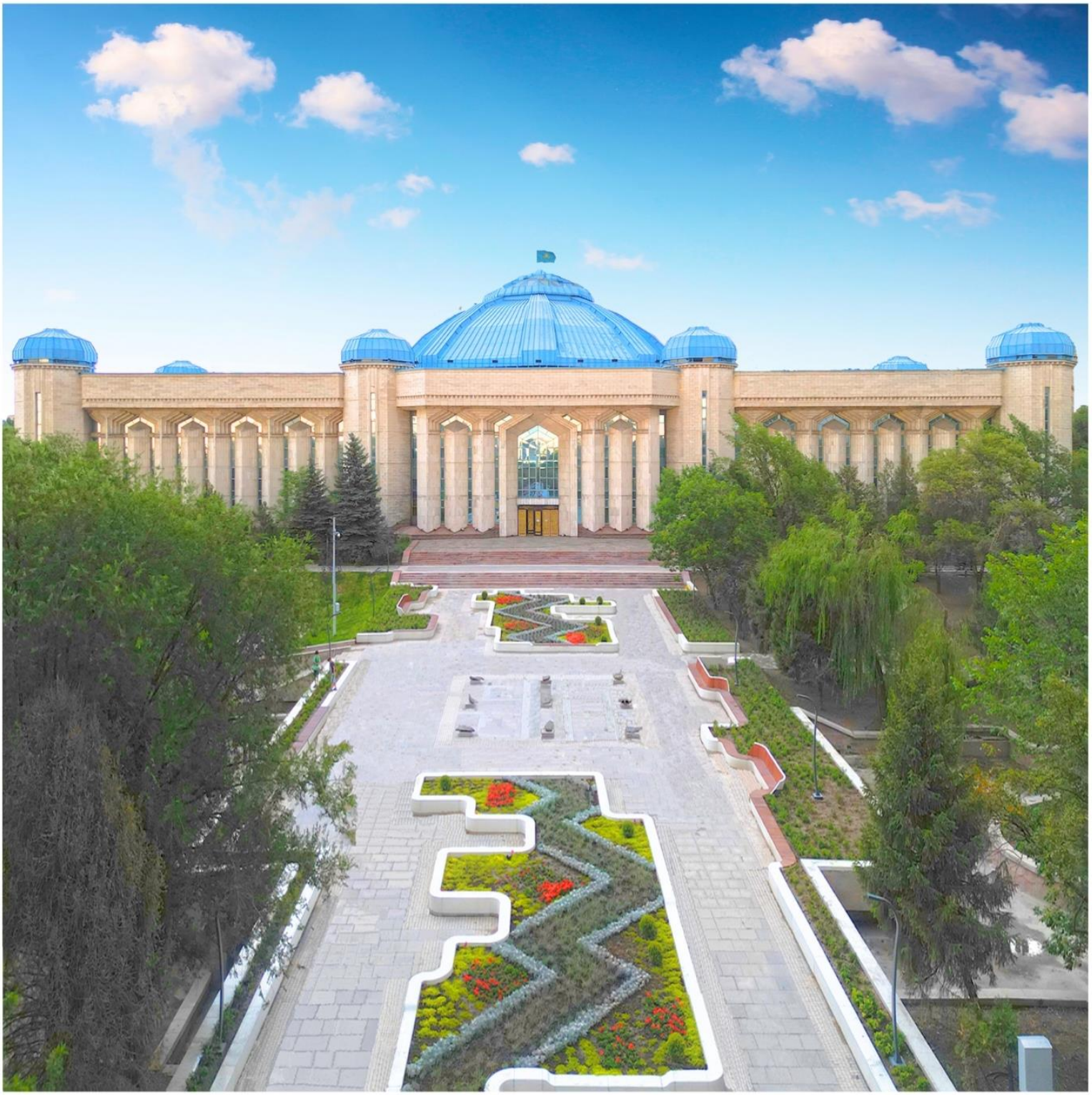
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ENDURING INSTRUMENTS OF PROPAGANDA FOR THE CIVILIZING MISSION: RUSSIA IN TURKESTAN

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Abstract. This article analyzes and summarizes the most common stereotypes regarding the indigenous peoples of Turkestan. Russia's colonial policy in the conquered lands of Central Asia during the second half of the 19th century frequently employed propaganda clichés and stereotypes about the subjugated peoples of Turkestan to justify military aggression and the transformation of the region into a colony. The study draws upon works by authors from the Russian Imperial era as well as contemporary scholarship in Russian and English.

The study aims to identify the characteristic features of the representation of the indigenous population in the Russian sources of the period under study, as well as the analysis of stereotypes and evaluative ideas about cultural identity and / or "backwardness", etc. A comparison of historical (the period of the Russian Empire) and modern scientific research in Russian and English has revealed different approaches to the interpretation of history and the cultures of the peoples of Central Asia.

Materials and methods of research. The source materials for this study include travel reports, field notes by Russian officials, travelers and researchers, as well as foreign scientists, works by modern historians devoted to the history and culture, the traditional way of life of the peoples of Central Asia during the Russian Imperial period in the second half of the 19th century – early 20 centuries.

Special attention is paid to ethnographic sources containing information about the language, traditional way of life, clothing, cuisine, as well as customs, in general, the culture of the local population.

The research uses historical, comparative, source-based and cultural methods.

Keywords: Stereotypes, orientalisation, exoticisation, bazaars, Turkestan.

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«ӨРКЕНИЕТТІЛІК МИССИЯСЫНЫҢ» ТҰРАҚТЫ ТАРИХИ ҮГІТ-НАСИХАТ ҚҰРАЛДАРЫ: РЕСЕЙ ТҮРКІСТАНДА

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Аңдатпа. Мақалада Түркістанның байырғы халықтарына қатысты ең көп таралған стереотиптер талданып, жүйеленеді. Ресейдің XIX ғасырдың екінші жартысында Орталық Азияның бағындырылған жерлеріндегі отаршылдық саясаты әскери агрессияны және аймақты отарға айналдыруды ақтау үшін Түркістанның бағынышты халықтары туралы үгіт-насихаттық клишелер мен стереотиптерді жиі қолданды. Зерттеу барысында Ресей империясы дәуіріндегі автордардың еңбектері, сондай-ақ орыс және ағылшын тілдеріндегі заманауи ғылыми зерттеулер негізге алынды.

Зерттеудің мақсаты – қарастырылып отырған кезеңдегі орыс дереккөздерінде жергілікті халықты бейнелеудің өзіндік ерекшеліктерін анықтау, сонымен қатар мәдени бірегейлік және/немесе «артта қалушылық» туралы қалыптасқан стереотиптер мен бағалаушылық көзқарастарға талдау жасау. Орыс және ағылшын тілдеріндегі тарихи (Ресей

империясы кезеңі) және заманауи ғылыми зерттеулерді салыстыру Орталық Азия халықтарының тарихы мен мәдениетін түсіндірудегі әртүрлі тәсілдерді айқындады.

Зерттеу материалдары мен әдістері. Зерттеу материалы ретінде орыс шенеуніктерінің, саяхатшылары мен зерттеушілерінің, сондай-ақ шетелдік ғалымдардың жолжазба есептері мен күнделіктері, сонымен бірге заманауи тарихшылардың XIX ғасырдың екінші жартысы – XX ғасырдың басындағы патшалық империя заманындағы Орталық Азия халықтарының тарихы, мәдениеті мен дәстүрлі тұрмыс-салтына арналған еңбектері алынды. Жергілікті халықтың тілі, дәстүрлі тұрмысы, киімі, асханасы, сондай-ақ әдет-ғұрыптары мен жалпы мәдениеті туралы мәліметтерді қамтитын этнографиялық дереккөздерге ерекше назар аударылды. Зерттеуде тарихи, салыстырмалы, деректанулық және мәдениеттанулық әдістермен қатар дискурсивті талдау қолданылды.

Тірек сөздер: стереотиптер, шығыстану, экзотизация, базарлар, Түркістан.

Сілтеме жасау үшін: Абдурасулов Х. «Өркениеттілік миссиясының» тұрақты тарихи үгіт-насихат құралдары: Ресей Түркістанда // MUSEUM.KZ. 2026. №3 (15), 64-70 бб. DOI: 10.59103/muzkz.2026.15.06

УСТОЙЧИВЫЕ ИНСТРУМЕНТЫ ПРОПАГАНДЫ «ЦИВИЛИЗАТОРСКОЙ МИССИИ»: РОССИЯ В ТУРКЕСТАНЕ

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Аннотация. В статье анализируются и обобщаются наиболее распространенные стереотипы в отношении коренного населения Туркестана. Колониальная политика России на завоеванных землях Центральной Азии во второй половине XIX века часто использовала пропагандистские клише и стереотипы о подчиненных народах Туркестана для оправдания военной агрессии и превращения региона в колонию. Исследование опирается как на труды авторов эпохи Российской империи, так и на современные научные работы на русском и английском языках.

Цель исследования заключается в выявлении характерных черт репрезентации коренного населения в российских источниках изучаемого периода, а также в анализе устойчивых стереотипов и оценочных представлений о культурной идентичности и/или «отсталости» региона. Сопоставление исторических (периода Российской империи) и современных научных исследований на русском и английском языках позволило выявить различные подходы к интерпретации истории и культуры народов Центральной Азии.

Материалы и методы исследования. Материалом для данного исследования послужили путевые отчеты и заметки российских чиновников, путешественников и исследователей, а также зарубежных ученых; труды современных историков, посвященные истории, культуре и традиционному укладу жизни народов Центральной Азии в имперский период (вторая половина XIX – начало XX вв.). Особое внимание уделено этнографическим источникам, содержащим сведения о языке, традиционном быте, одежде, кухне и обычаях – в целом о культуре местного населения. Методологическую основу работы составили исторический, сравнительный, источниковедческий и культурологический методы, а также дискурсивный анализ.

Ключевые слова: стереотипы, ориентализация, экзотизация, базары, Туркестан

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Introduction.

The East has always attracted the keen attention of European artists, scholars, travellers, diplomats, merchants, and adventurers due to its exotic nature and its distinctiveness from the West; it has also served as a source of inspiration for poets and writers. The dichotomy of "self" versus "other" is one of the most fundamental concepts in the history of human thought. The perception of the "Other" depends largely on national myths and stereotypes; since the origins of these constructs lie in the past, scholars seeking to understand how the boundary between the worlds of the "self" and the "other" is formed are increasingly focusing on the initial contacts between Western Europeans and "other" cultures [Koroleva, 2009: 2].

This study focuses specifically on the centuries-long interactions between Russians and peoples from Central Asia. The term "East" is placed in quotation marks in this study for a specific reason. Edward Said's seminal academic work on the representation of the East helps contemporary scholars of Central Asia—unencumbered by the ideological clichés of the Soviet era—to understand and re-examine the complex issues and notions surrounding the "imagined East" as conceived by Western scholars and policymakers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Said's Orientalism marked the first serious attempt to explain the creation of the stereotype of the colonial East [Edward, 1978]

In this article, based primarily on the works of Russian authors from the colonial period, we aim to demonstrate that the frequent use of terms such as "savagery," "backwardness," and "greed" – along with references to the "introduction of Russian civic values" or "European civilisation" and other clichés regarding the Central Asian territories conquered by the Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th century – was based not on scientific evidence of the colonisers' superiority, but rather on political and ideological strategies intended to justify expansionist goals. Our focus is on specific instances involving the bazaars and commercial establishments of Central Asian peoples during the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries – particularly within the Turkestan General-Governorship (1865–1917) – where the aforementioned stereotypes appear most frequently.

Discussion. In their travelogues and reports on visits to various parts of Turkestan, Russian travellers and officials, as well as foreign diplomats, frequently echoed clichés and stereotypes rooted in the "otherness" and distinctiveness of the local population's way of life, language, culture, and traditions – concepts famously analysed in Edward Said's Orientalism.

Many works by Russian authors from the colonial period [Kostenko, 1871; Arandarenko, 1889; Ivanov, 1872] – reflecting the typical views of historians and researchers of that era – cite numerous examples of the backwardness and cultural underdevelopment of Central Asian peoples and countries. They also highlight the rulers of the three Uzbek khanates' inability to resolve internal and foreign policy issues independently without the intervention of powerful states. These arguments were primarily grounded in the theory of white man's superiority over the inhabitants of other parts of the world (including Asia) and the concept of a special "civilising mission" undertaken by European powers – including the Russian Empire – in Central Asia.

Such rhetoric enabled the Russian Empire to justify its colonial policies and military operations, which began in the second half of the 19th century with the capture of various fortifications along the Syr Darya and major economic centres (such as Chimkent and Tashkent) of the Kokand Khanate. These actions continued with the incorporation of the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva into the Empire's sphere of political and economic interests, lasting until the events of October 1917 in St. Petersburg.

A vast body of work containing significant ethnographic data rich in details on the daily life, clothing, cuisine, and traditions of the inhabitants of Turkestan is also of particular interest to the methodological study of this subject. Works by certain contemporary Russian historians about the peoples of Central Asia offer readers a comprehensive analysis and a re-evaluation of the research conducted by their compatriots a century ago. Common stereotypes about Eastern peoples and countries feature prominently in the works of Russian authors from the second half of the 19th and

early 20th centuries. Foreign authors have also written about the rhetoric surrounding the Russian Empire's civilising mission in the conquered territories of Central Asia [Morrison, 2021].

Results. A brilliant example of the use of Orientalist clichés and stereotypes – whereby exoticisation (i.e. highlighting of "bizarre, unusual features") served as a mechanism for constructing difference and imbuing it with intrinsic significance, and which, when combined with a racial perspective, led to the dehumanisation and demonisation of those habitually labelled "Yellow race" - is the well-known work by L.F. Kostenko entitled "Central Asia and the Establishment of Russian Civil Order Therein". The "Yellow Peril" syndrome was fundamentally anchored in the thesis of the total, innate incompatibility of the "Yellow" and "White" races. In this book, Kostenko – attempting, like most authors of that era, not merely to justify but to substantiate the Russian Empire's territorial claims to the vast region stretching from the Ural Mountains in the north to the Hindu Kush in the south – cites a multitude of facts regarding the peoples of Central Asia to support this thesis. For instance, in the aforementioned work, published in St. Petersburg six years after the Russian conquest of Tashkent, he writes that "...the Russians were to occupy vast expanses of barren land inhabited by a poor, wretched, semi-savage people" [Kostenko, 1871: 104].

The work is also of interest because the information presented is often paradoxical—and sometimes even directly contradicts the very thesis Kostenko sought to emphasise. For instance, when describing the carpet-making of Turkmen women, the author marvels at the refined taste and superb skill of local weavers in creating intricate carpets, emphasising that "…the purity of colours, the precision of the pattern, and the durability of the thread constitute the distinctive qualities of these carpets. They are crafted exclusively by women; remarkable, too, is the skill with which these semi-wild creatures manage to maintain the accuracy and intricacy of a design that would strike even the most sophisticated European with its exquisite taste" [Kostenko, 1871: 237]. Such examples of exoticization – to which the majority of colonial-era authors were prone-reveal the paradoxical nature of these judgments and would lead an uninitiated reader, to use modern parlance, into a state of cognitive dissonance. Another equally renowned researcher of the region and local colonial official, G.A. Arandarenko, also presents interesting ethnographic details that serve to exoticise the daily life and customs of the local population. In particular, describing a reception hosted by a wealthy Uzbek—during which he was accorded the respect and honour due a rare guest-he writes: "If you find yourself with a man of means... in such a *mehmankhana* (guest room), they will spread out before you not just one, but several towel-like tablecloths (also known as a *dastarkhan*), sewn from calico with *adras* margins; upon these cloths, they will set out such an abundance of assorted sweets and fruits that the entire sweet-toothed harem and household of any Asian potentate could feast upon them to their heart's content" [Arandarenko, 1889: 3]. In our view, such conclusions stem from theories regarding the backwardness and sensuality of Easterners and the superiority of the white man over subjugated peoples. To illustrate this, let us cite a few examples from the well-known work by Kostenko. In the late 1860s, Russians from the heartland provinces of the metropole began—following the military—to actively resettle in Turkestan; living side-by-side with the local population, they did not consider grain farming an important occupation. As the author writes, "Russian settlers in forts and fortified posts avoid engaging in grain farming; living among less civilised tribes, they find easier ways to earn money." Meanwhile, the local population, in the author's view, was in a state of constant admiration for the achievements of the white colonisers; "upon inspecting Russian dwellings and sharing bread and salt with them, they could not fail to see the superiority of the civilised environment over their own" [Arandarenko, 1889: 175]. The author also presents highly controversial arguments regarding the superiority of his own civilisation over the local one, emphasising that the consumption of alcoholic beverages—forbidden under Muslim law—is a sign of high culture. Describing certain members of the local population who had adopted the so-called civilised lifestyle, the author writes: "It is highly strange, yet at the same time gratifying, to see a Sart riding in a light carriage or a phaeton, attending our balls and gatherings, drinking wine in Russian company, and having clothing made of pure silk. All this is gratifying in the sense that the intellectual aspect follows the material one" [Arandarenko,

1889: 332-333]. As we can see, the author draws ambiguous parallels between drunkenness and civilisation, suggesting that lifting the ban on alcohol consumption among the local population would influence their intellectual development.

Another equally renowned researcher of the region, I.L. Yavorsky – following the best traditions of promoting the patriotism of the Russian soldier in newly conquered territories and extolling their heroism and valour-advances the following arguments to justify the occupation of Central Asia: "Wherever the Russian man appears, he brings with him the fundamental traits of his happy nature: straightforwardness and a striving for truth, good-naturedness that readily transforms into magnanimity, and a desire to draw closer to his neighbours..." [Zapiski imperatorskogo…, 1893]. As we can see, the occupation of other lands was described by imperialists and propagandists of the autocracy as nothing less than a desire to draw closer to one's neighbours. Like Kostenko, Yavorsky equates the promotion of overt alcohol consumption among the Muslim population with the benefits of European civilisation. It is well known that in Muslim countries, the consumption of alcoholic beverages is—as previously mentioned—considered forbidden, with public punishment prescribed for violations. The situation changed radically from the second half of the 19th century within the Turkestan General-Governorship; particularly in marketplaces such as the Voskresensky Bazaar, the local male population began consuming alcohol publicly, following the example of the alien European population—specifically Russian soldiers. This trend was greatly facilitated by the opening of drinking establishments by Russian distillers in areas where large crowds gathered, such as bazaars and fairs. Yavorsky cites a comical yet highly illustrative example of local men joining Russian soldiers in drinking alcohol, highlighting the "civilisational" aspect of this culture. In particular, he writes: "I often witnessed a scene that was at once comical and touching: a soldier, tipsy from the festivities and unsteady on his feet, being carefully supported by his *tamyr* – that is, a native friend – as he was led back to the barracks. The soldier would act up, trying to land a punch on his friend’s ear, yet the latter, while dodging the blows, would not abandon his inebriated companion, continuing to support him gently and guide him to his destination" [Zapiski imperatorskogo…, 1893: 34].

Just a few lines above, Yavorsky had been admiring with great zeal how the Russian army was instilling European values in Turkestan. Having cited such ambiguous examples of Russian "civilisation" – values supposedly essential to instil among the local population, who were largely teetotalers – the author triumphantly concludes: "After all that has been said, there is obviously no need to dwell at length on the reasons for our profound cultural influence on the indigenous peoples of Asia in general, and Central Asia in particular" [Zapiski imperatorskogo…, 1893: 33].

It is hardly surprising, then, that Chernyaev one of the notorious and ambitious generals who played a direct role in the conquest of Tashkent – believed that those who disregarded the tenets of Islam and prioritised profitable trade were "civilised Muslims."

As a prime example, the general cites the case of Mukhammed Saatbay, one of Tashkent’s wealthiest residents at the time, who had traded with Russia for years and employed several permanent agents in Petropavlovsk and Troitsk. This prominent Tashkent merchant was highly proficient in the Russian language. Chernyaev wrote "that Saatbay, one of the most influential figures in Tashkent, belonged to the group of 'civilised Muslims'—men prepared to make concessions contrary to the Quran, provided such actions did not violate fundamental tenets and were advantageous for trade" [Yavorskiy, 1893: 117]. As this characterisation of a member of the local merchant elite suggests, another – and no less significant – mark of "civilization" could be the abandonment of the tenets of one's faith and loyal service to the invaders. By Chernyaev’s own admission, "...Saatbay led the pro-Russian faction of Tashkent’s population" [Yavorskiy, 1893: 117].

However, in the scholarly literature produced by colonial-era authors, one also encounters instances where certain members of the settler population failed to live up to the high standards of civilisation that their generals had so zealously sought to instill in the conquered territories of Central Asia during the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. D. Ivanov, who observed

local bazaars, product ranges, and the prices of consumer goods in both the so-called "Russian" and "Asiatic" sections of Tashkent, presents interesting data regarding the pricing practices of Russian settlers versus local merchants for the same commodities. For instance, he writes, "It is interesting to compare the prices charged for identical goods by Russian merchants trading in the citadel and by the natives (Table 1):

Table 1. Prices of goods

	Russian Merchants	Native Merchants
Tea:	2 – 2.50 rubles	1.80 – 2 rubles
Sugar:	16 – 18 rubles	10 – 11 rubles
Stearin candles:	16 – 20 rubles	12 – 14 rubles

Thus, Orthodox merchants sold to Orthodox buyers at prices 10% to 60% higher than Muslim merchants did. Ivanov stubbornly notes: "We would rather not sell the goods at all than lower the price" [Ivanov, 1872: 59]. Traits such as a desire for quick profit organically complemented the image of the conquerors. High-ranking officers also exploited their status. One incident occurred in early January 1908 at the Voskresensky Bazaar. A butcher was selling meat for 12 kopecks per pound instead of the official regulated price of 9 kopecks. A general appeared and, upon calling a policeman, sternly ordered the butcher to select half a pud of good meat for him at the official regulated price. Once he received it, he left without any official report being filed. As the chronicler later summarized, "...from this, one can see the modest desires our generals possess and how they safeguard public order" [Khalfin, 1960: 3]. As the account continued, the imposing figure of a general appeared at the counter. He asked the butcher why the meat was being sold above the regulated rate and sent his orderly to bring a policeman. What happened next is the most interesting part: upon the policeman's arrival, the general sternly ordered the butcher to select half a *pud* of good meat for him at the official price; once he received it, he parted ways with the butcher without any official report being filed. As the chronicler later summarised, "...from this, one can see the modest desires our generals possess and how they safeguard public order and the public interest" [Khalfin. 1960: 3].

Conclusion. In the second half of the 19th century, Central Asia was conquered by the Russian Empire; this process was preceded by extensive study of the region by various scholars and specialists—geographers, geologists, ethnographers, historians, Orientalists, and missionaries, as well as military topographers and officials involved in colonial projects. The experience of European powers—foremost among them France and Great Britain in pursuing their colonial ambitions in the East demonstrated that the widespread use of Orientalist stereotypes and clichés to justify aggression against subjugated peoples had become, by this period, the most effective tool in the hands of the "white man." The vast body of material gathered during numerous 19th-century expeditions involving prominent Russian Orientalists, historians, and ethnographers served these ends by presenting a biased view of the daily life and culture of Central Asian peoples—one that favoured the imperialist aspirations of the Russian Tsarist court. Though lacking a solid scientific foundation, the conclusions drawn by travellers, Orientalists, ethnographers, diplomats, and the vast corps of colonial administrative officials facilitated the conquest of Turkestan and the consolidation of Russian power there.

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