. That was the key factor in the creation of the colonial knowledge. Thus, I suggest showing how this interaction was used by both sides for their own benefit and what the strategies and foundations were for that kind of relationship.

As the main case for this study, I have chosen Russian Turkologist-encyclopedist Alexander Samoilovich. Almost yearly from 1900 to 1936, Samoilovich attempted to visit regions inhabited by Turkic-speaking groups,⁵ and as a result, he was able to form a network of assistants. These assistants were involved in his studies of local literatures, folklore, and languages. My focus in this study will concentrate on the assistants who originated from the Central Asian and Volga regions. Undoubtedly, cases from Crimea and Caucasus could be interesting, but they are far from my sphere of academic studies.

My main aim is to track the evolution line represented by the following concepts: "Imperial Visitor," "Idealistic Nationalism," and "Ambivalence of Soviet Academia." Alexander Morrison conducted a study of the first concept with Count Konstantine Pahlen (1861–1923) as example with some references to comparable British cases. The "Imperial Visitor" represents a person of aristocratic origin who, inspired by idealistic views on the rule of law, personal ideas of an empire's fate, and his or her own research of the colony's life, initiates an activity aimed to protect "the interests of an indigenous population".⁶ The second concept was proposed by Vera Tolz. "Idealistic Nationalism" is based on one of the peculiarities of a group of Orientologists who were trained by Baron Viktor Rozen (1849–1908). This peculiarity was an idea of enlightenment that could create a solid ground for the integration of "Oriental peoples" to Imperial structures. In some details, it is coherent with the "Imperial Visitor" concept, but Tolz's concept specifically underlines the enlightenment idea.⁷ Mathias Battis studied the last concept in the case of another Russian Orientalist, Alexander Semenov (1873–1958), who lived in the region for almost half a century (from the 1900s to 1950s). Battis emphasizes the indetermina-

4 Alexander Morrison, "'The Archives Talk'—Paolo Sartori's Contribution to the History of Central Asia," *Ab Imperio* 3 (2018), pp. 416–426.

5 The only exception was the period of the Revolution from 1917 to 1920.

Galina Blagova, *Aleksandr Nikolaevich Samoilovich: nauchnaia perepiska. Biografiia* (Moscow, 2008): pp. 408–412.

6 Alexander Morrison, "The Pahlen Commission and the Re-Establishment of Rectitude in Transcaspia, 1908–1909," *Monde(s)* 4 (2013), pp. 45–64.

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

cy of the Orientalist/colonized dichotomy" within the studies of the National Construction in Central Asia.⁸ There is also a noteworthy reference to Vasiliĭ Barthold's (1869–1930) ambiguous attitude toward the Soviet initiatives mentioned by Tolz and Svetlana Gorshenina.⁹ In other words, despite the idea of a strategic union between former Imperial scholars and the Soviet government (Hirsch, 2005), it seems that these experts' attitudes toward the local issues were not coherent with the ideas inspired by the authorities, in particular, in the "Soviet Orient."

The first part of this study will focus on the characteristics of the source base for this research. This exploration will be based on Sheila Fitzpatrick's idea regarding ego-documents and their relation to the social reality.¹⁰ This point of view also corresponds with Marina Rumyantseva's concept of ego-documents as a specific practice of socio-cultural identity reflection.¹¹ In the second part, there are brief descriptions of Samoilovich's relationships with some of his assistants.

One of the essential parts in this evolution line was a critical approach by Samoilovich. His critique on the local colonial administration's activity in the 1900s and the Soviet authorities' activity in the 1920s–1930s was correlated with his self-reflection. Samoilovich himself participated in these activities. Thus, it is necessary to pay close attention to the interaction between his comprehension of the policy and his academic ideas. This task is not easy due to the fragmentation of sources and the specific language of this epoch, which affected academic writings. However, the ego-documents could be a possible solution to resolve that issue using an anthropological approach and history of emotions.

SOURCE BASE

The study of ego-documents is an essential part of modern-day historiography. It is based on the comprehension of a social identity articulation. There are different approaches to ego-documents, varying from "the laboratory of the mindset" to "the social reflection institution." The conditions of their creation and social environment are equally important to their context. It is also important to determine the recipient of the information included in these sources. Some ego-documents were self-oriented materials. For example, a notebook in which a person tries to summarize his or her knowledge for future consider-

8 Matthias Battis, "The Aryan Myth and Tajikistan: from a Myth of Empire to One National Identity," *Ab Imperio* 4 (2016): pp. 155–183.

9 Tolz, "Russia's own Orient".

10 Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

11 Marina Rumyantseva, "Ego-History and Ego-Sources: Correlation of Notions," *History in Ego-Documents (Researches and Sources)*, (Ekaterinburg: "Aspur" Publishing House, 2005), pp. 32–41.

ation or as a 'self-reflection laboratory' can provide the grounds for a change of mindset within shifting social and cultural conditions.¹² Another group of ego-documents can be aimed to an outsider, as a specific method of knowledge transition. The articulation of thought through that kind of source is interconnected with an emotive phenomenon that represents the dual nature of emotions. On one side, it is a self-oriented representation of a feeling initiated by an external factor such as a political event. On another side, it is articulated through the regulated rules of the local society, legitimized or based on the socially determinate behavior of a subject.¹³

This paper is based on three groups of ego-documents: notebooks written by Samoilovich, his letters to his fellow colleagues, and photographs. All these groups require particular attention to the conditions and methods of their creation.

The first group includes his diaries or expedition notebooks. There are 26 notebooks created by this scholar that are currently preserved in the Manuscript Department at the National Library of Russia. This group consists of four different files (№ 77–81) dated from 1902 to 1927.¹⁴ This group of sources can be supplemented by some interesting documents in the personal archive of Russian Arabist Ignatii Krachkovskii (1883–1951), which is preserved in the St. Petersburg Branch at the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences.¹⁵

The origin of the expedition notes is important for this research. Samoilovich's first expedition to Central Asia in 1902 was initiated by his tutor, Turkologist Platon Melioranskii (1868–1906). Before the expedition, Samoilovich read books by Ármin Vámbéry (1832–1913) and Edmund O'Donovan (1844–1883) on their lives among Turkmens.¹⁶ Consequently, he had two distinct ideas. The first was to create expedition notes consisting of two types: notebooks containing his detailed impressions during the journey and notebooks containing his brief notes on language, literature, folklore, and housekeeping. The second idea was to write a book dedicated to his journey for the purpose of selling to the public. The travelogue genre could improve his financial situation, in particular, after his marriage in 1905. However, that project was denied by his mentors. Samoilovich continued to write diaries even after his return to St. Petersburg. In 1904 and 1905, he tried to describe, in detail, the learning process of the Faculty of Oriental Languages and the relations between professors and

12 Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2006).

13 Ian Plamper, *Istoriia emotsii* (Moscow, 2018).

14 The diaries OR RNB. F. 671. D. 77–81.

15 The personal archive of Ignatii Krachkovskii SPbF ARAN. F. 1026.

16 Vámbéry, a Hungarian Turkologist, made his journey through Central Asia in 1861–1864. O'Donovan, an Irish revolutionary and war correspondent, made his journey to the Merv and Ahal oases in 1879–1881. Note dated April 16, 1906, OR RNB. F. 671. D. 78. Notebook 3.1. 39.

students. These texts represent his thought on the disruptive gap between the different generations of Russian Orientalists who were not able to find a common language. Samoilovich emotionally reflected on the difference in attitudes between the new liberal generation of scholars and “elders,” the scandals over his group-mates, and the worries about their future academic careers.¹⁷ During this period, he planned his second journey to Turkmen lands in 1905, but the death of his academic advisor and critique by his elder and senior colleagues such as Nikolai Veselovskii (1848–1918) led to a new expedition from 1906 to 1907 with another itinerary and new research tasks. This journey resulted in numerous diaries, articles, and unpublished materials.¹⁸ According to the marginalia, Samoilovich used these diaries even after 1917 for comparative linguistic studies. The diaries dated from 1907 to 1911 are dedicated to his expeditions to Turkey and Crimea and the study of Stavropol Turkmens. His last diaries are dedicated to his journey to the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic and Siberia. They are brief and dated from 1926 to 1927. The reason for this conciseness can be found in the scholar’s political activity during this particular period.

The second group, the scholar’s correspondence, has been studied by some specialists, but the personal relations factor and the numerous letters by Central Asian politicians have been excluded from their analysis.¹⁹ The third group, photographs, includes numerous items.²⁰ Unfortunately, most of the photos are not published.²¹ Samoilovich adhered to the newest technology uses in Central Asian studies. He was in contact with one of the pioneers of audio recording use for folklore studies, Sergei Rybakov (1867–1921).²² The Orientalist himself created over ten wax cylinder audio logs during his expedition in 1902, but the fate of these is unknown. His attempt to photograph every local assistant is also remarkable for this study.

17 For example: The note dated February 14, 1906, OR RNB. F. 671. D. 78. Notebook 3. I. 26–29.

18 For example: The details from the diaries of a traveler who visited Turkmenia OR RNB. F. 671. D. 120.

19 Blagova, *Aleksandr Nikolaevich Samoilovich*; D. Nuralyýew, *Akademik A.N. Samoýlowiç Türkmen edebiyaty hakynda* (Ashgabat, 1971).

20 At least ten collections of photographs taken by Samoilovich are preserved in the Russian Ethnographic Museum and the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera; MAE). There is also an interesting collection in the home archive of the scholar’s granddaughter.

21 Valeriia Prishchepova, “Pervye kollektsii po etnografii turkmen v sobraniiax MAE (konets 19 – nachalo 20 vv,” *Istoriia 300-letnikh svyazei mezhdu Sankt-Peterburgom i Turkmenistanom* (St. Petersburg, 2019).

22 Correspondence between Samoilovich and Rybakov dated 1909–1920 SPbF ARAN. F. 782. O. 2. D. 38.

**INTERACTIONS BETWEEN A. SAMOILOVICH AND HIS LOCAL ASSISTANTS:
"OUTSIDER"**

By 1900, Samoilovich had already visited "the Oriental country," which was the Ottoman Empire, where the young scholar improved his knowledge of the local language. However, his first expedition was organized in 1902. Samoilovich, who was born on December 29, 1880, had a particular interest in the study of Turkmens because his birthday was close to the date of the Battle of Geok Tepe (the final battle took place on January 12, 1881), the climax of the Russian conquest. This interest was supported by his academic adviser, Melioranskii. Melioranskii asked his students to pay particular attention to modern-day Turkic languages and the way of life for Turkic-speaking peoples. This concept was one element in the methodological gap between his students and their senior colleagues.²³

In 1902, Samoilovich, equipped with references from the university, arrived at the port of Krasnovodsk through Baku at exactly the same moment that the Emir of Bukhara began his diplomatic visit to the Russian Empire through the same harbor. After his journey by railway, Samoilovich arrived at Askhabad, the political center of the Transcaspian region. He was curious about all the "Oriental personas" (*Vostochnye cheloveki*)²⁴ whom he met during his journey, but his first impression of the local administration was a disappointment. The administration of the region was situated in the mountain village of Firuza, near Askhabad. Civil workers were not able to provide their support due to the subordination of this region to the military ministry,²⁵ while Russian officers were skeptical about the local climatic condition and indigenous population. For example, they told him this joke: "During the Temptation of Christ by the Devil, he hid Transcaspia from Jesus with his tail".²⁶ However, the main reason for their complaints was the local population. Persian attacks and discontent with the resettlement policy of the center led to a very controversial atmosphere. The administration was distrustful of the local population, and this attitude was reciprocal. This can be described by a story told to Samoilovich by a local journalist: Ostroumov spoke with a Sart in a horse-drawn carriage and told him that the carriage was granted on concession to the Russians for 50 years. The Sart was bewildered and said, "Are they supposed to be here for that long?"²⁷ Moreover, the officers were not impressed by the newly appointed governor, Serbian general Dejan Subotić (1852–1920). Subotić supported communicating with civil workers and the local population to re-

23 Blagova, *Aleksandr Nikolaevich Samoilovich*, pp. 17–94.

24 For example, The diary note, OR RNB. F. 671. D. 77. Notebook 1. I. 19.

25 Sebastien Peyrouse, *Turkmenistan: Strategies of Power, Dilemmas of Development* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2012), pp. 25–26.

26 The diary note, OR RNB. F. 671. D. 77. Notebook 1. I. 14.

27 Note dated June 17–20, 1902; The diary note, OR RNB. F. 671. D. 77. Notebook 1. I. 22.

solve numerous socioeconomic issues inside the region (for example, the waqf issue that was an enigma to the colonial administration²⁸), but his servicemen (most likely, except for writer Vasilii Ianchevetskii [1875–1954], who was in contact with Samoilovich²⁹) positioned Subotić as “a liberal” too young to take control over the region.³⁰ One of the officers told Samoilovich: “Without Aleksei Kuropatkin, there is chaos in the Transcaspia!”³¹ Kuropatkin (1848–1925) was one of the region’s conquest participants.³² He was its governor (1890–1898) and was later appointed to the position of military minister (1898–1904). Kuropatkin created the administration system inside Transcaspia based on personal relations and trust. This system was severely criticized from 1908 to 1910 during the audit by Senator Pahlen, who was shocked by the corruption and bribery created within this system.³³ The ambiguities between the local administration and the indigenous population were exactly the framework that Samoilovich found when arriving at Transcaspia.

The reason for the disappointment was that Samoilovich had to use this vertical colonial system as a method for his in-field work arrangement. According to the initial strategy, he had to communicate with the administration to identify the most suitable way to realize his philological study. However, Subotić, after questioning Samoilovich’s political affiliation (“Are you a socialist?”), campaigned for the young scholar to create a dictionary of the Turkmen language for the local administration to use.³⁴ Consequently, the administration wanted to use Samoilovich for their needs while they were not able to support his academic studies. Shortly after the conversation with Subotić, the Orientalist stated: “Except for Rudakov, I have no one to consult on the matter of what to do next for the Teke vernacular study.”³⁵ However, he asked for

28 More about this issue, Sergei Abashin, “Islam v biurokraticheskoi praktike tsarskoi administratsii Turkestana (Vakufnoe delo dakhbitskogo medrese, 1892–1900),” *Sbornik Russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva* 7:155 (2003), pp. 163–191; S. Abashin, D. Arapov, et al., eds., *Rossia—Sredniaia Aziia: Tom vtoroi. Politika i islam v XX – nachale XXI vv.* (Moscow, 2011); Paolo Sartori, *Visions of Justice: Sharī‘a and Cultural Change in Russian Central Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 217–237.

29 For example: The recommendation for Samoilovich on Ianchevetskii’s business card OR RNB. F. 671. D. 78. Notebook 3. I. 4; The correspondence between Samoilovich and Ianchevetskii dated 1913–1914 OR RNB. F. 671. D. 338.

30 Boris Litvinov, *Vospominaniia v 2 chastiakh, chast’ 2. Grazhdanskaia voina na Kavkaze i Zakaspii, 1918–1920 gg.* (Moscow, 2017), pp. 209–216.

31 Diary note, OR RNB. F. 671. D. 77. Notebook 1. I. 23.

32 Victor Sal’nikov, et al., eds., *General Kuropatkin—gosudarstvennyi i voennyi deiatel’ Rossiiskoi imperii: K 170-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia, kollektivnaia monografiia* (St. Petersburg, 2018), pp. 29–48.

33 Morrison, “The Pahlen Commission.”

34 Note dated June 28, 1902, OR RNB. F. 671. D. 77. Notebook 1. I. 39–46.

35 Ibid. The mentioned persona (Rudakov) was not determined.

aid from Azeri colonel Sadiq-bek Agabekov (1865–1944).³⁶ Agabekov proposed that the scholar move to the nearby village of Bagyr, which would be convenient for his studies and communication with Askhabad. Agabekov told the local elder (*arçyn*) Anna Rejep Mamed Niýaz ogly: “This noble person (*boýjar*) arrived from St. Petersburg (he put his finger up). He will be your guest. Myhman! Do you understand me?”³⁷ As the following episodes demonstrate, the local elder did not understand who had arrived. He truly believed that Samoilovich was an inspector from the capital city. In the following days, he tried to show Samoilovich all the agricultural and pastoralist activity of his village. Thus, in the scholar’s dissertation, a section titled “The Stories on Agriculture” appeared,³⁸ but in the diary, more emotional speeches can be observed: “It is rather sad that no-one knows a thing”; “I asked my assistant (*jigit*) to tell me proverbs—in Bagyr, a person does not know a damned thing”; “I consider moving away from this village due to the absence of material”; “God damned villagers of Bagyr: no-one does a thing; no-one wants to speak or to sing!”³⁹

The villagers noticed their “inspector’s” frustration and brought him a singer (*bagşy*) who changed the situation completely. Moreover, the locals were impressed by the use of new technologies such as the photo camera and graphophone. The communication improved after Samoilovich contracted a disease and was treated by a Turkmen healer (*tabib*). Samoilovich communicated mainly with the local elders and religious authorities such as the above-mentioned Anna Rejep Mamed Niýaz ogly, his secretary Ýar Mamed tagi Mamed ogly, singers Kurwan and Piröw, local craftsman (*usta*) Molla Köşö, and religious leader Memedi išan. It seems that his communication line was mostly vertical, based on the recognition of the local authorities; however, he mentioned numerous conversations with children, women, villagers,⁴⁰ and colonial workers such as veterinarians and agricultural inspectors who were also active participants in village life. Samoilovich also noticed numerous issues in the villagers’ housekeeping. Among these issues were locusts, livestock diseases, and illiteracy. His conversations with the Turkmens were limited by his academic tasks. For example, he had a long conversation with a local mullah on the

36 Agabekov wrote the Handbook of the Turkmen Language. This textbook was the pioneering publication dedicated to the learning of this language. Samoilovich severely criticized it in 1907 due to Agabekov’s use of Azeri grammar instead of Turkmen.

A. Samoilovich, “Retsenziia: S. Agabekov. ‘Uchebnik tiurkmenskogo narechiia s prilozheniem sbornika poslovits i pogovorok tiurkmen Zakaspiiskoi oblasti, Askhabad, 1904,’ *Zapiski Vostochnogo otdeleniia Imperatorskogo Russkogo arkheologicheskogo obshchestva*, tom 17, vyp. 2–3 (1906), pp. 184–188.

37 Note dated June 17–20, 1902, OR RNB. F. 671. D. 77. Notebook 1. I. 22

38 The linguistic study on the Teke dialect of the Turkmen vernacular, 1903, OR RNB. F. 671. D. 129. Notebook 4. I. 242–248.

39 For example: Note dated June 23, 1902, OR RNB. F. 671. D. 77. Notebook 1. I. 27.

40 All their names were mentioned in his dissertation (OR RNB. F. 671. D. 129. Notebook 6. II. 377–379).

world's current geopolitical situation. Samoilovich mentioned that the mullah's information, which was based on pilgrims' stories brought from Hajj,⁴¹ was outdated. Samoilovich's research approach had been slightly transformed. His communication line proceeded to a more horizontal dimension.

His following visit to Geok-tepe-1, the village on the other side of the Akhal oasis, was mainly based on his conversations with mullah Ýazlyk, a scholar's assistant Kirpek, and a hero of the Geok-tepe battle, Gul-Batyr. Samoilovich wanted to know everything about the battle of 1881, but Gul-Batyr refused to answer his questions, claiming it was all water under the bridge.⁴² During this visit, however, Samoilovich discovered the widespread eye diseases among the Turkmens. At the end of his expedition, he relocated to the city of Merv, where he began to work in the local hospital as an interpreter.⁴³ He continued this activity in 1906, and there is a photograph of an Ýolöten hospital taken by Samoilovich in the archive at the *Kunstkamera*.⁴⁴ He also communicated with local teachers such as Anna Murad, mullah Baý Muhammed, and some singers. A compilation of Magtymguly poetry presented to Samoilovich by Baý Muhammed is currently preserved at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (IOM) in St. Petersburg.⁴⁵

Despite Samoilovich's involvement in interpreting activities, his relations with the Turkmens, at first, could be seen as remote. The "Oriental personas" were only his object of study. However, he was not able to do his research under the conditions presented by the local military administration. Only the creation of the informants' network and direct dialogue with the Turkmens made it possible to know about their culture, language, and history. All these factors were strengthened during his second expedition in 1906.

"IMPERIAL VISITOR"

In between these two expeditions, Samoilovich experienced serious disillusionment. In the beginning, his marriage provoked opposition from his senior colleagues. His methods and ideas just strengthen his split with "the elders". Samoilovich found himself outside the "Orientalists' circle": "And, thus, my eagerness to communicate with my tutors was inconclusive... all this was from a distance, in a factitious manner! I want to join this 'chain of Orientalists,' feel myself its 'link' by the knowledge of their tradition. I want to get from them, so to speak, this blessing. But, with sorrow, I recognize myself its bro-

41 Note dated July 6, 1902, *Ibid.* II. 61–62.

42 Note dated July 14, 1902, *Ibid.* I. 74.

43 Note dated July 15–16, 1902, *Ibid.* I. 78.

44 Staff and patients of an Ýolöten hospital MAE (*Kunstkamera*) RAN. Photoarchive. Op. 1397. D. 26.

45 Magtymguly. Manuscript №2 The Manuscript Department at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (IOM). D. B-320.

ken shard."⁴⁶ Numerous episodes of nepotism by elders of Russian Orientalism become an obstacle for his talented group-mates to begin a career in academic studies. Reinforced by the First Russian Revolution (1905–1907), Samoilovich's rebelliousness led to numerous conflicts with elders such as Veselovskii, Vasiliï Smirnov (1846–1922), and Valetin Zhukovskii (1858–1918). Furthermore, the death of his academic adviser, Melioranskii, was the final event that changed his initial plans for a second expedition to the Turkmen lands.

The strategy for this journey (planned in 1904–1905) was based on the same idea of a vertical system of interaction. It was also supplemented by Melioranskii's thought that an Orientalist had to use insignia for recognition by the indigenous population.⁴⁷ One of the Russian Muslim leaders, military Orientalist Abdulaziz Davletshin (1861–1920) who had previously worked for the Transcaspia administration, prepared two letters of recommendation for Samoilovich. These letters were addressed to Muhammed Oraz, who was one of the leaders among the Turkmens who lived in the villages of Garagala, Gürgen, and Çandyr and to Meñli han in the village of Serahs on the Iranian border.⁴⁸ However, Melioranskii's death and the news that Muhammed Oraz had passed away as well changed the entire plan. Samoilovich's new academic adviser, Barthold, chose Merv as a primary target for the study of local poetry. The strategy was to create a communication network between Orientalists who were living in the region and to use the relationship with mullah Baý Muhammed as a starting point for this study. This strategy led to the change of route. Instead of Baku and sea travel, Samoilovich had to visit Tashkent by railway. He also had an idea to communicate with the local religious authorities in Bukhara and Samarkand.

The second expedition began on July 20, 1906. In Tashkent, Samoilovich had the opportunity to speak with all the local Orientalists. For example, he mentioned the ambivalent position of Nikolai Ostroumov (1846–1930) whose intentions to use a "strict administration" in the Islamic region put locals against him.⁴⁹ Unlike his group-mate and administration worker, Ivan Beliaev,⁵⁰ Samoilovich had an opportunity to learn Persian with mullah Seyyid Rasul and to visit classes at local madrasahs. These visits changed his posi-

46 Note dated January 31, 1906, OR RNB. F. 671. D. 78. Notebook 3. ll. 12–13.

47 Note dated December 16, 1905 Ibid. l. 8

48 Correspondence between Samoilovich and Davletshin dated 1908–1918 SPbF ARAN. F. 782. O. 2. D. 18.

49 Bakhtiiar Babadzhanov, "Nikolai Ostroumov: 'missioner', 'islamoved', 'tsivilizator'?" *Vostok svyshe* 32 (2014), pp. 29–51. This magazine includes a discussion about Ostroumov's personality consisting of articles by Bakhtiiar Babadzhanov, Sergei Abashin, Aleksandr Dzhumaev, Ul'fat Abdurasulov, and Iurii Flygin.

50 Beliaev worked at the Russian Committee for Central and Eastern Asia studies in history, archeology, and linguistics. He was a part of the communication between local Orientalist organizations in Ashkhabad and Tashkent and the Committee's leadership (Barthold) in St. Petersburg (Correspondence between Barthold and Beliaev dated 1906–1916 SPbF

tion on the domination of religious consciousness among the local population. Scenes of gambling games in front of the mosque and the way the locals ignored the meddah's stories led him to consider that their mentality was not so conservative. In Samarqand, he tried to communicate with a student of the Sherdor madrasah named Baqa hoja. Baqa hoja, who was descendent of so-called "saint kin", was also a graduate of the Russian school, a member of the Constitutional Democratic Party (Kadet party) and a follower of philosopher Vladimir Solov'ev (1853–1900). He underlined the fact that socialism contradicts "moral philosophy." Among his books, Samoilovich found some Russian editions, including an Arabic dictionary by Vladimir Girgas.⁵¹ These pictures of everyday life in Central Asian cities deconstructed the scholar's point of view. On one side, Samoilovich found out that his mentors and foreign experts were not as competent as he believed they were.⁵² This idea, inspired by his learning conditions in St. Petersburg, was reinforced by his meeting with the old diplomat, Nikolai Petrovskii (1837–1908). One of the main players during the Great Game, Petrovskiy knew many details on the academic and political activity in the region. For example, his description of the rebellion in Andijan focused on the socio-economic reasons instead of the administration's idea on Islamic influence.⁵³ "The only reason why this rebellion was organized under the banner of the Prophet was the absence of other options such as the Trudoviks (Labour Group—a social-democratic party) or Kadets."⁵⁴ On another side, the narrative of local culture dissolution under the Russian influence appeared in his diaries. This idea was reinforced during his time among the Turkmens.

At the end of August, Samoilovich arrived at Merv. He presented to the local administration his idea to live among the Turkmens in one of the nearby villages. However, his intention was restrained by local religious authorities. Mullah Baý Muhammed had to refuse because the superior religious figure, Abdulla išan, asked him "to abstain from *bagşy* signing and supporting the Russian".⁵⁵ The reason for this denial, which provoked an emotional reaction from the scholar, was due to the local administration's policy on invitations of clerics from other Russian regions to Transcaspia. Thus, the Russian military administration had tried to prevail in the uncertainty of the border region by

ARAN. F. 68. O. 2. D. 21). Samoilovich, in his turn, criticized Beliaev for unprofessionalism and bad knowledge of Oriental languages (Note on Beliaev OR RNB. F. 671. D. 78. The Notebook 10. Il. 10–12).

51 The report on the travel to Central Asia in 1906–1907 OR RNB. F. 671. D. 31. I. 19.

52 The critique of Smirnov, Ármin Vámbéry, Vasilii Radlov (1837–1918), and others OR RNB. F. 671. D. 80. The Notebook 11. I. 11.

53 Aftandil Erkinov, *The Andijan uprising of 1898 and Its Leader Dukchi-ishan Described by Contemporary Poets* (Tokyo: Department of Islamic Area Studies, 2009).

54 Note on meeting with Petrovskii OR RNB. F. 671. D. 78. The Notebook 10. Il. 20–26. The report on the travel to Central Asia in 1906–1907 OR RNB. F. 671. D. 31. I. 19.

55 Note dated August 25, 1906 Ibid. Il. 55–56.

closing it to foreign *sufis*.⁵⁶ Abdulla išan mentioned this episode later, during the preparations for the Parliament elections.⁵⁷ Consequently, Samoilovich had to visit the head of the Togtamyş district, black-hundredist Sokolov. Sokolov, in his turn, was interested in the study of Turkmen poetry and proposed that the scholar could live with the family of his secretary, mullah Sabyr, in the village of Agyr-baş. At this moment, the work of the Orientalist had changed entirely.

First, he began to communicate more with the Turkmen elders. Mullah Sabyr made a significant impact on Samoilovich's comprehension of Turkmen culture, Islam, and the way of life in Central Asia. Sabyr's relatives and workers such as Sapar Myrat, usta Göz Alla, two brothers of his youngest wife, the local poet Subhan Berdi (Gör-molla) and his father Awaz Berdi (Molla Sakar), dam stationmaster Garry-beg and his father Ramazan, landowner Mamed Orazow and his family, Aman bagşy, arçyn Rahman Niýaz and other personalities were actively involved in Samoilovich's life during this time. He mentioned numerous astonishing episodes that demonstrated the blurred boundaries between the indigenous population and "the outsiders." From a dog that understood only Russian language to the scholar's excitement when the mullah's daughters called him *Isgender-kaka* (Uncle Alexander), from numerous conversations on Islam and Russian colonialism to the cooperation between Russian hydrologists and local dam stationmasters, from the exchange on political news of the world and Turkmen interests of Japanese people⁵⁸ to their questions on Russian traditions—all these episodes were pieces of the puzzle that formed the Orientalist's attitude toward the Turkmens. The knowledge that Samoilovich obtained in these conversations gave him a more negative view of colonial officials. The idea of Tatar librarian Sultanov on the relation between Turkmen word *boýat* and Russian word poet, the concept of the common origin of British and Turkmen cultures by Finnish officer fon Phaler (1865–1937) based on the peculiarities of Turkmen speech, and their love of horses and other thoughts of colonial administrators unpleasantly surprised the scholar.⁵⁹ During his visit to the island of Çeleken, where he was a guest of his friend, military Orientalist and ethnographer Nikolai Iomudskii (1868–1928) and his relatives such as local elders Seyíd Şerep-Haji-ogly, Kyýat-han,⁶⁰ and mullah Nury, the Orientalist

56 Sergei Demidov, *Sufizm v Turkmenii (Evolutsiia i perezhitki)* (Ashgabat, 1978).

57 Note dated December 26, 1906 OR RNB. F. 671. D. 79. The Notebook 5. I. 41.

58 "We read all our books to find out who is *yapan*, and there was no mention of such people in the books. It means that there is no *yapan* at all. These should be disguised British and they can be called pereñ (French or European—A.I.)" (OR RNB. F. 671. D. 79. The Notebook 10a. I. 38).

59 Notes OR RNB. F. 671. D. 79. The Notebook 5. I. 16; The Notebook 10a. I. 63.

60 Kyýat han, the military leader of Çeleken island, was born in 1754 and died in 1843. Thus, Samoilovich would have met with one of Kyýat's sons or relatives. There is no mention why this man was called "Kyýat han" in the diary. The full name of this informant was Abd al-Gyýas han Kyýat han. His full name in: Meskin Gylyç. The Manuscript Department

observed numerous changes in the material culture of the Turkmens. These observations strengthened his belief in the dissolution of the Turkmen culture.

The second important point was Samoilovich's involvement in the local juridical activities. He served as an interpreter and secretary four times during different trials. He helped the Turkmens to write official documents and requests.⁶¹ This activity had a much more significant meaning than he thought.

From 1913 to 1914, local businessmen initiated a trial against a group of Turkmen intellectuals.⁶² The official accusation was "activity to disassociate Transcaspia from Russia," while the story behind this accusation was connected mainly to economic processes. In 1906, Samoilovich sent a series of letters written by local elders to his friend and local administration worker (*pristav*) Iomudskii. It seems that Samoilovich was not the only one who prepared written appeals from the local population to Iomudskii. Other participants had already mentioned Mamed Orazow and his secretary, a teacher of the Merv school (*mekdep*), Muhammetguly Atabayew, who was also in contact with Samoilovich. From 1908 to 1909, during the audit of this region by Senator Pahlen, Iomudskii was a member of the prosecutorial supervision to the Turkestan military court, and he had participated in the audit commission work. Moreover, after the audit was finished and numerous colonial administrators were accused of corruption, Iomudskii prepared his own plan for supporting the local peasants. In 1913, he asked Davletshin to support him in buying the lands near the river of Tejen (Hari river) and in the Merv region. According to him, the local administration and brokers had extorted more than 75% of the farmers' income. His proposition was to take control over the deals between the Russian and Turkmen farmers and the local administration, bypassing the Ministry of Agriculture through the competency of the military ministry.⁶³ It was this action that provoked the accusations. Blamed for being a nationalist, Iomudskii had to leave Transcaspia. Only the patronage of high-ranking military officials helped him to avoid more severe consequences. Samoilovich was interested in the progress of this trial. His letter to the Merv citizens and his correspondence to Iomudskii reveal his desire to know the details of this case.⁶⁴

This case can be seen as the final point in the scholar's transition from a distant observation of "Oriental personas" and curiosity toward them as an

at the IOM. D. B-322. His photo: Russian Ethnographic Museum. Photographic negatives collection № 5493. Photo 52. Kyýat han, uncle of N. N. Iomudskii, the citizen of Cheleken island.

61 For example: Notes OR RNB. F. 671. D. 78. The Notebook 10. I. 61; D. 79. The Notebook 10a. I. 37

62 Tat'iana Kotiukova, "'Politicheskie dela' v Turkeстане v nachale XX v.: 'Shpionomaniiia', ili 'okhota na ved'm,'" *Islam v sovremennom mire* 12:3 (2016).

63 Correspondence between Davletshin and Iomudskii dated April 25, 1913, IOM RAN. The Archive of Orientalists. F. 70. O. 1. D. 70.

64 Correspondence between Samoilovich and Epinatov dated 1906–1920, SPbF ARAN. F. 782. O. 2. D. 21.

object of study to the “Imperial visitor’s” participation in their lives. In living among them, his intention to aid in the interaction with the colonial administration changed his attitude. Since the second expedition, Samoilovich’s sphere of academic interest had changed. His disillusionment in his mentors and the colonial system, supplemented by the turbulent political atmosphere in Russia, was summarized after his return to St. Petersburg. On January 20, 1907, he wrote in his diary: “If we take the term ‘Asian’ in the acknowledged negative sense of this word, Russians are truly Asians, while Turkmens are the Europeans in the most positive meaning of this word. And this should be said about all ‘Asians,’ as they really are and not as they are imagined.”⁶⁵ This quote can be seen as a step to the next stage of his views’ evolution.

“ROMANTIC NATIONALISM”

Despite his critique, Samoilovich still adhered to the Imperial paradigm. In his article dedicated to the “Poem on Russians” by Gör-Molla, the scholar mentioned, “the new stage of Turkmen history” that brought changes to their everyday lives. He pointed out the generation gap between different groups of Turkmens, including peaceful peasants and military leaders who preserved a belief in the use of weapons. The Orientalist expressed an opinion that the Turkmens would adapt to the new socio-economic conditions and would prosper in this stage of their history.⁶⁶ This idea corresponds to the concept of Russian Orientalists on further integration of Central Asians into the Imperial body.⁶⁷ However, how does this “romantic nationalism” correspond to the quoted concept of “imagined Asians”?

The answer can most likely be found in the deepening relations between Samoilovich and Muslim intellectuals. This interaction had a solid background. The remarkable attempt to construct a dialogue with Uzbek mullah Muhammed Sheref, who was living among the Qazaq (*Kirgiz*) people is an interesting case, recently referenced by Paolo Sartori as a possible example of overcoming “Otherness”.⁶⁸ Mullah was astonished by Samoilovich’s knowledge of Muslim culture. Some of the locals called him “*Isgender-han*” (khan Alexander) or “*Bilim-aga*” (knowledgeable gentleman), while others stated that if he were not a “*Bud-perest*” (idol-worshipper), he would be an “*Awliyā*” (supporter).

This basis allowed Samoilovich to communicate with his informants and different groups of Russian Muslims. For example, from 1906 to 1920, he was in correspondence with Turkmen intellectual mullah Hojeli Myratberdi ogly. Ho-

65 Note dated January 20, 1907, OR RNB. F. 671. D. 79. Notebook 5. l. 52.

66 Aleksandr Samoilovich, “Turkmenskii poet bosiak Kor Mulla i ego pesnia o russkikh,” *Zhivaia starina god XVI*, vyp. 4, otd. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1907), pp. 221–225.

67 Tolz, “Russia’s Own Orient”.

68 Paolo Sartori, “On Strangers and Commensurability in Eurasia: A View from ‘the North’,” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 55: 1 (2018), pp. 133–145.

jeli-molla was a former secretary of Anna Berdi han, a leader of Baharden. They initiated a book exchange that formed the basis of a Turkmen manuscript collection at the IOM.⁶⁹ Simultaneously, the newest publications on Central Asian literature sent from the capital galvanized Turkmen intellectuals to publication activity in the local press. Hojeli molla wanted to clarify the knowledge on Turkmens that was “imaginary” by Russian scholars such as Alexander Hodzko (1804–1891). He had to create an association with Russian Orientalists to realize this idea.⁷⁰ In turn, Samoilovich’s comprehension of “imagined Asians” led to a refusal of further Turkmen studies and a change in academic interest sphere in favor of comparative linguistics.⁷¹

Furthermore, step by step, Samoilovich engaged in discussions about the enlightenment movement among the Muslim population. His meeting with Muhammed Durdy, the younger brother of Mamed Orazow, proved that local educational system was inefficient. Consequently, Samoilovich paid particular attention to the issue of rural education. In 1912, he was a tutor for the teachers in education classes in Crimea. The scholar’s strategy to improve education changed his attitude from the creation of his own version of Arabic script to the Latin script principle that was introduced to his works from 1914.⁷² After the Revolution of 1917, Samoilovich was actively involved in creating the Soviet educational system in Central Asia. This process was affected by his close contact with Muslim intellectuals who sometimes severely criticized his ideas and intentions. For example, the correspondence between Samoilovich and Gasprinskii was connected to a discussion on Pan-Turkism and its nature. Samoilovich insisted on the cultural origin of this phenomenon, while the Crimean enlightener noticed the political and ideological roots of this concept and its use by Turkish policymakers.⁷³ This difference in narratives between the Muslim intellectuals’ pragmatism and Samoilovich’s idealism affected the interaction during the next stage, Soviet scholarship.

In conclusion, during the period of 1906–1920, Samoilovich changed his attitude. The contacts with Central Asians who were sent for learning to St. Petersburg, expeditions to Khoresm, Turkestan, Crimea, the Stavropol region,

69 The book exchange was one of the dominating forms of interaction with Muslim intellectuals. Samoilovich’s collection included books signed personally by Osman Akchokrakly (1878–1938), Musa Bigiev (1875–1949), Ahmed Zaki Validi Togan (1890–1970), and Ismail Gasprinskii (1851–1914). A. S. Asvaturov, *Knigi iz biblioteki akademika A. N. Samoilovicha v fonde ONL* (paper presented at 12 Mezhdunarodnaia konferentsiia Krym 2005: biblioteki i informatsionnye resursy v sovremennom mire nauki, kul’tury, obrazovaniia i biznesa, Sudaak, June 2005). [<http://gpntb.ru/win/inter-events/crimea2005/disk/144.pdf>], accessed September 14, 2017.

70 Nuralyýew, *Akademik A. N. Samoýlowiç*, pp. 98–131.

71 The report on the travel to Central Asia in 1906–1907 OR RNB. F. 671. D. 31. I. 19.

72 Anton Ikhsanov, “Language Reform in Turkmen SSR and Its Comprehension by Alexander Samoilovich (1880–1938) and Aleksandr Potseluevskii (1894–1948),” unpublished manuscript.

73 Correspondence between Samoilovich and Gasprinskii dated 1912–1913, SPbF ARAN. F. 782. O. 2. D. 14.

Turkey, internship in Europe, correspondence with leading thinkers of Russian Muslims, book exchange—all these actions deepened Samoilovich's communication with the Muslim intellectuals. However, his reflection encountered a collision of narratives between different groups among the intellectuals that led to his ambivalent status during the Soviet period. Samoilovich found himself in the turmoil of political interests and the ambiguities of the new epoch.

“AMBIVALENCE OF SOVIET ACADEMIA”

The newest epoch in Russian history was also a new period of life for Samoilovich and his assistants. There are two different styles to describe the scholar's activity during this particular period. The first was used by Michael Kemper⁷⁴ and Edward A. Allworth⁷⁵ and is based on Samoilovich's academic affiliation. The second is widespread in the works dedicated to big narratives and issues of local history such as the Cultural Revolution, Nation Building, etc. It represents the Orientalist as a Bolshevik scholar who was associated with the projects initiated by the party in Moscow.⁷⁶ Both approaches seem to be antipodes of each other. Furthermore, they only partly correlate with the topic of interaction between Muslim intellectuals and the Orientalist. The ambiguity of the Imperial Academia position in this period is also underestimated. Undoubtedly, their work was not only the association with the Soviet government, but it was also a survival strategy. They adopted a new political language for their academic works and served in administrative positions. However, their evaluation of the Bolsheviks' activity was ambivalent.

Samoilovich was interested in policy and philosophy. His diaries from 1904 to 1906 contain numerous considerations on the political life of this period. The scholar severely criticized his own father by calling him “an illustrative example of the far-right idealism.” This reflection is also ambivalent. According to the family archive, during his directorship at the gymnasium of Nizhnii Novgorod, Nikolai Samoilovich (1847–1937) permitted the socialist students to meet in his own apartment. He wanted to take the socialist moods in his institution under control. It was also the scholar's father who signed the fourth-class diploma for Iakov Sverdlov (1885–1919), one of the leaders in the Bolsheviks' initial years in power.⁷⁷ The second party that was criticized by the scholar was the Constitutional Democratic Party. He mentioned the “ambivalence” of this group. However, he noticed his interest in *Polaris* (*Poliarnaia zvezda*) magazine. It was the magazine of a rightwing inside the Kadets that severely criticized

74 Michael Kemper, “From 1917 to 1937: The Mufti, the Turkologist, and Stalin's Terror,” *Die Welt des Islams*, 57 (2017), pp. 162–191

75 Edward Allworth, *Evading Reality: The Devices of 'Abdalrauf Fitra' Modern Central Asian Reformist* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

76 Victoria Clement, *Learning to Become Turkmen: Literacy, Language, and Power, 1914–2014* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018).

77 Interview with Marina Samoilovich (St. Petersburg, February 9, 2019)

the idea of the revolution. The young scholar mentioned his support of ideas by Prince Evgenii Troubetzkoy (1863–1920), a philosopher and a follower of Solov'ev, that correlated to his origin from an ecclesiastic family.⁷⁸ Moreover, his sister Eugenia was a member of the Kadet party. Thus, it seems that in the period before his visit to Merv, Samoilovich had no relation to socialist ideas.

Information on Samoilovich's comprehension of the Revolution of 1917 is limited. The scattered documents do not allow us to track the evolution of his political views between 1906 and 1917. However, from 1919, Samoilovich began cooperation with the Bolsheviks. In 1920, the Orientalist became a worker for the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. His cooperation with the new authorities was criticized by his colleagues. Consequently, he wrote numerous letters to his senior colleagues explaining his actions.⁷⁹ He insisted on the necessity to continue his career and to ensure the survival of his family. As a diplomatic worker, Samoilovich was directly connected to the leadership of the Commissariat. In particular, his analysis was requested by Lev Karakhan (1889–1937), the chief of the Asian department, and Georgii Chicherin (1872–1936), the head of the institution. During the civil war, his analysis of the situation between the Turkmen and Uzbek elite groups was important for the decision-making process in Moscow.⁸⁰ For this reason, Bashkir intellectual Ahmet Validov called Samoilovich "a spy".⁸¹ This activity led to the emergence of two very interesting ego-documents dedicated to his intentions toward the Bolsheviks and Turkestan intellectuals.

The first document is a small copybook preserved in Krachkovskii's personal archive. This copybook is literally a small collection of poems created in 1921 by one of the members of the particular diplomatic mission sent by the Commissariat to the Central Asian states after the Revolutionary events of 1920 and subscribed by the pseudonym "Drunken Sasha." Samoilovich had previously sent his poetry to Krachkovskii in letters dated August 26, 1912, and July 8, 1917. The last one consists of an impromptu poem titled "Beside a glass of evening tea." This poem referenced the idea of immigration before the Revolution. The Orientalist mentioned the severe economic conditions and the popular idea of immigration. However, Samoilovich ironically noticed: "Fly, my piece of paper, directly to Finnostan! What is it now the matter with Orient, Iran, Crimea, Turkestan..." These verses are based on the meaningful purpose of his work that could not be realized in immigration.⁸² The style of this poetry is the same as the style of "Drunken Sasha's" copybook. Moreover, Samoi-

78 Notes dated January 21 and February 20, 1906, OR RNB. F. 671. D. 78. Notebook 3. 1. 9, 30

79 Blagova, *Aleksandr Nikolaevich Samoilovich*, pp. 408–412.

80 The documents on this activity are currently preserved in the Archive of Foreign Policy of Russia (Moscow) and in the National Library (St. Petersburg). For example: OR RNB. F. 1240.

81 Zeki Velidi Togan, *Hâturalar: Türkestan ve diğer müslüman doğu türklerinin millî varlık ve kültür mücadelesi* (Ankara, 1999), pp. 525–527.

82 Blagova, *Aleksandr Nikolaevich Samoilovich*, p. 205.

lovich was a member of this diplomatic mission. In the family archive, there is a photo of a scholar who had malaria during the mission. The second part of the verses is titled “The thoughts of a person with malaria in Bukhara.” This poem is important to represent the author’s comprehension of Soviet power: “Liberty, equality is a lie! The red rebellions in all the countries are actually the fight for [filling] the bellies!” The scholar noticed the pragmatic goal of the authorities to gain power, hidden in meaningful slogans. Thus, Samoilovich held a critical perception of Bolshevik ideas. The third part of the text is closely connected to two members of the Bukharian trade commission who were sent to Moscow and Europe for negotiations, Mirza-Amin Muhiddinov and Gaybulla Turya-Hojayev. Samoilovich had an opportunity to speak with them during his journey from Bukhara.⁸³

However, Mirza-Amin Muhiddinov was not the only representative of the Bukharian noble Muhiddinov family who had a relationship with Samoilovich. A photo album is preserved in the archive of the scholar’s granddaughter. This album (98 photos) was made during Samoilovich’s diplomatic mission and consists of numerous photos dedicated to his meetings with the representatives of the Young Bukharans and local intellectuals (Domullo Ikrom [1847–1925], Mirzo Abdulvahid Munzim [1875–1934], Abdulkadyr Muhiddinov [1892–1934], Khudaybergen Devonov [1879–1940]). These meetings were a part of work on an article dedicated to this political movement.⁸⁴ In the 1920s, the Bolsheviks were not able to form a unified approach with this group. David Gopner (1884–1925), a leader of the mission, believed that the Young Bukharians were actually Islamists and a possible obstacle to Soviet power in the region while Moscow authorities wanted to have a dialogue with this group to present them as a local socialist movement.⁸⁵ Samoilovich went to Bukhara numerous times from the mission’s disposition, which led to a concerned message from Gopner.⁸⁶ It seemed that the scholar working on this issue was in direct contact with Moscow. Another peculiar detail is tied to the manuscript of Samoilovich’s report that later formed a basis for the article. The pages with “the list of living members of the group” are missing. It is not known when were they extracted, but according to archival notes, it happened before the registration of the document. Furthermore, a son of Mirzo Abdulvahid Munzim, Rahim Burhanov (1909–1973), lived with the scholar’s family during his

83 Poetry by Drunken Sasha, SPbF ARAN. F. 1026. O. 2. D. 112.

84 Aleksandr Vasil’ev, “K voprosu o sushchestvovanii tainogo obshchestva Mladobukhartsev i ego svyaziakh s Mladoturkami,” *Zhivem druzhno, ‘molodye’ raznogo vozrasta...: Sbornik statei po problemam istorii, traditsionnoi kur’tury i filologii Turtsii i tiurkskikh narodov. V pamiat’ akademika A. N. Samoilovicha* (Moscow, 2012), pp. 30–40.

85 Adeeb Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), pp. 117–156.

86 Correspondence between Samoilovich and Gopner, dated 1921, SPbF ARAN. F. 782. O. 2. D. 16.

learning in Leningrad from 1925 to 1929.⁸⁷ All these cases can be supplemented by the personal trust of Tatar intellectual Rizaeddin Fakhreddinov (1859–1936) who, during the repressions against Islamic clergy in Tatarstan in the 1930s, sent some of his materials for preservation in the IOM.⁸⁸ Samoilovich was its director during this time. The final detail connected to a specific relationship between Samoilovich and Central Asian “academic cadres” was the support of his students at the Leningrad Oriental Institute. It was Samoilovich who positively evaluated the works by Abdulhekim Gulmuhammedov (1891–1931) while this Bukharian author was criticized by other Turkmen and Russian academic workers.⁸⁹ The instruction of the new generation of Central Asian intellectuals could be viewed as Samoilovich’s contribution to the academic learning of the local population and his inclusion in the knowledge transfer process. Consequently, his activity might have been a factor that influenced identity formation in the region.

Such an ambivalent situation provoked different reactions. The Imperial scholar became a part of the Soviet administration mechanism but preserved the personal trust of the Muslim intellectuals and engaged both in the academic study of their culture and in administrative work in educational and diplomatic fields. On one side, the scholar’s position in between was used by different groups for their own benefit. For example, Moscow authorities requested his knowledge, analytic skills, and the possibility to communicate with the Muslim intellectuals in the decision-making process.⁹⁰ In its turn, the local intellectual elite supported the presence of the Orientalist to use his knowledge and academic status to proof their own work and to use him as a mediator in interactions with the Bolshevik authorities. However, the indigenization process gave them control of research work in their own republics.⁹¹ On another side, Samoilovich found himself under the pressure of criticism. His colleagues in Leningrad and Moscow blamed him as an opportunist and a henchman of the Bolsheviks and the Republican authorities. For example, Sergei Malov charged Samoilovich with numerous faults, including disrespect for his colleagues and use of his relationships with the republic authorities for his own benefit. Based on gossip, Malov emphasized that Samoilovich’s particular position in academic society was due to his influential “friends” among the governments of

87 In the family archive of Marina Samoilovich, there is correspondence between Burhanov and the scholar’s son, Platon Samoilovich, dated 1968–1970. Burhanov’s activity was studied by German and Tajik historians (Manfred Lorenz, Schervonsho Burhanov, Schersod Burhanov, Sharbatullo Sodikov).

88 Kemper, “From 1917 to 1937.”

89 Ikhsanov, “Language Reform.”

90 Umid Bekmuhammad and Bobookhyn Solimov, “Boboosun Salimov. Kundaliklar yoxud Kremldagi muzokaralar,” *Xurshid Davron Kutubxonasi* (2018). <http://kh-davron.uz/kutubxona/uzbek/tarix/boboosun-salimov-kundaliklar.html> (accessed 11 April, 2019).

91 Clement, *Learning*.

the Turkic republics.⁹²

Thus, an ambivalent situation provoked the gradual decline of Samoilovich's standing among the Leningrad Orientalists (Malov) and some groups of Muslim intellectuals (Validi Togan). He was surrounded by gossip and rumors that later provoked disputes over the true reasons for his death in the purges of the 1930s.

CONCLUSION: EPISODES OF AMBIGUITY

The episodes mentioned do not represent the whole picture of interaction between the Russian Orientalist and his local assistants from the Muslim intellectual elite of Central Asia and the Volga region. However, even this description shows that his way of thought on the nature and/or methods of interaction had changed over the course of his academic career. From the external observation by a descendent from an ecclesiastic Ukrainian family with adherence to right views to the Imperial visitor who tried to help locals in their communication with authorities and fight against the administration's arbitrariness, from disillusionment in the nature of "imagined Asians" and his Orientalist mentors to the idealistic comprehension of the local cultures rooted in conversations with the Muslim intellectuals, from the mediation between Soviet authorities in Moscow and local governments to the search for his own position in the local education system and knowledge transfer—all these stages were experienced by the scholar from 1902 to 1938.

This evolution line, based on critical comprehension, self-reflection, and self-transformation, affected his works and way of thinking. His assistants also experienced a self-transformation. Both sides were affected and acknowledge this process. However, despite this factor, the ultimate question that Sartori initiated on overcoming Otherness cannot be resolved by these cases. The interaction and mutual trust between Samoilovich and his assistants and the scholar's comprehension of "imagined Asians" should be supplemented by his academic works written within the framework of dominating academic concepts, his idea of "cultural Pan-Turchism" that he counter-posed to the political "Pan-Turkism," and the preservation of his own identity as a descendent of the clergy and a noble family.

In other words, this evolution line is an appropriate supplement to the discussion regarding the interaction with Other that is relevant even today, but it is not an ultimate question for the deconstruction of grand narratives. It represents numerous episodes of ambiguity that are worth noting precisely due to the ambiguities and complexity of social institutions and interactions.

92 Correspondence from Malov to the union of the educational workers was dedicated to the activity of A. Samoilovich, February 6, 1931, with the supplements, dated from July 17, 1931 to September 10, 1931. SPbF ARAN. F. 1079. Op.2. D.9. 93 Poetry by Drunken Sasha, SPbF ARAN. F. 1026. O. 2. D. 112.