



Altai Mountains in the European Imagination of the 19th and early 20th centuries

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Russia

Altai as a mountain system of southern Siberia didn't immediately appear on European maps

Comparing old maps, starting with the collection of the Flemish cartographer Abraham Ortelius of the early 17th century, we can see how in the minds of Europeans gradually traced the idea of this place. The terrible inaccuracy of these maps was supplemented by the General mythological idea of limitless Tartary. The concept of "Tartary" was constructed in the middle of the 13th century in connection with the Mongol invasion of Europe. In the concept of "Tartary" there was the inclusion of the Christian hell; as a result, there was "Tartary" as a specific designation that exists on the verge of real and imaginary geography



Map of Russia, 1603

1700:



1820:



1860s:



Altai – is a *terra incognita* located between the 48 and 52 degrees of North latitude and 99 and 107 degrees of East longitude - so stated in the first volume of "Geographical and statistical dictionary of the Russian Empire", published in 1863 by the famous traveler Pyotr Semyonov-Tyan-Shansky

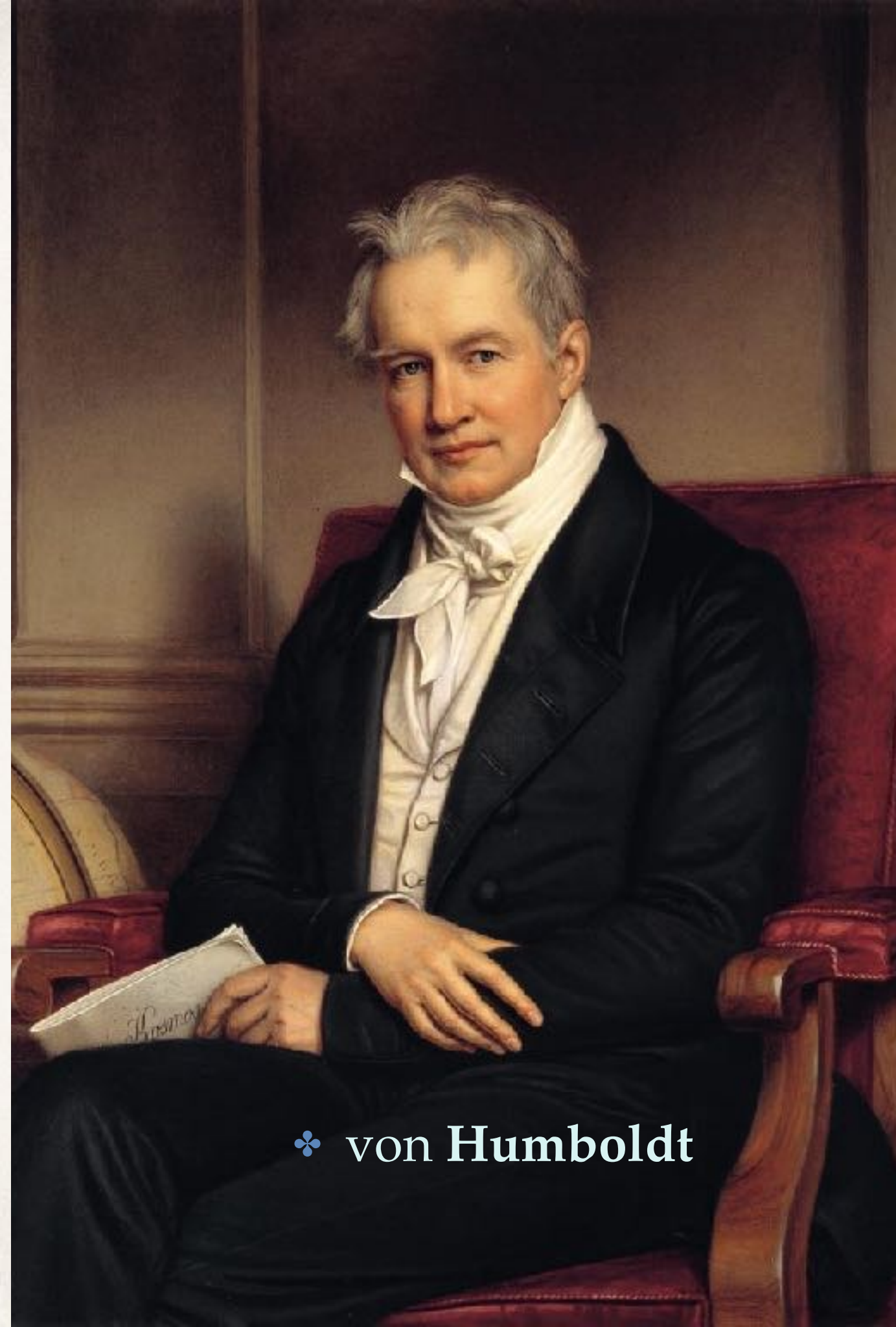
Tomsk Governorate, 1910

- 1 - Biysk
- 2 - Barnaoul
- 3 - Tomsk



Selected list of German explorers of Altai (except of mountain border)

- ❖ Peter Simon Pallas (1741-1811)
- ❖ Johann Gottlieb Georgi (1729-1802)
- ❖ Friedrich Wilhelm Heinrich Alexander **von Humboldt** (1769-1859)
- ❖ Bernhard **von Cotta** (1808-1879)
- ❖ Hans Michael **Renovanz** (1744-1798)
- ❖ Alexander Georg **von Bunge** (1803-1890)
- ❖ Friedrich August **von Gebler** (1781-1850)
- ❖ Gregor **von Helmersen** (1803-1885)
- ❖ Gerhard Friedrich **Müller** (1705-1783)
- ❖ Johann Georg **Gmelin** (1709-1755)
- ❖ Friedrich Wilhelm **Radloff** (1837- 1917)



❖ **von Humboldt**

Pyotr Chikhachyov (1808-1890)

Russian naturalist and geologist who was admitted into the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1876 as an honorary member. He authored geographical and geological descriptions of the Altai, Xinjiang (1845), and Asia Minor (1853-1869). One of the Altai mountain ranges is named after him.





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d'éprouver à son tour une vive impression à l'aspect des images vivantes qui lui rappellent le théâtre éloigné de ses travaux et de ses jouissances. Quo de fois, de retour en Europe, n'ai-je pas savouré tous les charmes d'une ineffable rêverie, lorsqu'au milieu de la splendeur bruyante des capitales, mon regard rencontrait par hasard les traits de quelques-unes de ces prestigieuses régions de l'Orient, qui font jaillir dans l'âme du pèlerin tout un torrent de réminiscences et de désirs !... et dans le moment même où je trace ces lignes, n'éprouvé-je pas une sensation bien singulière à l'aspect de ces modestes feuilles transportées du sein de la Sibirie sur les rives du lac de Genève ! ne font-elles pas surgir, comme par enchantement, les Alpes de l'Altai et les âpres remparts des frontières de Chine, à côté des cimes argentées du Mont-Blanc, et des crêtes bleuâtres du canton de Berne que je vois se dessiner sur l'horizon lointain !

Genève, le 24 août 1844.

VOYAGE

SCIENTIFIQUE

DANS

L'ALTAI ORIENTAL

ET LES PARTIES ADJACENTES DE LA FRONTIÈRE

DE CHINE

Fait par ordre de S. M. l'Empereur de Russie

PAR

PIERRE DE TCHIHATCHEFF

COLONNEL DE LA COLONNE DE S. M. L.
HONNORÉ DE PLUSIEURS ACADEMIES ET SOCIÉTÉS SAVANTES

« *Précieux Journal que la période curieuse de notre siècle trouve si utile pour ses études et ses recherches, que l'histoire de l'Asie, celle que l'impératrice Catherine a fait faire dans l'Asie centrale et qui recouvre les hautes parties de l'Asie, est si précieuse par le passé, et si importante au point de vue politique et à la marche progressive de la civilisation de l'Europe.* »

(Bernes, Erdkunde, tome I, page 100)



PARIS

CHEZ GIDE, LIBRAIRE-ÉDITEUR

RUE DES PRÈTRES-AUGUSTINS, 2.

1845



Altai as the East

- ❖ The natives live in filth and poverty
- ❖ These lands are very far from civilization
- ❖ The natives have an Eastern appearance
- ❖ The nature of Altai is exotic

— V —

non-seulement glace son esprit, mais encore paralyse son activité, en le tenant captif, pendant les trois quarts de l'année, au milieu des neiges et des brouillards. Errant dans ces vastes et éparses solitudes, souvent dépourvues même de l'auréole des souvenirs historiques, et placées en dehors de toute sympathie du monde civilisé, qui en ignore pour la plupart jusqu'au nom; avec quel enthousiasme, quelle fervente gratitude, l'obscur pèlerin de la Sibérie ne relit-il pas les pages éloquentes tracées par la main du plus grand géographe de notre siècle, lorsqu'en pesant dans sa balance infaillible les efforts de ces hommes voués à une carrière si ardue et en apparence si modeste et si ingrate, il leur adresse ces paroles consolatrices: « Ce n'est qu'après des siècles, lorsque ces solitudes sauvages se trouveront habitées par des races ennoblies, et que sur les rives du pittoresque lac de Télézk, comme au sein des fertiles vallées de la Katounya, on aura vu s'élever, au milieu de chalets et de villages alpestres, d'industrielles cités helvétiques et tyroliennes, à l'instar des Alpes populeuses de l'Europe; ce n'est qu'alors, que les Muses naturalisées en ces contrées, puiseront dans les noms de ces premiers et paisibles missionnaires de la science, des souvenirs bien plus doux que n'en offrent dans le Nouveau-Monde les noms des explorateurs conquérants, qui, comme Balboa, Cortès et Pizarro, firent des découvertes par la puissance de leur glaive, et s'y présentèrent comme destructeurs et non comme régénérateurs de la civilisation¹. »

Ce murmure involontaire échappé contre les tribulations pénibles qui empoisonnent les jouissances de l'explorateur des contrées septentrionales, on le pardonnera sans doute à un homme habitué à s'asseoir plutôt à l'ombre du palmier et du platane qu'au pied du mélèze boréal, et dont les souvenirs comme les vœux et les espérances, se confondent dans l'image ébrie d'un ciel inondé par le soleil ardent du Midi. C'est parce que le théâtre habituel de ces opérations scientifiques lui a fait apprécier l'avantage qu'elles peuvent en retirer, qu'il a été si péniblement affecté des entraves insurmontables qui, dans les contrées du Nord, arrêtent à chaque pas l'élan du naturaliste; en Sibérie ces obstacles pesèrent d'autant plus sur son âme, qu'ils y contrastent d'une manière désolante avec les efforts du gouvernement pour favoriser les explorations de tout genre. Dans aucun pays du monde civilisé, l'action protectrice du gouvernement à l'égard des voyageurs scientifiques ne se manifeste d'une manière aussi bienfaisante et aussi large qu'en Russie; c'est une vérité qui n'a plus besoin de preuves, depuis qu'on peut l'appuyer de l'autorité de tant de savants étrangers qui, plus ou moins récemment, ont parcouru

¹ Ritter, *Erdkunde*, t. I, sect. 2, p. 908. Pour conserver plus d'unité dans le texte, j'ai quelquefois traduit en français les citations empruntées aux auteurs étrangers; c'est, entre autres, le cas pour l'épigraphie placée en tête de mon travail, et tirée, comme la citation que je viens de faire, du grand ouvrage de M. Ritter sur la géographie comparée.

Selected list of English books mentioned the Altai mountains

- ❖ Kennan G. Siberia and the Exile System. 2 vols. London, 1897.
- ❖ Krausse A. Russia in Asia. London, 1899.
- ❖ Stadling J. Through Siberia. London, 1901.
- ❖ Fraser J.F. The Real Siberia. London, 1902.
- ❖ Deutsch L. Sixteen years in Siberia. London, 1905.
- ❖ Price M.G. Siberia. London, 1912.
- ❖ Wright R.L., Digby B. Through Siberia. London, 1913.
- ❖ Nansen F. Through Siberia. The Land of the Future. London, 1914.
- ❖ Czaplicka M.A. Aboriginal Siberia. London, 1915.

UNKNOWN MONGOLIA

A Record of Travel and Exploration in
North-West Mongolia and Dzungaria

BY
DOUGLAS CARRUTHERS
GOLD MEDALLIST OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

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VOL. II.

SECOND EDITION

LONDON
HUTCHINSON & CO.
PATERNOSTER ROW
1914

Thomas Witlam Atkinson (1799-1861)

English architect, artist and traveller in Siberia and Central Asia. Between 1847 and 1853 he travelled over 40 000 miles through Central Asia and Siberia, much of the time together with his wife Lucy and son Alatau, who was born during their travels





Day & Son, Litho. & the Queen.

London: Published by Hurst & Blackett.

SULTAN SOUK AND FAMILY

T. W. Alderman del. E. Walling sculp.

ORIENTAL

AND

WESTERN SIBERIA:

A NARRATIVE OF

Seven Years' Explorations and Adventures

IN

SIBERIA, MONGOLIA, THE KIRGHIS STEPPES,
CHINESE TARTARY, AND PART OF CENTRAL ASIA.

BY

THOMAS WITLAM ATKINSON.

WITH A MAP AND NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,

13 GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1858.

The Right of Translation is reserved.

Lucy Sherrard Atkinson (nee Finley, 1817–1893)

In 1846 she met Thomas Witlam Atkinson, whom she married in February 1848 in Moscow. Between 1848 and 1853 she accompanied her husband on his travels through Siberia, south to the Kazakh steppes and eastwards as far as Irkutsk and the Chinese border, before they returned to Britain in 1858.





RECOLLECTIONS
OF
TARTAR STEPPES
AND
THEIR INHABITANTS

By MRS. ATKINSON

With Illustrations

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET
1863

THROUGH THE HIGHLANDS
OF
SIBERIA

BY
MAJOR H. G. C. SWAYNE, R.E.
F.R.G.S., F.Z.S.

AUTHOR OF "SEVENTEEN TRIPS TO SOMALILAND"

*WITH 60 ILLUSTRATIONS
AND MAP*

LONDON
ROWLAND WARD, LIMITED
166, PICCADILLY

1904

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AFTER WILD SHEEP
IN THE
ALTAI AND MONGOLIA

BY
E. DEMIDOFF
PRINCE SAN DONATO
AUTHOR OF "HUNTING TRIPS IN THE CAUCASUS"

*WITH 82 ILLUSTRATIONS
A COLOURED FRONTISPIECE
AND MAP*

LONDON
ROWLAND WARD, LIMITED
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1900

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Harald George Carlos Swayne (1860–1940)

English soldier, naturalist and hunter, the older brother of Eric Swayne, Governor of British Honduras. Between 1884 and 1897 Swayne hunted whilst on active service in both Africa and India, shooting various animals including elephant, rhinoceros, lion, tiger, leopard and bear. Between 1898 and 1927 he made roughly 40 further privately funded trips throughout Africa and Asia to complete collections, see new countries and meet new tribes, including a trip to Siberia in 1902 with his friend Henry Seton-Karr.



Elim Pavlovich Demidoff, 3rd Prince of San Donato (1868-1943)

A descendant of Akinfiy Demidoff, the founder of mining in the Altai. Diplomat, state Councilor, poet. He graduated from the Imperial Alexander Lyceum. He served in the Russian embassies in London, Madrid, Copenhagen, Vienna. In 1912 he was an adviser to the Russian Embassy in Paris. Russian envoy to Greece (1912-1917). He visited Altai in 1897.

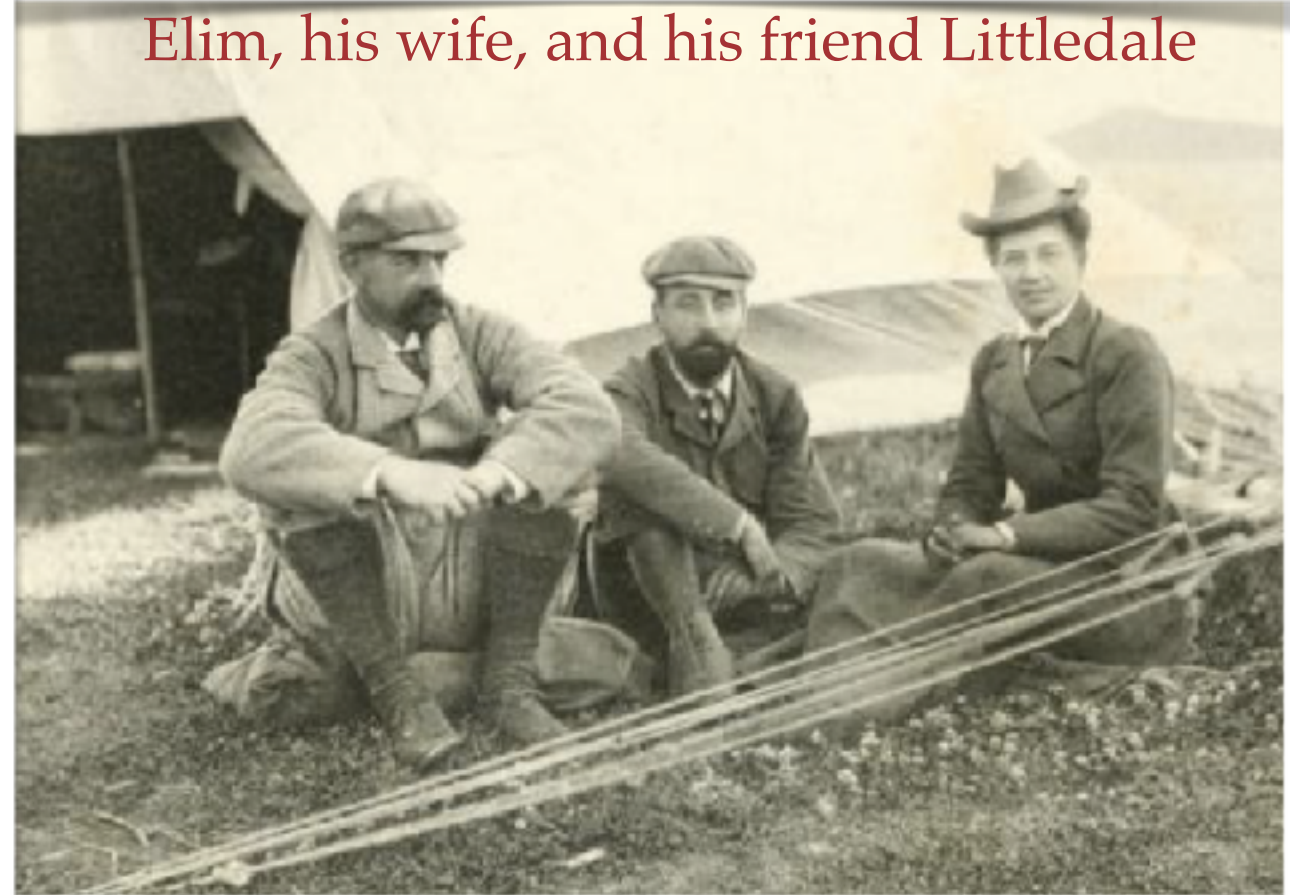


Ovis Ammon



THE BAG AT KOSH-AGATCH.

Elim, his wife, and his friend Littledale



Concept of savagery in Demidoff's travelogue

- ❖ All settlements and roads are buried in mud
- ❖ The semantics of violence
- ❖ The local population is eking out a miserable existence
- ❖ Kalmuks are difficult to Christianize
- ❖ The natives adhere to the cruel and disgusting rituals

to the Greek Church, while the others remain heathen, such division creating no misunderstandings whatever amongst them. They are mostly nomads



KALMUKS.

and live in "yourts," or felt-covered tents, with wicker frames, which they shift from place to place according to the time of year and the abundance of grass available for their cattle. As regards their intelli-

some hundred yards, beating him as hard as he could with his knotted whip. In the afternoon we sent for the hunters. Four dismal creatures presented themselves, stating they were willing to accompany us, and that they knew the ground up to the frontier. We kept hearing the words "*Kotchkor bar*," which our interpreter translated "There are wild sheep." Tabá was one of the four men. I was very anxious to secure him, having been told that Major Cumberland had employed him the previous year, and had found him exceedingly useful. We certainly all

The semantics of violence

«Here we made acquaintance with the Zaissan Semion, an energetic Kalmuk chief, who had been summoned by Mr. Meyer in order to superintend our expedition in procuring for us the best horses he could muster in the country, and the most reliable men. He was a christened native, and a great deal above the average of Kalmuk intelligence. As I have said before, the Zaissan, the elected chief of a tribe, is almost omnipotent in his district, and generally rules over his subjects in a most arbitrary fashion, Government control amounting to very little, and the inhabitants being at the lowest possible degree of civilisation, if such it may be called. We were several times witnesses of punishments inflicted on Kalmuks by the Zaissan's orders for slight attempts at disobedience, and occasionally had to put a stop to them».



PUNISHING A KALMUK.

There were no more signs of villages; only a few "yourts" witnessed the presence of human beings, and the occupants of these were so frightened at the sight of us that they would rush off and hide under the rocks until our caravan had passed. At

The natives adhere to the cruel and disgusting rituals

«Here we first came across Kalmuk offerings to their gods. Two or three poles were put up in the middle of a field, in a slanting position from the ground; at the end of these poles hung skins of horses and goats; the wretched animals had been torn to pieces alive as a peace offering to the spirits. After two trees are hewn down the animal is tied, his fore feet to one and hind legs to the other, and the trees are released. It was, indeed, a ghastly sight».



"WAVING THE LEGS OF THE SKINS TO AND FRO."

4 p.m. we reached a place called Iodro, on the banks of the Tchouia, where we camped for the night, the ponies having had a march of forty versts. Here the Ispravnik promised us a curious sight. He sent for a Kalmuk priest who lived in his yourt in the neighbourhood, and on the latter's

A movie by G. Kozintsev and L. Trauberg about young Leningrad schoolteacher, which came to Altai (1931)





THE SACRED GATE OF THE KREMLIN, MOSCOW,
FROM THE INTERIOR

THROUGH THE HIGHLANDS OF SIBERIA

BY
MAJOR H. G. C. SWAYNE, R.E.
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1904

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The Altai Highlands and Chuisky Tract

our journey for thirty-five versts to Iyedra, a small post-house on the Chuya. We crossed a plain on the true right bank of the Katun, and entered for the first time the gorge of the Chuya, far famed for its



FELT "YURTA" USED BY KIRGHIZ AND KALMUKS

splendid alpine scenery. We drove through this all the evening in a thunderstorm, and arrived in the dark at Iyedra, a station built close to the margin of the river.

This was kept by Kalmuks. The Kirkuchi station had been the last Russian one, the Ust-Iniya station

The Altai Highlands and Chuisky Tract

an hour, waiting for the train to clear, and then we galloped on after our pack-ponies and reached Chibit late. We had some trouble in crossing a stream at Chibit, as it rained all the evening.



PEASANT BUILDERS AT KURAI

On 2nd July I allowed the caravan to go on and stayed to hunt in the forest for roebuck, which were said to be plentiful here, but did not succeed in getting

Summary

- ❖ The Russian government, despite almost a century of possession of this territory, had no idea about its Mountainous South Siberian frontier;
- ❖ The process of inventing the Altai had a foreign policy orientation;
- ❖ The strengthening of Russian expansion in the Central Asian direction led to the anxiety of the British Empire;
- ❖ As a result of the influence of Russian and European Imperial practices, the image of southern Siberia was strongly romanticized and saturated with contradictory meanings as a typically Eastern territory



Thanks for your attention!