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Research paper

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ANALYSIS OF SOME PHOTO SOURCES, MISTAKENLY ATTRIBUTED TO NOGAIS

Abstract. With the rapid spread of information technologies today, many archival materials, such as digitized old photographs and videos of representatives of the peoples of the world, in general, and the Caucasus, in particular, have become available to general public. The mentioned materials have a tremendous impact on the image and perception of the material culture of these peoples. Despite the obvious advantages of ample opportunities for the spread of scientific data, these archival and historical materials, unfortunately, are not always used correctly. For instance, on the Internet and in print media, the erroneous use of photographs depicting representatives and elements of the material culture of one people as figures and attributes of other peoples is quite common. Our study analyses four archival photographs from various sources that have appeared in scientific and popular science literature, as well as in encyclopedias, articles, websites of major state and independent media, in materials telling about the Nogai people. We aim to prevent the erroneous use of photographs that have no bearing to Nogais. To achieve this, the author attempts to verify the legitimacy of attributing the studied photographic materials to the Nogais by attracting a broad evidence base in the form of archival data, museum exhibits, works of art historians and historians, as well as a comparative analysis of available material. In the course of the study, the author has come to a sufficiently substantiated conclusion that the photographs presented in the study depict not representatives of the Nogai people, but representatives of the Balkars, Kalmyks, Cossacks and Kazakhs. The researcher of the present work urges the authors of publications about the Nogais to use photographic materials, the relevancy of which is undoubtful.

Keywords: Nogais; photography; photo source; Balkars; Kalmyks; Kazakhs; source studies; analysis; art criticism.

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ЭТНОГРАФИЯ

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Исследовательская статья

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АНАЛИЗ НЕКОТОРЫХ ФОТОИСТОЧНИКОВ, ОШИБОЧНО ОТНОСИМЫХ К НОГАЙЦАМ

Аннотация: В настоящее время, вместе с бурным распространением информационных технологий, широкому кругу лиц стали доступны и многие архивные документы, такие как оцифрованные старинные фотографии и видео представителей народов мира, в общем, и Кавказа, в частности. Упомянутые материалы оказывают колоссальное влияние на образы и представления о материальной культуре этих народов. Несмотря на очевидные преимущества широких возможностей для распространения научных данных, к сожалению, не всегда эти архивные и исторические материалы используются корректно. Так, в сети Интернет и печатных изданиях достаточно распространено ошибочное использование фотографий, на которых изображены представители и элементы материальной культуры одного народа в качестве лиц и атрибутов других народов. Данное исследование представляет собой анализ четырех исторических архивных фотоснимков из разных источников, попавших в научную и научно-популярную литературу, а также в энциклопедии, статьи, сайты крупных государственных и независимых СМИ, в материалы, повествующие о ногайском народе. Целью представленного исследования является предотвращение ошибочного использования в материалах о ногайцах фотографий, не относящихся к ним. Для этого автор предпринимает попытку проверить правомерность отнесения исследуемых фотоматериалов к ногайцам посредством привлечения широкой доказательной базы в виде архивных данных, музейных экспонатов, трудов искусствоведов и историков, а также сравнительного анализа доступного материала. В ходе исследования автору удалось прийти к достаточно аргументированному выводу, что на представленных в исследовании фотографиях изображены не представители ногайского народа, а представители балкарцев, калмыков, казаков и казахов. В заключении своей работы исследователь призывает авторов материалов о ногайцах использовать фотоматериалы, в правомерности отнесения которых к этому народу нет сомнений.

Ключевые слова: ногайцы; фотография; фотоисточник; балкарцы; калмыки; казахи; источниковедение; анализ; искусствоведение.

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The history and material culture of the Nogai people is an important part of the heritage of Russia and the entire Turkic world. The need to study them with the involvement of the widest range of sources is indisputable. In the age of digital technologies, visual sources in the form of archival photographs and video materials have become even more relevant.

The role of photography as a valuable ethnographic source is covered in the publication of Z.Z. Kuzeyeva, in which she emphasizes that photography, in fact, has become a new phenomenon in scientific research. “In Russia, interest in the study of photography as an independent source has arisen in recent decades, in connection with the development of visual anthropology in Russian science” [1, p. 182].

Doctor of Historical Sciences Ozlem Baykar from Ankara University (Turkey) gave an excellent definition of photography as a historical source: “An event about which you need to write a lot of paragraphs can be conveyed through just a single photo... The conclusions made as a result of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the photo reveal a story. Reading photographs, interpreting information about people, clothes, behavior, nature, city, place, culture in historical science is a way to understand and tell the truth” [2, p. 97].

Among the works involving historical photography as a source, we can name publications of Shevelchinskaya S.L., Kanokova F.Yu., Magomedov A.J., Basirova K.K.

However, photography is not always a reliable and truthful source. Cases of erroneous attribution of photographs to one or another people are not uncommon, which is mentioned by Z.Z. Kuzeeva: “Despite the positive aspects of the use of photo sources in visual information, there are photographs that can distort the overall nature of the study. For example, there may be inaccuracies in the description of some photos that are fixed in documents” [1, p. 184].

E.M. Glavatskaya believes that this occurs in part because photography has not been given serious attention in contrast to written sources: “Meanwhile, even classical historians occasionally feel an urge to visualize verbal reconstructions of historical processes and phenomena. And then, in their desire to match a picture to a written text, a historian who respects a written source, consciously or not, easily does to a visual document something that he would never allow himself to do to a written one. Attempts at vulgar illustration of history inevitably lead to the fact that visual documents are taken out of the context of time, space and culture, are not subjected to critical analysis, have no references to the place of their storage, are inaccurately quoted, allowing chronological and geographical absurdities” [3, p. 217–218].

Sometimes such inaccuracies may lead to incorrect conclusions regarding the material culture of the people, which entails many consequences, for example, incorrect reconstruction of the national costume, distortions in the study of the anthropological appearance of the people, etc.

This work deals with exactly such cases in the form of an analysis of four photographs as the examples of inaccuracies in their attribution. The author attempts to verify the validity of attributing the studied photographs to the Nogais by using an extensive evidence base in the form of archival data, museum exhibits, works of art historians and historians, as well as a comparative analysis of available material.

The first photograph under review (Fig. 1) is stored in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography named after Peter the Great (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, captioned “Orden F. A man and three women in national costumes. Nogais. Dagestan (Dagestanskaya oblast). 1890s (?)” [4]. The original of this image is taken from



Fig. 1. Photo by F. Orden with the caption
 “A man and three women in national costumes. Nogais. Dagestan (Dagestan region), 1890s (?)” // Exhibits, Online
 Collections, Kunstkamera. Museum number: MAE No. 1403-74

Рис. 1. Фотография Ф. Ордена «Мужчина и три женщины в национальных костюмах. Ногайцы. Дагестан
 (Дагестанская обл.). 1890-е (?)» // Экспонаты коллекции онлайн, Кунсткамера.
 Музейный номер: МАЭ № 1403-74

the second volume of the collection of photographs by F. Orde “The Caucasus and Central Asia”, in which it was published under No. 1852 [5, p. 152]. It was widely distributed on the Internet and in scientific materials with the caption “Nogais”, and was even used in the monograph of R.H. Kereyrov “Nogais. Peculiarities of ethnic history and everyday culture” [6, p. 212].

However, on Karachay-Balkar web resources and in the works of Balkar authors, the photo is captioned differently. In the monograph of the Balkarian researcher H.L. Osmanov “Balkaria through the Ages” we can see the same picture, but captioned “Prince Urusbiev Ismail Myrzakulovich with his mother and sisters. Photo of the second half of the 19th century” [7, p. 32].

The author attempted to verify the authenticity of one or another description. Since in the second case the description carried more specifics, we turned to the photographs of the Balkar princely family of the Urusbievs for the specified period and found the same people depicted on them as in the photograph studied by the author. Thus, in the collections of the Russian Ethnographic Museum, there is a photo captioned “Photoprint: Portrait of Princess Urusbieva” [8], in which one can recognize an elderly woman from the picture considered by the author, wearing the same clothes and in the same photo studio. In the German electronic online library Zeno.org, famous for reliability of its materials, a photo of a girl is also published with the caption “Russian photographer: a princess from the Urusbiev family in the Tersk Valley” [9], in which one of the girls from the photo source under study is easily recognizable. Moreover, like the elderly woman, this girl is in the same photo studio and in the same costume as in the group family picture.

Based on this evidence, we can conclude that all these photos might have been taken on the same day, in the same studio and depict the same people. All of the above makes it possible to confidently state that the attribution of the people depicted in the picture in question with the Nogais is erroneous. Therefore, the caption “Nogais”, written on the negative of the photo by N. Orde, is incorrect, and the caption to the photo made in the monograph by H.L. Osmanov, on the contrary, is truthful.

The second photo considered in this study (Fig. 2) shows a yurt with two men standing on two sides, and an elderly woman sitting at the threshold of the yurt with two children at her feet. This picture was also widely distributed online with the caption “Nogais” and was even placed on the page about Nogais in the Atlas of the Peoples of Russia on the website of the Federal Agency for Nationalities of the Russian Federation [10].

We should note that, unlike the first case, this image was not originally captioned as related to the Nogais, and began to be associated with them for unknown for us reasons. The author found that the photo was taken in 1894 by the Nizhny Novgorod photographer Maxim Petrovich Dmitriev near the town of Zhiguli in the modern Samara region.

The photograph is captioned differently in different sources. For example, in the archive of audiovisual information of the Nizhny Novgorod region, this photo is captioned as “A general view of the Kyrgyz khibitka” [11], where Kyrgyz refers to Kirghyz-kaysaks (modern Kazakhs). However, after turning to Vol. 7 of the magazine “Picturesque Russia” for 1899, we see another caption: “The exterior of the Kalmyk khibitka” [12, p. 157]. This caption seems closer to the truth. If we pay attention to the elements of clothing of the people in the photo, it is hard to ignore that these are typical features of the Kalmyk, not Kazakh or Nogai, costume. These features include an abundance of pleats on the structural parts of the upper doublet, narrow sleeves for men [13, p. 63], covers for braids made of



Fig. 2. Photo captioned “Nogais”. Atlas of the peoples of Russia.
The official Internet resource of the Federal Agency for Nationalities

Рис. 2. Фотография с подписью «Ногайцы» // Атлас народов России.
Официальный интернет-ресурс Федерального агентства по делам национальностей

black fabric, lowered to the chest for a woman [13, p. 70]. The above allows to conclude with confidence that the presented photo shows not Nogais, but Kalmyks¹.

The third image considered in this study (Fig. 3) shows a man sitting in a felt cap, with orders on his chest and a saber in his hands, as well as a man of Slavic appearance standing at his right hand, in a caftan and with a revolver in his belt. This photo is often captured as “Police officer and Nogai Murza” or simply as “Nogais”. Such an attribution of this photo is likely due to the fact that in the above-mentioned collection of photographs of F. Orde “The Caucasus and Central Asia” in the collage No. 1868, the same man in the cap is captioned as “Nogai man” [5, p. 159]. The photo in question, like the previous ones, often appears on the pages of books and web resources dedicated to the Nogai people. For example, this photo appeared in the heading of the article about Nogais in the section “Peoples” on the website of the Guild of Interethnic Journalism “National Accent” [14].

When trying to identify the nationality of the persons depicted in the photograph, as well as in the previous case, we faced contradictory data. On the website of the Williams College it says that the owner of the photo is Kirill Fitzlyon (Kirill Lvovich Zinoviev), and

1. The author would like to express his gratitude to Larisa Fedorovna Popova, Head of the Department of Ethnography of the Caucasus, Central Asia and Kazakhstan of the Russian Ethnographic Museum, for providing valuable information on the subject of research.



Fig. 3. Photo with the caption "Nogais". Peoples of Russia.
Media project of the Guild of Interethnic Journalism "National Accent"

Рис. 3. Фотография с подписью «Ногайцы» // Народы России.
Медиапроект Гильдии межэтнической журналистики «Национальный акцент»

the photo itself was published in 1983 in his book “Before the Revolution” with the caption “Kalmuck Chieftan and Bodyguard” [15].

However, one can recognize Kazakh elements in the attributes of the sitting man’s costume. Perhaps the most distinguishable of them is the traditional felt hat with brim typical for the Kazakh men’s costume – a cap (Turk. kalpak – high cap) [16, p. 209–212].

The question of the final attribution of the photograph was resolved when the ROS-PHOTO Museum together with Exhibition Center and the Russian Ethnographic Museum held an exhibition “Dmitry Ermakov’s Photography”. It exhibited the works of this famous Tiflis photographer, which he took in the late 19th – early 20th century. Among the exhibited works was a photograph examined by the author with the following caption: “A Kazakh foreman in the Russian service with a Cossack. Transcaspien oblast. 1870s-1890s. Russian Ethnographic Museum” [17]. This fact allows us to draw an unambiguous conclusion that the presented image depicts not a Nogai or a Kalmyk, but a Kazakh foreman, which fully corresponds to the costume set of this person.

The fourth and last photo (Fig. 4) under review is the most common and controversial image attributed to the Nogais in various resources. This is a photograph showing two girls, one of whom is wearing a tall headdress with a zoomorphic ornament. The original photograph is kept in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography named after Peter the Great (Kunstkamera) [18]. The description of the exhibit states: “Nikitin D.A. Two Nogai girls. Nogais, the second half of the 19th century”. The authorship of the picture is attributed to D.A. Nikitin, the geographical localization of the place of origin is indicated as the Caucasus and Ciscaucasia. On the photo itself, it is handwritten “Nogai girls. Nogaierinnen”. Part of this photograph, namely the image of the girl with a high headdress, is used in the monograph of S.Sh. Gadzhieva “The material culture of the Nogais in the 19th – 20th centuries” [19, p. 146]. Moreover, this picture is placed in the headline of the article “Nogais” on the “Great Russian Encyclopedia” website [20].

The authenticity of the attribution of this photo with Nogais have raised doubts in the scientific community. Thus, Z.Z. Kuzeeva, talking about the nationality of the girls in the photo, writes: “The girls in traditional costumes in the photo are unlikely to be Nogais, as indicated in the caption to the photo, but Kazakhs. This is evidenced by the girl’s robe-like dress made of Bukhara adras fabric, which was widespread among the peoples of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, and her hairstyle, consisting of small braids, is not typical for Nogai girls. In addition, the bride’s headdress in the photo is almost identical to the Kazakh bride’s headdress” [21, p. 144].

Studying archival photographs of various peoples of the Caucasus, the Volga region and Central Asia, we cannot but agree with the conclusions of Z.Z. Kuzeeva. In this regard, we should mention a series of photographs of Kazakh women taken by N.V. Nekhoroshev in the Syr-Darya oblast in about the same time period as the picture considered by the author. These photographs were published in the “Turkestan Album” in 1872. N.V. Nekhoroshev’s photos depict Kazakh girls in shirts and robes made of the aforementioned adras fabric, with hairstyles in the form of multiple braids, as well as an almost identical wedding outfit with a headdress “saukele” [22]. We can see exactly the same in a photograph from the Kunstkamera collection with the caption “Ermolin N.A. Girls in traditional costumes: bride’s one (left), ordinary one (right). Kyrgyz. Early 20th century” [23]. The photo itself is captioned “Cossacks”, that is, it depicts Kazakh girls. In addition to the costumes of the girls in the picture under consideration, the typical Kazakh jewelry is noteworthy.



Fig. 4. Photo by D.A. Nikitin, captioned "Two Nogai girls. Nogais, second half of the 19th century". Exhibits, Online Collections. Kunstkamera. Museum number: MAE No. 121-51.

Рис. 4. Фотография Никитина Д.А. с подписью «Две молодые ногайки. Ногайцы, вторая половина XIX в» // Экспонаты коллекции онлайн. Кунсткамера. Музейный номер: МАЭ № 121-51

On the bride's chest there is a Kazakh traditional adornment "alka", the analogue of which is stored in the Kunstkamera art depository. An exhibit with the description "Women's pectoral. Kazakhs. Kazakhstan (?), late 19th – early 20th centuries" and the annotation "Pectoral "alka" (Kazakh). Characteristic of the western and southwestern Kazakh tradition" from the collection "Special depository" [24] is an almost complete copy of the adornment that we see in the picture.

While studying the exhibits and archival photographs, the author has discovered other photos of presumably a girl standing on the right side of the studied picture. The mentioned photograph is kept in the Kunstkamera repository, belongs to the collection of A.L. Melkov and is captioned as follows: "Girls in traditional costumes. Kazakhs. Uzbekistan, Navoi oblast, Tamdyn region, village of Tamdybulak (Karakalpak ASSR). 1929" [25]. The author believes that this photo proves that the girls depicted in the photo under study are Kazakhs, since not only the material attributes of the costume and hairstyle are similar, but also, presumably, the personality of one of the girls.

We should also pay attention to the anthropological features of the girls depicted in the photo. The flatness of their faces, the weak protrusion and shape of the nose, pronounced Mongoloid features in the absence of a combination of characteristic Europoid admixtures for Nogais confirm that the depicted girls are Kazakhs [26, p. 64–65].

In addition to the ethnicity of the girls in the picture in question, the authorship of this photo is also questionable. Another photograph of the same two girls, obviously taken in the same studio by the same photographer, is in the mentioned second volume of the collection of photographs by F. Orde "The Caucasus and Central Asia" under No. 1880. It shows already familiar girls (Fig. 5). However, the capture made by the photographer F. Orde here is different: "Stavropol Kalmyk girls" [5, p. 172].

The fact that the caption of this author contradicts the description made by D.A. Nikitin, further confirms doubts about the legitimacy of attributing the photo to the Nogais. Also, the fact that even within the framework of this work, we have encountered numerous erroneous attributions of photographs by F. Orde, demonstrates the poor reliability of the captions he made. However, this does not negate the very fact of the probability of F. Orde's authorship regarding this photograph.

From the monograph of V.A. Prishchepova "Illustrative collections on the peoples of Central Asia of the second half of the 19th – early 20th century in the collections of the Kunstkamera", the reader has the opportunity to learn a lot about the life of F. Orde, being one of the most famous photographers of his time. But in this case we focus on the phenomenon of signing photographs directly on negatives. Valeria Alexandrovna writes: "The author's attribution is found on the glass negatives of the Kunstkamera collections of the late 19th – early 20th centuries: "F. OrdeN", "de-Lazari" or "property of Barshchevsky". Such attribution was necessary in those years. The master protected the exclusive right of ownership from competition from other photographers by signing his work, just like the author of any other art piece. As it turned out, this helped in working with the museum's photo collections. Thanks to it, it was possible to determine that among the pictures of later years that came to the museum from other collectors, there are images made by N. Orde" [27, p. 63–64]. Next, she lists several facts of confirming the authorship of F. Orde's photographs in other people's collections. In the same monograph, she concludes: "In the process of studying N. Orde's four-volume album from the collections of the RNB (meaning the aforementioned album "The Caucasus and Central Asia – *author's note*) it

turned out that a number of old photographs received by the Kunstkamera from various collectors actually have a common author – N. Orde” [27, p. 61–62].

Based on all of the above, we consider it possible to conclude that in relation to this picture, the authorship of D.A. Nikitin is not confirmed, and also confidently conclude that it depicts not the Nogai, but Kazakh girls.



Fig. 5. Photo by F. Orde, captioned “Stavropol Kalmyk girls”.
The Caucasus and Central Asia: [vol. 1-4] [photo album]. Vol. 2. P. 38.

Рис. 5. Фотография Ф. Орде с подписью «Ставропольские калмычки» //
Кавказ и Средняя Азия : [т. 1-4] [альбом фотографий]. Т. 2. С. 38

Conclusion

The presented analysis of photographs demonstrates that the problem of establishing the authenticity of annotations and captions to photographs related to Nogais has not yet been considered widely enough. A number of questions regarding the examined images, as well as those photo sources that have not been mentioned here, desperately need further research. However, the sources used in this article and their analysis allow us to draw an unambiguous conclusion that these four images are attributed to the Nogais by mistake.

In contrast, there are many works, the authenticity of the photos attributing to the Nogais in which is undoubtful. Among these, we can name expedition photographs by V.I. Trofimov, E.M. Shilling, photographs by D.I. Ermakov, collections of F.I. Kapelgorodsky et al.

In conclusion, the author urges to stop using the photographs considered in this article as sources and visual examples in the study of the material culture of the Nogais, to place them in encyclopedic articles, popular science and especially scientific works about the Nogais.

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