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PANOV'S PHOTOGRAPHS IN CENTRAL ASIAN VISUAL CULTURE: ARTISTIC EXPRESSION THROUGH POSTCARDS

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Abstract: This article examines the role of Ivan N. Panov's photographs in the visual culture of Central Asia, focusing on postcards as a medium of artistic expression. The study analyzes the artistic features of Panov's photographs, including composition, perspective, and the use of light, based on postcards preserved in the library and archival collection of the State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan. The research demonstrates that these postcards functioned not only as documentary records but also as artistic works that contributed to shaping the visual image of Central Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Keywords: Central Asia; visual culture; Ivan N. Panov; photography; postcards; artistic expression.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, photography played a significant role in the formation and development of visual culture in Central Asia. In particular, photographs created during this period began to gain importance not only as a documentary source, but also as a means of artistic expression. One of the most widespread forms of photography in this process was postcards, which visually depicted the historical architecture, ethnographic landscapes, and social life of the region.

In 1922, under the slogan "bringing culture to the masses," the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (Associatsiya khudzhonikov revolutsionnoy Rossii) began a wide-ranging cultural and propaganda activity. In this process, visual materials, in particular postcards, served as an important informational and aesthetic tool. One of the first initiatives of the newly formed organization was the publication of a series of postcards entitled "Life and Life of the Peoples of the USSR." This collection was printed in 5,000 copies and included 18 postcards, which contained reproductions of works of fine art reflecting Soviet reality ("Pioneers in the Village", "Altai Hut", "Murman Fishermen", etc.). Today, this series is considered a rare and collectible resource (1).

The term "postcard" comes from the combination "open letter", that is, a postal item sent open. In the 1930s, the production of postcards was transferred to the conveyor method. Their publication was carried out by the State Art Publishing House in Moscow ("GIZ" until 1930, then - "Izogiz" - "Izobrazitelnoe iskusstvo") (2. 112–130). Some postcards were also printed by the Mezzo-Tinto printing house.

The origin of this name is that in the early 1930s, a system of ideological and organizational patronage was introduced in relation to rural areas, which was carried out within the framework of the policy of "integration between city and countryside". In this process, urban delegations were sent to the villages, who were engaged in attracting the population to a new social way of life, organizing communes, joining state loans, and ideological reorientation (3).

In order to produce propaganda materials, these patronage bodies were given the right to carry out publishing activities, and private printing houses were also involved in this process. Thus, the

engraving enterprise “Mezzo-tinto”, which belonged to the Nepmen, was included in the patronage body (Sokraishefsovet) of the Sokolniki district.

In these years, photojournalists Ivan Panov and Max Penson worked effectively in Central Asia. And despite the provincial isolation, their work reflected the main world trends in the art of photography of that time. Photographers not only created a unique photolithography of Tashkent and other Asian cities, but also preserved for the younger generation rare images of memorial monuments, city streets and buildings. The significant changes in people's lifestyle during this period were also vividly reflected in their photographs (4).

Ivan Nikolaevich Panov, who actively participated in the development of the art of photography in Central Asia, is an important source for studying the visual culture of that time. Ivan Panov worked in Central Asia since 1929. The high level of professionalism of this remarkable photographer can be judged by the several dozen postcards that have survived to this day. Their themes continued the series "Life and Life of the Peoples of the USSR", and also opened the series "Peoples of the USSR" and "Tashkent". Only through the work of Ivan Panov can we see the shady streets of Tashkent, rare scenes of life, individual personalities and numerous bazaars. His postcards do not depict a stage, but the real life of that time, and this is reflected more clearly and comprehensively than many verbal descriptions. A distinctive feature of Ivan Panov is a non-standard perspective, usually there are many people in the frame, and their clothes and household items are also visible. A total of 82 original photographs were created to visually depict the territory of Uzbekistan, including more than 30 views of Tashkent, as well as views of the cities of Bukhara, Fergana and Namangan, the Syrdarya and Khujand rivers, the Aral Sea, and portraits of local residents. These photographs were created before 1966.

The Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia performed a major propaganda function through the publication of postcards. It communicated with the citizens of the Soviet Union not only through posters or works of art, but also organized exhibitions (for example, "Life and Life of the Peoples of the USSR"). The association's postcards presented its exhibits at these exhibitions, and the works of Soviet artists were distributed throughout the country by mail.

Ivan Panov's work is an important source for studying the visual culture of that time. The photographs created by the photographer, especially since they were distributed in the form of postcards, reached a wide audience and served to form certain aesthetic views. These postcards are appreciated not only as works of documentary significance, but also as works of artistic solutions in terms of composition, lighting, and perspective.

Ivan Panov is distinguished not only as a highly professional photographer, but also by the lack of in-depth information about his personal life and image. Although he left a large legacy in photographs, he did not portray himself personally, so his personal image and life can only be assessed through his creative legacy. From this point of view, Sergei Pryakhin, in his article about Ivan Panov, describes the photographer with the phrase “a shoemaker is barefoot himself.” Although Ivan Panov left a rich visual legacy in his work, the lack of a personal ego and self-portraits creates limitations in assessing his life and personality. It should be noted that information about the photographer’s personal life is limited, and his portrait has long been unknown. However, based on archival materials, it was found that a photograph taken in Tashkent Square in 1930 also contains a self-portrait of Panov (6). This situation is considered as an important scientific finding that allows to restore his personal image.



Tashkent Square, 1930, photo fragment. I.N. Panov is in the center

At the same time, despite the rich creative heritage of Ivan Panov, his name and activities are not widely known among modern youth. This situation is explained, on the one hand, by the lack of special scientific research on his work, and on the other hand, by the insufficiently launched work aimed at popularizing the visual heritage. As a result, the historical and artistic values expressed through Ivan Panov's photographs are not fully understood by the general public, especially the younger generation.

The role of I.N. Panov's photographs in the context of Central Asian visual culture The main attention is paid to the artistic images created by him through postcards, methods of visual expression, and their cultural and historical significance. Also, the role of photographs not only as a means of disseminating information, but also as a factor shaping cultural perception is incomparable. The article uses a collection of postcards stored in the library-archive fund of the State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan as a scientific source on the basis of source research.

A number of studies have been conducted on the visual culture and history of photography in Central Asia. In particular, the practice of photography in the 19th and early 20th centuries has been studied mainly as a visual legacy of the colonial period. Researchers evaluate photography as a documentary source, emphasizing its ethnographic and historical value (5. 12–35).

The history of postcards and their role as a means of mass communication is also a separate area of study. In particular, the issues of creating the "image of the East" through postcards published in Europe and the territories of the Russian Empire have been analyzed in many scientific works. However, I.N. The artistic features of Panov's photographs and their place in the visual culture of Central Asia have not been comprehensively researched. Therefore, this article aims to fill the gap in the existing scientific literature, I.N. It is aimed at considering Panov's work not only as a documentary, but also as an artistic phenomenon.

Ivan Panov's photographs cover various aspects of Central Asian life: architectural monuments, urban landscapes, markets, local people's lifestyle and traditions. These photographs were often published in the form of postcards, through which the visual image of the region was widely distributed. One of the important aspects of Ivan Panov's works is their artistic composition. For example, when depicting architectural objects, a centralized composition is used, which focuses the viewer's attention on the main object. At the same time, human figures are often included in the composition to increase scale and vitality.

The play of light and shadow also plays an important role in I.N. Panov's photographs. Through the skillful use of natural light, he gives the image volume and depth. This makes it possible to perceive photographs not as simple documents, but as works of art.

These images, distributed through postcards, not only provided information, but also formed certain visual stereotypes. That is, Central Asia was depicted as an "exotic", "traditional" region, and this image was fixed in the minds of the external viewer.



I.N. Panov. "Quail lovers" ("Lyubiteli perepelov") late 19th or early 20th century.

This photograph is an important source documenting the life of Central Asia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The frame depicts a traditional urban environment - houses with mud walls, architectural structures with verandas, and men resting on the side of the street. Several figures are located in the composition in different positions: one is lying on his side, another is sitting, and another is in a state of contemplation. These positions give the image vitality and naturalness.

The diagonal direction prevails in the compositional construction of the photograph: the elongated shape of the veranda and the arrangement of human figures lead the viewer's gaze into depth. This gives the image a sense of dynamics and spatiality. Through the play of light and shadow, the photographer reveals the volume of forms, especially the texture of the wall and the layers of clothing are clearly visible.

I.N. Although such photographs created by photographers like Panov initially had a documentary value, as a result of their distribution in the form of postcards, they began to acquire aesthetic and artistic value. This image not only records everyday life, but also conveys the social environment of that time, people's lifestyle and cultural traditions in artistic language. Thus, the photograph can be considered as a vivid example of the process of transition from document to art: it is at the same time a historical source and an object of visual aesthetics.



I.N. Panov. Central Asian University, 1920–1925, Uzbekistan, Tashkent.

Panov depicts architecture: he places buildings in the center, horizontal and vertical lines are used to show a clear scale, people are included. The rhythm and repetition of the geometric composition (arches, columns) reveal the details of the light facade.

These photographs do not just document architecture, but also rediscover it as an aesthetic object.

In the postcards created by I. Panov, the image is not limited to a simple reflection of reality. In them, the visual material is reworked and enriched with aesthetic and ideological meaning. In this regard, they can be assessed as examples of early photographic art.

The results of the study show that I.N. Panov's photographs occupy an important place in the history of Central Asian visual culture. His works performed two functions: on the one hand, they served as a documentary source, and on the other hand, they were presented as visual works of high artistic value. Another important aspect of I.N. Panov's works, which were distributed through postcards, is their artistic composition. For example, when depicting architectural objects, a centralized composition is used, which focuses the viewer's attention on the main object. At the same time, human figures are often included in the composition to increase scale and vitality.

The play of light and shadow also plays an important role in I.N. Panov's photographs. Through the skillful use of natural light, he gives the image volume and depth. This makes it possible to perceive photographs not as simple documents, but as works of art. These images, distributed through postcards, not only provided information, but also formed certain visual stereotypes. That is, Central Asia was depicted as an "exotic", "traditional" region, and this image was fixed in the minds of the external viewer. тPanov's photographs reached a wide audience and played an important role in shaping perceptions of the region. In this regard, it is important to study them not only from the point of view of the history of photography, but also from the point of view of cultural studies. One of the important aspects of I.N. Panov's works is their artistic composition. For example, when depicting architectural objects, a centralized composition is used, which focuses the viewer's attention on the main object. At the same time, human figures are often included in the composition to increase scale and vitality. The play of light and shadow also plays an important role in I.N. Panov's photographs. Through the skillful use of natural light, he gives the image volume and depth. This makes it possible to perceive photographs not as simple documents, but as works of art.

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this image is fixed in the mind of the external viewer. I.N. Panov's photographs are distinguished by their compositional solutions, mastery of working with light, and centralization of the human image. The scenes depicted on his postcards — portraits, market life, and architectural objects — appear not only as documentary sources, but also as aesthetically processed visual images. This allows us to evaluate them as examples of early photography elevated to the level of art.

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