Early Field Photography and Visual Documents of Northern Indigenous Cultures Ivan Poliakov's Collection, 1876

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Abstract: This article deals with the analysis of the first collection of ethnographic photographs brought to the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE) in Saint Petersburg from the Ob' River by the Russian zoologist Ivan Poliakov in 1876. The article analyzes this collection as the first evidence in the history of visual anthropology of the North in Russia. Based on the historical documents from the Russian archives and Poliakov's published field notes the article looks at his photographs through their social history both in the field and at the MAE. The article tells the story of this collection, which intertwines the organization of expedition, the technical history of photography, the relationships between Poliakov and indigenous communities of the Ob' River, the photographic genres he preferred, and the history of the registration and cataloguing of the photographs at the MAE.

Keywords: fieldwork, Khants, North, photography, visual anthropology

Field, and particularly ethnographic and anthropological, photography, began to develop in Russia in the 1870s. A particular surge of interest in visual documentation of culture can be traced back to an ethnographic exhibition held in Moscow in 1867. Photo materials showing various ethnic groups living on the territory of the Russian Empire were on display for the first time, and the exhibition evoked a wide public response because it demonstrated the potential of photography to provide a scientific visual documentation of conventional everyday life.

Following this, photography became widely used to document the outside world and from the 1880s on, it became impossible to find a significant expedition taking place without photographic coverage. During this time, Russia kept pace with the world's endeavors in the field of visual documentation of culture and the first methodologies and technical recommendations concerning photo surveying in the setting of field research began to emerge (Edwards 1997).

Russia's diverse national composition provided a wide field of work for ethnographers. In the nineteenth century, large numbers of political exiles and liberal thinkers who had been forced to leave the capital were involved in ethnography. They did not highlight superfluous exoticism, but instead worked to understand the traditional life of the country's people. Their achievement consisted not only in collecting vast amounts of field data, but also in demonstrating that the performed peoples of Imperia were uniquely contributing to the culture of the state.

In the period under review, photography was still significantly influenced by the figurative arts, and this was not surprising given that the main individuals involved were artists who had retrained as photographers. In the 1870s, artistic and scientific photography began to diverge from one another, but it was a slow process. It was difficult for an amateur to organize photographic shooting; photo equipment was expensive, and mastering the technology was complicated. For this reason, studio photographers also took on photographic surveying in the field. However, because they were not involved in the science, they did not ponder over scientific methods of documentation and focused, instead, on beauty and performance quality. They built up works of art, commercial projects, and tried to reflect not so much the reality as the most vivid, exotic living conditions (Geary 1986).

Professional photographers of this period were often involved in portrait shooting in their personal studios. Finding themselves on expeditions, they did not change their regular way of thinking and working methods, and often went on shooting portraits. Thus, static pictures of people dominated in early ethnographic photography and diverse visualization of everyday life was all but absent. In addition, scholars saw ethnographic photo shooting as a reflection of people in cultural context. That is why many of the photo collections from this era are "portrait albums of population" in the region of exploration.

The understanding that a superficial acquaintance with a local community is not enough for complex photography came with time. To see the culture, to work with it, to understand and describe it, one should be deep within it, take time to research it, and build relations

with its representatives. Yet the researcher doing the work often did not have enough time to get to know the society he described that closely. During this period, travel expeditions in the Russian Empire often covered broad territories and researchers had to move frequently, limiting their time in an area and their ability to get close to a culture. That is why photo collections from this time period may seem superficial and out of context.

The majority of the aforementioned context, which influenced the development of early ethnographic photography, also impacted the work of Ivan Poliakov. Unquestionably, every traveler who took a camera into his hands, or who engaged a professional photographer, was influenced by the situation in the field and his internal understanding of the process and tasks of photo documentation. In this case, some nuances of the researcher's field experience can be found in available text documents that provide information about the scientist's journey, for example in published reports, correspondence with colleagues, and official documents.

In 1876 zoologist, Poliakov made a scientific journey to the Ob' River Valley. In the course of his work a photo collection was set up that was delivered to the Anthropology and Ethnography Museum (*Kunstkamera*) at the Imperial Academy of Sciences¹ a few years later. At present this collection is of particular interest to researchers. On the one hand, being characteristic of that time period, it is reflective of methods and approaches to photographic surveying in the field environment. It shows preferences in the choices of objects, topics, and perspectives of photo documentation, as well as the influence of scientific ideas and the technical capabilities of the equipment in the 1870s. On the other hand, the unique character of this collection, incredible as it may seem, is significantly different from other sets of works of the early period deposited in the Museum Fund. Studying such photo collection makes it possible to conceptualize mechanisms of evolvement of scientific photo sources/visual documents.

Poliakov collected written and visual data on the way of life, main activities, and interaction of the local population—the Ostiaks²—with Russian newcomers and industrialists. On the basis of this journey he compiled a report (Poliakov 1877), which is a comprehensive study of the Irtysh and Ob' rivers—not only with regard to ichthyology but also to geology, botany, and the fishing industry. The report focuses primarily on describing the ethnography of the locals, from their origin to various everyday peculiarities. Thus, much of the information about the expedition—its terms, route, goals, and objectives—is known. It is rare

that this data accompany photo collections of the 1870s. In addition, this collection is the first in the Museum Fund that constitutes a thematic series of materials, rather than just a random collection of photos.

Ivan Semenovich Poliakov³ (1845–1887) was born in a Cossack village near Troitskosavsk⁴ to a poor Siberian Cossack family. Mother of the would-be explorer was of local Buryat ancestry. Poliakov was recognized as a gifted young boy in school and he was sent to Irkutsk to study in a military college for record clerks. After graduation, he became a teacher. In 1866, Poliakov made one of his first journeys. He worked as an anatomist and naturalist during the Olekminsk-Vitimsk expedition. In 1867, he visited the Eastern Sayans as a physicist and geographer and it was there that he gained his first experience of archeological, anthropological, and ethnographic research, and amassed a special collection. He was entrusted with carrying out this work despite his lack of specialized education.

With the support and influence of a number of renowned local actors, such as Mikail V. Zagoskin and Petr A. Kropotkin,⁵ Poliakov was able to continue his education. In 1870, he was accepted to Saint Petersburg University. Four years later, he graduated from the Physics and Mathematics Faculty of the Natural History Department. He was soon appointed to a temporary position of keeper of the Vertebrates Department at the Museum of Zoology at the Imperial Academy of Sciences. In 1881, in order to get access to civil service, he defended a thesis and officially became a learned keeper. The many achievements of Ivan Poliakov as a participant of many diversified expeditions were appraised by the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, and he was elected an associate of the society. He was frequently invited to work in the organization's departments and commissions. Poliakov devoted attention not only to zoological and paleontological research in his studies, but also had interest in anthropology, archeology, ethnography, geology, geography, botany, and so on. During his lifetime the researcher managed to participate in more than fifteen expeditions in various scientific directions and gather materials that are now stored in several organizations of Saint Petersburg.

Finalizing the researcher's biography, one can draw some conclusions or assumptions that would help understand certain aspects of his ethnographic research activities and collected materials. Although Poliakov's scientific merits gave him a position of authority, his social origin prevented him from fully entering the social stratum of Saint Petersburg's scientific community. He remained a lower class outcast until his death.

Despite his higher education and contributions to the field of science, he kept his connection to the Cossacks. His private life was also quite lonely. As Nikolai M. Iadrintsev (1887) at his funeral noted, Poliakov lived in an unfamiliar environment, and was never at home in Saint Petersburg's scientific and cultural community. As he mingled among intelligentsia circles, he subscribed to their inherent liberal views. Contemporaries saw him as a democrat whose views led him to "service to humanity and its most miserable part" (Ustinovich and Mendelson 1935). But it is important to understand that his career success and the fact that he lived in Saint Petersburg tells us about the mildness of his own opinion, despite his close friendship with a number of quite radical thinking scholars and public figures.

Poliakov had a bicultural background followed by well-deserved career recognition, which gave him an understanding of the different ways of living and the various cultures of the country. Thereby, the researcher had a wider scope for data comparison in different studies. He was not a perfect stranger to the aboriginal culture, having an understanding of a specific way of life and the difficulties of local community's existence. This particular condition probably allowed him to establish closer relations with representatives of various peoples of the country. Such experiences cannot help but be reflected both in this research work and photos. His frequent field trips gave him a chance to leave behind the metropolitan milieu that perhaps weighted him down.

Nobody could say for sure who came up with the idea of the expedition to the valley of the Ob' River. Local actors—merchants, industrialists, and managers—who were interested in the fishing industry environment (Reshetov 2002) could have been the initiators, and the researcher himself was probably interested. One could imagine that he was about to write a thesis on zoology of fish in that body of water. The source of funding of the expedition is also unknown. It was initially planned that the researcher would join one of the expeditions to this region prepared by various Russian societies.

It is stated in the note of 9 March⁶ 1876 (SPF ARAN 2/1(1876)/1) that Poliakov needed 1,000 rubles for his trip, but only if he were not able to join the expedition of the Russian Industry and Trade Society to the Kara Sea and estuary of the Ob' River. The main theme of the research in this document is designated as zoological and basically ichthyological (studying of ciscoes) research of the Ob' River Valley.

The next document sets forth the journey term of six to seven months from the beginning of April (SPF ARAN 2/1(1876)/1). It also mentions the necessary number of supporting documents for the

expedition: a permit from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and power of attorney from the city administrator of Saint Petersburg for free movement in the gubernias (provinces) of the examined region, hunting license, and a commendatory letter to Nikolai G. Kaznakov, the governor-general of Western Siberia, with a request to provide assistance in work, and the like.

It remains unclear whether the scientist was going to conduct his research as part of some expedition or whether he initially planned to travel alone. Moreover, money was handed to him as an individual researcher.

There exists an interesting letter containing the offer and instructions for Poliakov with regard to his joining the expedition of the Society for the Advancement of Russian Trade Seamanship to measure the depths of the Ob' River (SPF ARAN 2/1(1876)/1). It follows from it that the researcher would have found himself under a time pressure, and apparently this was not a part of his scientific plans. It is indirectly confirmed by a personal letter of Poliakov to Alexandr A. Straukh⁷ (SPF ARAN 50/2/205) in which the researcher noted that he did not want to participate in that expedition because "he would not get any sea fish and lose all the river fish." So, he assumed in advance that his personal scientific interests would be neglected in favor of the tasks of other people's expedition.

Poliakov notes: "In the summer the banks of the River Ob' become filled with hundreds of people from the outskirts of Tobol'sk who work in the fishing industry. Around forty to eighty people live at all main 'sands,'⁸ workers and estate managers." (Poliakov 1877) This lively fishing industry caught the interest of both the researcher and local authorities. Kaznakov asked the researcher to give special consideration to the interrelationships of fishery managers and local citizens and even made a list of questions to which it was necessary to get answers, thus having significantly broadened the scope of initially planned research.

In his report, Poliakov describes the route and terms of his expedition in considerable detail in his report, and partial information can also be obtained from correspondence between the researcher and Straukh. Poliakov departed from Saint Petersburg on 19 April. After two weeks in Kazan where he familiarized himself with the zoological collections of the university he went up the Kama River. Then he made it to Yekaterinburg. A steamboat bound for Tomsk was scheduled for 12 May only, and awaiting it the scientist lived in Tyumen for about a week. On 14 May he was in Tobol'sk.

Poliakov stayed in Tobol'sk for two weeks. Here he tried to obtain all local information about nature, people, and trading in the examined region. This turned out to be an extensive stop because he could not proceed with his research of fish and fishing. The river became free of ice rather late that year, and fishing only commenced when there was no ice.

On 27 May the researcher started his fieldwork. He had to get to the conflux of Irtysh and Ob' rivers by boat studying its valley and then go down the Ob' River to the Obdorsk inlet. In Samarovo⁹ rural settlement Poliakov got a large, closed, eight-oared boat for his further voyage. It was provided by a local peasant named Vasilii Zemtsov. It is interesting that Poliakov became aware of this boat when he was in Saint Petersburg, after receiving a letter from its owner. Zemtsov informed him as follows: in April 1875 he became aware that in a years' time researchers from Bremen Alfred E. Brehm and F.H. Otto Finsch would travel from Samarovo to Obdorsk.¹⁰ Seeing the importance of this expedition and knowing that one could only get to Obdorsk from Samarovo by water, he made a cayuco. However, after he found out about Poliakov's planned journey, he decided to give the boat to him. He gave two other closed boats to the Bremen expedition (Poliakov 1877).

On 24 June Poliakov met with Brehm, Finsch, and volunteering Karl von Waldburg-Zeil-Tranchburg in the rural settlement of Sukhorukova on the Ob' River banks (SPF ARAN 50-2-205). They talked for approximately four hours. Poliakov invited local citizens, and local women sang and danced for the guests. Brehm commented on this event, saying, "It is good to observe the citizens participating in their affairs and entertainment" (SPF ARAN 50-2-205).

On 20 June Poliakov left Samarovo and on 8 July he made it to Beryozovo where he stayed for eight days. The first stop he made after Berezovo was the Pugorsky iurts.¹¹ After that, the researcher visited all the fishing settlements along his Ob' River voyage.

Poliakov notes that he observantly studied the existing fishing industry practice as well as relations between the Russians and Ostiaks. In one of the letters he states that he wrote in a diary the history of fishing and hunting of each Ostiak living on the banks of the Irtysh River (SPF ARAN 50-2-205) with whom he had a chance to speak.

On his way to Obdorsk he ran into only one Russian resident settlement—Kushevaty—but it had signs of aboriginal everyday life. Russians had deer here, dogs substituted horses for them, and both Russians and Ostiaks went hunting and fishing for a long time for industrial purposes. Besides, the majority of Russians here knew the Ostiak language.

After getting to Obdorsk, on 10 August the traveler went to explore the Ob' inlet where he spent about three weeks. On 9 September he began to go back up the Ob' River on the *Sibiriak* steamboat to Tobol'sk (Poliakov 1877). Members of those two expeditions, which Poliakov could also join, Captain Dal' and his assistant Raudsep from the Moscow Society for the Advancement of Russian Trade Seamanship, and Matveev and Vasil'ev, members of the expedition prepared by the Saint Petersburg Society for the Advancement of Industry and Trade, traveled on the same steamboat.

Further, in October the researcher came to Omsk and departed for Tyumen on 31 October. On 5 November he was in the Perm gubernia and, stopping in Yekaterinburg, Perm, and Kazan, he made it to Nizhny Novgorod on 23 November where he boarded a train to Petersburg.

In the introduction to his report, Poliakov writes: "There is a significant ethnographic collection containing various household appliances and instruments, inter alia, stone implements, present-day skulls, photographs, etc. All these natural history, anthropological and ethnographic materials will be especially valuable if they are compared to similar items from neighboring and more distant places and times." Therefore, we conclude that the researcher considered photo materials to be of just as much importance as the other types of sources. The visual data is a great illustration to his report and one can only regret that it was not published in the text. This was probably the first time the researcher had taken such an approach to photography. In the majority of cases visual data were not yet mentioned in publications or scientist's diaries because it was very rare for Russian researchers to photograph during this period. We only know of a few examples of ethnographic photo shooting in scientific expeditions before the 1880s (Morozov 1953).

It is interesting that we have not only references but also some additional information to help us understand how the photo surveying was planned and carried out. Poliakov emphasizes "the connection and harmony that exist between the country's nature and its dwellers." Unfortunately, available texts do not explain whether the researcher was going to portray aboriginals' everyday life aspects or whether circumstances made him do so. It is fair to assume that these plans were nurtured at the preparation stage of the expedition, since he focused extensively on studying available information about the population in the Ob' River Valley; he planned to approach his studying of the fish and fishing industry within the context of the interaction between nature and people. The scientist tried to express these particular ecological concepts in his photo materials.

Poliakov engaged a professional photographer in Tobol'sk. Unfortunately, we do not know whether his choice was incidental or whether this expert's works had already somehow been recommended to him. Poliakov himself writes about it as follows: "When I departed from Tobol'sk, I got an opportunity to engage a quite dutiful photographer Mr. Liutik for the time of my voyage in the valley of the Ob' River to Obdorsk or even the estuary" (Poliakov 1877; see also SPF ARAN 50/2/205). Curiously, Poliakov's report and letters say nothing else about this man with whom the explorer had been working for several months. Even his name remains unknown.

Reportedly, Poliakov could take photos himself, but it is impossible to confirm this report because no references to this fact were found. This assumption is based on the statement made by researchers of the Bremen expedition; when they met Poliakov in Sukhorukovskaia it was he who took photos of the Ostiak group (Finsh and Brem 1882). At the same time, they note that he concentrated on studying the country and its population because high water prevented him from going fishing (Finsh and Brem 1882). This confirms the fact that the initial goals of the researcher were adjusted in the course of work because of weather conditions. We thus accept that all these photo materials were technically made by Liutik who worked to the instructions of his employer. In a sense we can talk about dual authorship.

The museum history of Poliakov's photo collection is also interesting and demonstrative. The exact year of transfer of the collection to the Museum is unknown. However, it is mentioned for the first time in the "List of photographs of representatives of various Russian ethnic groups received from I.S. Poliakov" (SPF ARAN 142/1/21) and "Catalogue of photographs depicting types of various peoples" (SPF ARAN 142/1/19) compiled in 1879–1881 by the Museum keeper Feodor Russov. The first inventory (the main museum document for the collection) of the majority of materials was drawn up in 1903 by Evgenia Petri, and it states that the pictures were received by the Museum in 1880.

Unfortunately, Poliakov's collection was brought into the Museum before the photo fund obtained its official status. The unified visual document registration and storage system had not been developed at that point in time; photos made in the course of one 1876 project and passed on to the organization by one collector turned out to be in two separate departments in three different collections. Such distribution of photo data in the Museum evidenced the perception of photo documents as illustrations, rather than as a source for research. If keepers had understood the importance of single collections of each particular researcher

from the beginning, original collections would not have been divided based on the fact that they portrayed various regions or national groups.

The majority of photos taken during Poliakov's 1876 expedition, fifty-nine pieces, are registered at present in the collection No. 106A. The collection is not generally homogeneous; it includes photographs taken by different photographers in studios. Such photos do not relate directly with the expedition to the Ob' water gap. We should note six pictures representing series "Ostiak's and Samoed's costumes." It is known that at least one of these pictures was presented at the ethnographic exhibition in 1867, so these same type images could have been printed in the second half of the 1860s. Unfortunately, it is not possible to ascertain the authorship of the pictures, although one could presuppose that Liutik made them. This would explain why Poliakov invited that particular photographer to the expedition. Since the history of studio photos and the content of those images is not important for this article, we will not discuss this further.

The materials from the 1876 expedition should be supplemented with four more photos that are stored separately from the general Siberian part. They depict Russian people who lived in the Ob' River Valley. As mentioned before, the whole collection was divided between departments and, as a result, several photographs turned out to be in the Department of ethnography of the East Slavs and peoples of the European part of Russia because of the national identity of depicted people (or how museum workers understood), and were attributed to the collection No. 106.

In addition, some more unaccounted photographs can be related to materials of Poliakov obtained in the Ob' River Valley. They are registered in collection No. 1695. Curiously, these pictures are not noted in the previously mentioned Russov's list, however they are noted in the document named "Catalogue of photographs depicting types of various peoples" (SPF ARAN 142-1-19). They are similar to other photo materials from Poliakov's expedition of 1876. Technically, they were shot in the same distinctive manner as ones in the main collection. One can only guess as to why these twelve photos were not in the basic collection from the very beginning. They could have been obtained later for some reason, or they could have been separated from the main collection at some point. They most probably were put with another group of materials due to their scenic, rather than ethnographic, contents, although such an assumption is more than provisional because the photos mostly depict townships. These materials are from the described expedition, confirmed by the fact that they depict localities on the scientist's way.

Figure 1. The group of Russians from Western Siberia. MAE RAS No. 106-3.

Courtesy of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera).

Both in a letter and in his report Poliakov writes: “Thanks to him [Liutik] I have now a collection of rather satisfactory photographs which depict both types of localities and residents, mostly Ostiaks” (Poliakov 1877) and “When we were travelling down the Irtysh River about twenty-five rather large photographs of Irtysh and Ostiaks were taken” (SPF ARAN 50/2/205). Most of pictures related to the 1876 expedition, and assumingly taken by Liutik, are printed using a special technique, with rounded edges, and are of the same size. Probably the edges had to be cut because of uneven pouring of light-sensitizing agent, collodion, on the glass surface. Thus, in the course of preparing of a negative image liquid ran all over the center and fixed on edges. Such things happened quite often as negative plates had to be manufactured directly at the place of work before the photo shooting, as it was required by the technology. Unfortunately, one can only make assumptions about the technical side of photo-shooting during an expedition. The only mention about photo technology in the report specifies that the waters of

Figure 2. The right bank of the Ob' River near Malyi Atlym. MAE RAS No. 1695-145.

Courtesy of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera).

Ob' and Sos'va contain a lot of metal, which helped to restore the photo equipment (Poliakov 1877).

The photographs use thin albumin paper. This is the basic material used in photo printing in the 1870s. All pictures registered in the collections No. 106 and No. 106A are signed in ink, apparently by Russov. A part of the signatures is duplicated in German. The twelve photographs that were placed in collection No. 1695 were signed later in pencil, and their inventory was made in 1910. It remains unclear who marked up these photos. It is interesting that one picture has a signature in ink made by another person. All photographs in the main collections, Nos. 106 and 106A, were glued to cardboard, one to four pieces per sheet, and under each sheet, it says "I.S. Poliakov 1880." Almost all sheets have later marks. Apparently, photographs in collection No. 1695 were also glued to cardboard sheets, several to one, but were cut out one by one at a later date.

Poliakov planned to present the photo album to the Academy personally. The researcher wanted to send one copy of the collection to Governor-General of Western Siberia Kaznakov to thank him for the assistance on the journey and the hospitality he received in Omsk.

Nothing is known about the fate of this album, if it ever existed, and of the negative images on the basis of which these photographs were printed. Poliakov wanted to make these materials public by himself, and he agreed with the photographer on that point (SPF ARAN 50/2/205). Interestingly, some pictures were given to Finsch and Brehm for publication in their report on their journey in Siberia (Finsh and Brem 1879: abb. 44, 45). The book has two inserts presenting photo materials from Poliakov's collection. They provide an interesting example of a photographic montage but as the scope of this article is limited, we do not have the space to examine the history of the publication of these materials in the collections.

As has already been noted, the collection in question has a number of unique features as far as early ethnographic collections are concerned. Photographs illustrate the materials gathered by Poliakov in the course of his field research, and one may find references to certain pictures in his published report. The whole collection looks like a complete project, a thematic series where the data is combined by general content. The researcher tried to create the image of aboriginals as people who live by subsistence farming, and in harmony with nature. These photographs confront us with the lives of the poor. Pictures show the connection between Ostiaks and the environment quite brightly via photographs of traditional activities, poverty-stricken homes, and general ambiance.

One can draw a parallel with the text of the report, in which traditional fishing of local residents is set against industrial, oftentimes barbaric fishing. Interestingly, ethnographic peculiarities of the Ostiak day-to-day routine were captured in the photographs, with multiple references to fishing activities, not industrial *artels* (cooperative associations).

Criticizing the available materials, one should take into account the challenges a photographer meets when out in the field. Because there were many limitations to photography in the 1870s—because of the immaturity of technology and restrictions on approved methods of what a researcher could and could not portray—early ethnographic photo collections are often characterized by scarcity of topics and their uniformity, while the quality of photographs is not always good.

Due to the space restrictions, this article does not analyze each individual photograph, and instead presents general groups of materials that follow the researcher's approach to photo surveying and topics that interested him the most but not delving deeply into the content of images and related ethnographic comments. Thus, having examined the story of creation and life of the collection as the first stage in the complex of criticism/analysis of the document, I turn to external

Figure 3. The Ostiaks' house in Filinskie iurts. MAE RAS No. 106A-65.

Courtesy of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera).

analysis, the second stage of work with the source, and describe several essential features of the collection.

It is possible to characterize the pictures under several principles. It would be most logical to consider the photographs in chronological order of when they were taken, that is connect them with the route of the researcher. However, I am more interested here in Poliakov's work methods than his route. Therefore, it is more convenient to classify the documents by genre. Such grouping is somewhat conditional because the very genre system remains to be rather vague, and that concerns both the art of photography and ethnographic photo documentation in particular.

Several genres can be distinguished in the pictures taken in the course of studying of the Ob' River Valley. There are stand-alone or group portraits, as well as a few scenic and genre pictures. Since Poliakov gave much attention to both the origin of the Ostiaks and description of their temper and anthropology in his study, his visual documents vividly depict this topic of the research. One may also assume that the photographer chose such topics himself because working in Tobol'sk he could specialize in creation of portraits. Many

Figure 4. The Ostiak women from the environs of Berezovo. En face. MAE RAS No. 106A-11.

Courtesy of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera).

portraits are made against the background of a valuable cloth. It is possible that it was bought in the course of work but it would have been challenging to get such a big cloth from local residents. Probably, the photographer took it from his studio, which means he did not plan to photograph only scenery and fishing.

As already stated, portrait was one of the most popular genres of ethnographic photography in the nineteenth century. The majority of Poliakov's collection is represented by portraits. They are quite diverse, and three basic groups can be discerned among them—portrait, anthropological portrait, and portrait set in ethnographic environment. Though correlation of each photograph with a certain group is conditional and based on general external characteristics, they have their distinctive features and purposes.

Anthropological portraits presented in the collection are typical of such data in the second half of the nineteenth century. They do not meet contemporary requirements imposed to anthropological pictures, but have been taken in accordance with recommendations for anthro-

Figure 5. The Ostiak women from environs of Berezovo. In profile. MAE RAS No.106A-12.

Courtesy of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera).

pometric shooting which existed in the 1870s. These portraits are similar and usually are focused on faces. A person was photographed full face and side face, if possible. Probably for the purposes of comparison, photographers often included two and sometimes three faces in one shot. The majority of portraits are individual or companion. No measurement instruments were used in the course of such shooting. All these portraits were shot against the background and cut in an oval shape. Uniformity of this group of data confirms that the researcher deliberately created this series and probably planned to use it as an appendix to the gathered craniological materials.

The composition of Poliakov's common portraits is somewhat different from anthropological portraits. Subjects here are not so strictly fixed in shots, postures are more relaxed, and faces are not so close up. People in the shots sit, stand, or form several lines. Some of the photographs are shot against the background, while there is no background in others. The collection consists mostly of group portraits in which families or citizens of one particular locality are depicted. These

Figure 6. Thsingalinskie Ostiak women. MAE RAS No. 106A-25.

Courtesy of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera).

photographs show clothing, hair styles, and the structure of a small family, including the household items and traditional activities of the studied society. A particular group of portraits can be found where some people are shown full face, and some are side face, three-quarters, or faces turned back.

A rather large number of images of women should be noted. The Ostiaks had and sometimes still practice the so-called avoidance ritual meaning that a woman must cover her face when she meets men who are elders of a clan (Gemuev et al. 2005). Poliakov also wrote about this cultural activity. Interestingly, women in the portrait photos do not have headwear whereas in the group pictures, with smaller human figures, women have scarves draped over their heads.

Figure 7. The Ostiak from the upper reaches of the Sos'va. MAE RAS No. 106A-55.

Courtesy of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera).

Therefore, a question arises of how women allowed him to take photos of them face forward. One may only assume that Poliakov, as a man with a certain authority in the eyes of local residents, could ask the society to change the traditions—or demand it. Or maybe he, not being a part of the social structure of aboriginals, actually did not fall within the scope of prohibition on the basis of which women had to hide their faces in certain situations.

Several photographs stand apart in the collection in which local “princes,” as Poliakov calls them, are depicted. One of them named Artaziev (Poliakov 1877) is mentioned in the researcher’s report. We understand from the text that Poliakov cooperated rather actively with him and managed to get to know a number of family stories.

Figure 8. Artanziev, the prince of the northern Ostiaks. MAE RAS No. 106A-18.

Courtesy of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera).

Both photographs of him (in one he sits, and in the other he is shown full size) remind us of a ceremonial portrait. He is well dressed, and a medal shines on his chest. There is also a photograph of the prince's son with his spouse and a shot showing the whole family of the Artanzievs. These two photographs are taken in the manner similar to all other portrait materials in the collection. The name of the second person, "prince" Taishin, is not given in the report. He is mentioned in the photo description only. Two portraits of him were taken. In one of these photos he also wears holiday clothes, with a medal on his neck. A small table with various items on it is shown in this photo, which looks like a reference to a studio portrait.

Such interest of the society's high-status people is easy to explain. Poliakov as a traveler had to build relationships with local leaders who, in turn, helped him to connect with the rest of the members of the

community. This typical situation is well reflected in numerous pictures from different corners of the world. Local chieftains were objects of photo shooting much more often than other members of the studied society (Geary 1986; Korlekar 2005).

The third type of portrait photography depicts people among household appliances, and often shows some of their daily pursuits. The accent here is on documentation of a person, and surrounding items serve as a supplement that makes it possible to unveil the cultural nuances in a broader way. Such materials are especially important because it was rather hard to catch movement, and that is why static compositions were made. A beholder had to read into them, imagining how a certain item was used and what its meaning in the picture was. Besides, the researcher often did not have enough time to familiarize himself with the locals closely. He could not observe various processes for a long period of time. All photo surveying was superficial, and obviously it led to creation of complex images able to reflect as many traditional cultural nuances in one shot as possible.

Figure 9. The group of the Ostiaks from Kondinskoe. MAE RAS No. 106A-46.

Courtesy of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera).

So-called genre scenes are another group of photographs presented in Poliakov's collection. This genre is characteristic of ethnographic photography since it fixes movement of people in the course of their activities. However, such photographs were still rare and conditional in the 1870s. In order to fix movement, more optically sensitive materials than those applied in the technology and short exposure were needed. Advancements in photo equipment that enabled this process did not come until the second half of the 1880s. However, we have to give the researcher and photographer credit, they tried to capture culture in movement, and in some cases one can see that they were successful. The photographer sometimes tried to shoot several heterogeneous actions simultaneously. Where a photograph shows all subjects with various items frozen and looking into the camera, a description supplements the image, helping to form a dynamic plot. The comment animates the shot, guides the viewer's gaze, and explains what there is to see. Due to the complexity of shooting such plots and taking photographs of genre scenes, there are not many in the collection. One shot showing a dance is particularly distinguishing. It is the only picture that does not look static, and at the same time it is rather clear. Probably, the photographer managed to catch real dynamics on it.

Figure 10. Ostiaks' dance in Troitskie iurts. MAE RAS No. 106A-33.

Courtesy of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera).

Landscape photographs depict natural landscapes and general views of inhabited localities. The majority of such images cannot be considered good. They show many small details and in order to see them significantly larger prints would be necessary. This is because no photographic enlargers were used in the course of printing. Apparently, the prints were made with the use of contact method and had to match the size of the negatives. The majority of landscape photographs have blurred foreground, which evidences the imperfection of the camera glass: it did not ensure even focus throughout the whole shot depth, regardless of the distance of shot object. Besides, light transition in these pictures is rather sharp. Weak light sensitivity of photographic plates resulted in intense contrast; one could not level the light range up, and on a sunny day dark details turned black, and light details disappeared. Portrait pictures with whole-colored background are notable for the best shooting quality. As a rule, they are sharp, clear, and the light range is distributed evenly in them.

Researchers began to use objective shooting, a special type of scientific ethnographic photography rather late. The Poliakov's collection contains only one such image. It depicts the so-called *shaitanchik* (Poliakov 1877). The researcher writes quite a bit about the meaning of this set of cult items and anthropomorphic depiction of god for the Ostiaks. This unique photograph shows that Poliakov was particularly interested in this detail of aboriginal daily routine. However, considering that the description of this *shaitanchik* is vague in the report, he did not fully understand the particularities of this phenomenon. It seems like he wrote about a kind of home sanctuary common for the north Khanty (Gemuev et al. 2005).

The Poliakov collection is a spectacular example of new technologies that were being used for scientific research. Being in the origins of the scientific visual documentation of culture, it shows the special aspects and possibilities of early photo surveying in the field environment. The collection allows us to retrace topics that attracted the researcher, and reflects main scientific trends of the time. It also shows great examples of being in the scientific museum organization and allows us to consider the perception of similar documents among contemporaries of Poliakov. A set of sources he created makes it possible to carry out comparative research by means of juxtaposition of data and representation methods on versatile information carriers.

Figure 11. The shaitan in Thsingalinskie iurts. MAE RAS No. 106A-28.

Courtesy of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera).

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Notes

1. Present-day Peter the Great Anthropology and Ethnography Museum (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences.
2. Old name of Khanty people.

3. Main biographic data is taken from Reshetov (2002).
4. Present-day Kiakhta.
5. M.V. Zagoskin is a writer, journalist, and public person, founder of first private newspapers in Siberia. Prince P.A. Kropotkin is a revolutionist, one of the anarchism ideologists, scientist, geographer, and geologist.
6. All dates are given in accordance with the so-called Old Style, in accordance with the Julian calendar, which was in force in Russia until 1918.
7. From 1867 Shtraukh was a junior scientific assistant at the Zoology Academy; in 1870 he was appointed extraordinary academician of the Academy of Sciences; and in 1879 he was appointed director of the Museum of Zoology at the Academy of Sciences.
8. Sands are industrial fishing places.
9. In 1935 the rural settlement became a part of Khanty-Mansiisk.
10. Present-day Salekhard.
11. Poliakov uses the term “iurts” to describe nonmigratory settlements of local citizens.

List of Acronyms

SPF ARAN Sankt-Peterburgskii filial arkhiva Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk [The St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences]

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