

2. Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin (1860–1923)

In her memoirs about life in colonial-era Turkestan, Sof'ia Nilovna Mikhailova, née Lykoshina, a daughter of Nil Lykoshin, left the following notable reminiscence: “[m]y father was engaged in writing all the time, I can’t imagine him other than sitting at the desk.”²⁶ Indeed, one cannot but wonder at the quantity and thematic range of writings that Lykoshin produced over a career primarily devoted to administrative duties. In 1957, bibliographers were able to identify at least 766 publications composed by Lykoshin in the period following his arrival in Russian Turkestan in 1880.²⁷ No less striking perhaps is the variety of genre in these works. As Alexander Morrison has noted, Lykoshin’s textual legacy represents “a mixture of conventional Orientalist scholarship, semi ethnographic works, writings on land-settlement, the functioning of ‘native’ administration ..., and the progress of ‘civilization’ amongst natives”.²⁸ Lykoshin himself in his letter to Governor-General of Turkestan Fedor Martson in 1915 described his passion for writing thus:

Over the course of the quarter-century period of my administrative service in Turkestan, I have gone to great lengths in studying the mode of life of our Central Asian subjects, getting acquainted with their languages, and collecting a mass of data on the ethnography of the [people of] Turkestan Region.

²⁶ The manuscript of Sof'ia Lykoshina's memoirs has been found by my colleague Dr. Oksana Pugovkina among the materials of the private collection of M.E. Masson, curated at the National Archive of Uzbekistan. It gives me pleasure to extend my gratitude to Dr. Pugovkina for sharing this material with me. For more on S. Lykoshina and her memoirs, see O.G. Pugovkina, “Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin: ot Samarkandskogo Gubernatora do Sovetskogo Professora” *Vostok (Oriens)* 6 (2018): 124–141.

²⁷ O.V. Maslova, A.I. Kormilitsyn, and Z.V. Schmidt, “Ukazatel’ publikatsii N.S. Lykoshina s 1980 po 1922 g.”, in *Trudy SAGU im. V.I. Lenina, Arkheologiya Srednei Azii IV* (Tashkent: SAGU, 1957), pp. 197–230.

²⁸ Alexander Morrison, ““Applied Orientalism” in British India and Tsarist Turkestan” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51/3 (July, 2009): 635–636.

While observing their life I have kept due records and published them periodically.²⁹

The general dynamics of Lykoshin's biography have been discussed in some detail in currently existing scholarship.³⁰ It is by drawing on this scholarship, then, that we here offer a broad outline of Lykoshin's career and scholarly path.

Lykoshin's walk of life was a remarkable one. He succeeded in securing promotion to a series of high offices, while simultaneously building up an academic reputation that subsequently earned him recognition as "one of the most important figures of pre-revolutionary Turkestan".³¹ This is all the more striking given that his background was modest, and scarcely promising of future success. The son of an alcoholic hussar officer³² from the backwoods of Pskov Guberniya, he had a difficult childhood. Following his father's death, it was thanks to a fortuitous turn of events that Lykoshin's mother was given a job as a housekeeper at the estate of Count Vorontsov and was thus able to keep afloat the family of three juvenile children.³³ Later on, thanks to the protection of his maternal uncle Mikhail Ivanovich Semenovskii, the publisher of the prestigious historical journal *Russkaia starina*, the young Lykoshin was enrolled at the Second Military Gymnasium in St. Petersburg.³⁴ This was a reputable military institution, but studying there did not necessarily guarantee successful employment thereafter. According to his daughter's testament, a lack of both funds and patronage

²⁹ O'zMA, f. I-1, op. 28, d. 1473, l. 42.

³⁰ For the most notable instances, see B.V. Lunin, *Sredniaia Aziia v dorevoliutsionnom i sovetskom vostokovedenii* (Tashkent: Nauka, 1965), pp. 206–216; Morrison, "Sufism, Panislamism and Information Panic", pp. 255–304; Pugovkina, "Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin", pp. 124–141.

³¹ Morrison, "Sufism, Panislamism and Information Panic", p. 264.

³² S.N. Mikhailova, *Vospominanie o N.S. Lykoshine*; O'zMA, f. 2773, op.1, d. 1172, l. 33.

³³ Pugovkina, "Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin", pp. 125–126 (see especially fn. 1 on p. 126).

³⁴ Pugovkina, "Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin", p. 126.

meant that upon completing his studies at the Military Gymnasium, Lykoshin had little hope of securing advantageous promotion. With little prospect of preferment in Moscow or Saint Petersburg, Lykoshin thus opted to take up service in Turkestan, a remote Asiatic colony of the Russian Empire.³⁵

In 1880, having been assigned to the 2nd Turkestan Artillery Brigade, the 20-year-old artillery officer arrived at his new place of service. It was there that over the subsequent forty years of service he was able – thanks in large part to his own perseverance, diligence and dedication – to build a stellar career, rising from junior officer (*podporuchik*) through major-general; from the district *pristav* (police-chief) of the small town of Ura-Tube (1889) to Military Governor of the larger Samarkand Province (1914–1917).³⁶ But this was of course only part of the story. Despite having received no formal training in Oriental studies,³⁷ Lykoshin managed to achieve broad recognition among the most prominent scholars of the age, thanks to his publication of numerous academic texts on the history of the region, as well as translations from Persian and Chaghatay of

³⁵ Mikhailova, *Vospominanie o N.S. Lykoshine*, l. 34.

³⁶ Lunin, *Sredniaia Aziia v dorevoliutsionnom i sovetskom vostokovedenii*, p. 207; Pugovkina, “Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin”, p. 122.

³⁷ The lack of a specific training in oriental studies was attributed to Lykoshin, for instance, by Nikolay Veselovskii. In his review of Lykoshin’s translation of *The Autobiography of Tamerlane*, Veselovskii wrote: “Well, there is [a sufficient] knowledge of local languages and local circumstances, there is diligence, [...] yet, there is a lack of a special [university] training that could give the necessary direction to local scholarly works, and that could teach how to [conduct that] work,” cited from Lunin, *Sredniaia Aziia v dorevoliutsionnom i sovetskom vostokovedenii*, p. 209. According to Pugovkina, Lykoshin’s scholarly endeavors did receive much support from prominent scholars, such as Nikolai Ostroumov and Vasilii Bartol’d. It was these individuals, Pugovkina further argues, who seems to have played a distinct role in informing scholarly interests of Lykoshin, see Pugovkina, “Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin”, pp. 130–131.

notable historical works such as the anonymously authored *Divan-i Mashrab*³⁸ and Narshakhi's *Tarikh-i Bukhara*.³⁹

Lykoshin's evident linguistic expertise seems to have played a major part in both his career trajectory and his scholarly endeavors. Nearly all his biographers and most of the contemporaries have been univocal in noting his excellent command of the local languages – first and foremost, Uzbek (Chaghatay) and Tajik (Persian).⁴⁰ This was particularly impressive given that it was not until his arrival in Turkestan that he could start learning local languages. As his daughter later recalled, Lykonish's decision to take up the study of local languages came about in the late 1880s and was conditioned by his decision to leave military service⁴¹ and try his hands at the colonial administration, or, as it was called at the time, at “the system of administrative-military governing”.⁴² “The talks began in the family about my father's possible [transfer] from the artillery to administration”, – Sof'ia would write in her memoirs, – “[and] on occasion in the evenings a mullah would come to our place to teach my father

³⁸ N.S. Lykoshin, ed., *Divana-i-Mashrab. Zhizneopisaniia populiarnishego predstavitelia mistitsizma v Turkestanskom krae. S tiurkskogo perevel i snabdil primechaniiami N.S. Lykoshin* (Samarkand: Izdatel'stvo Samarkandskogo statisticheskogo komiteta, 1916).

³⁹ N.S. Lykoshin, *Istoriia Bukhary. Perevod s tiurkskogo po rukopisi Mukhammada Sadyka Kashgarskogo* (Tashkent: s.n., 1984). Lunin referred to the translation of Narshakhi's work as “the crowning achievement” of Lykoshin's translation endeavors, see: Lunin, *Sredniaia Aziia v dorevoliutsionnom i sovetskom vostokovedenii*, pp. 213–216.

⁴⁰ Lunin, *Sredniaia Aziia v dorevoliutsionnom i sovetskom vostokovedenii*, p. 207; Morrison, ““Applied Orientalism” in British India and Tsarist Turkestan”, p. 635; Pugovkina, “Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin”, pp. 127–128; Lykoshin's daughter stated that her father spoke “Uzbek and Tajik on the same level as he did Russian”: see Mikhailova, *Vospominanie o N.S. Lykoshine*, l. 34.

⁴¹ Lykoshin's military service *stricto sensu* lasted from 1880 through 1889; in 1883 he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant (*poruchik*). His next promotion took place in 1888, when “owing to distinguished military service” he attained the rank of staff-captain: see O'zMA, f. I-1, op. 33, d. 308.

⁴² O'zMA, f. I-1, op. 36, d. 308, ll. 187–199, cited from: Pugovkina, “Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin”, p. 127.

Oriental languages”.⁴³ Elsewhere she provides further details of the learning process:

In the evenings, an Uzbek [mullah] used to come [to our place], with whom he [=my father] studied. [...] Finally, the languages were learned, and he was always able to talk to whoever [among the natives] sought his help, without [the help of] an interpreter. Once I witnessed [my father's] dispute with learned Uzbeks about a certain subtlety in the language and my father managed to prove that he was right in the correctness of his conclusions ...⁴⁴

An excellent command of local languages, coupled with his skills as an orientalist, seems to have been an effective asset in Lykoshin's administrative toolbox, providing him with valuable insight into the specifics of local life and enabling him to navigate through the complexities of the various conflicts and disputes which he had to deal with in the course of his work. A number of recent studies have demonstrated how he drew upon these skills while administering Tashkent and Chimkent district.⁴⁵ The same virtues seem to have been helpful also over the course of his activity at the office of Commandant of the Amu-Darya Department, as we see in the text presented here. For instance, one can observe him evidently at ease while talking to the Khivan prince Timūr-Ghāzī Tūra, or while checking the accuracy of the Chaghatay/Uzbek translation of the Russian administration's letters by the Khivan scribes, or while giving advice to the Khanate's chancellery translators on how to convey properly certain formulaic expressions contained in Russian-language correspondence.⁴⁶ A proficiency in local languages also allowed him to engage in private conversations with the Khivan

⁴³ O'zMA, f. 2499, op. 1, d. 31, ll. 395–396.

⁴⁴ Mikhailova, *Vospominanie o N.S. Lykoshine*; O'zMA, f. 2773, op.1, d. 1172, l. 35.

⁴⁵ See, for instance: Morrison, ““Applied Orientalism” in British India and Tsarist Turkestan”, pp. 634–636; idem., “Sufism, Panislamism and Information Panic”, pp. 255–304.

⁴⁶ See infra, *Записка*, pp. 141, 150–151.

courtiers, and thereby to touch upon various sensitive matters which it would not have been possible to raise in the presence of translators or other third parties.⁴⁷

Lykoshin's career path in Turkestan resembles a kaleidoscope of swiftly changing offices and localities, which saw him shuttling from one corner of Turkestan to another. Having started his "administrative" career in 1889 in the position of the Ura-Tube district *pristav*, already the following year he was transferred to Tashkent to take up the position of assistant to the city's commandant. In 1906 one may find Lykoshin in the office of district commandant of Khujand; the next year, meanwhile, he was in Tashkent acting in the capacity of a member of the Commission for reception of the Grand Duke's estate in the Hungry Steppe, and then in 1909 we find him back in Khujand, serving as honorary guardian of the district's schools.

In March 1913 he was promoted to the office of Commandant of the Amu-Darya Department (ADO). The promotion seems to have been in large part at the personal behest of the Turkestan Governor General Samsonov.⁴⁸ We do not know precisely whether Samsonov had known Lykoshin from earlier experience, or whether he was simply looking for someone with the necessary expertise and skill to fulfill his delicate mission in the Khivan Khanate. As it happened, Lykoshin's career in ADO did not last long, and on 22 April 1914 he got a new promotion, this time to the post of Military Governor of the Samarkand province. As Oksana Pugovkina has recounted in

⁴⁷ See for instance the details of his private conversation with Ḥusayn Muḥammad Bāy Divānbīgī in December 1912 in: N.S. Lykoshin, *Raport G. Turkestanskomu General-gubernatoru. 04.01.1913, no. 4*; O'zMA, f. 1-2, op. 1, d. 305, ll. 3-9.

⁴⁸ General V.P. Kolosovskii, Lykoshin's successor in the office of the ADO Commandant, would recall in 1914 that he alongside Lykoshin had been nominated for the position of ADO Commandant. According to his opinion, "as the ranking officer and therefore more fitted for assuming [such] offices, which [require] independent actions", he had initially been preferred over Lykoshin. Yet, with a noticeable sense of regret Kolosovskii further admitted that "for reasons beyond my control" it was Lykoshin who eventually assumed that office: see V.P. Kolosovskii, *Raport Diplomaticheskomu chinovniku S.V. Chirkinu, 12.12.1914, no. 242*; O'zMA, f. 1-2, op. 1, d. 35, l. 64.

her study, Lykoshin had been initially considered as an underdog in the running for the governor's office, with a certain Nechaev, who enjoyed the backing from some individuals in the imperial metropole, the initial favorite. As with Lykoshin's appointment to the ADO, it was the same Samsonov who made the ultimate decision, once again in favor of Lykoshin. As Pugovkina further notes, Samsonov was motivated here by the fact that Lykoshin was better qualified for that position owing to his "service and moral virtues", rather than "anyone from outside" such as Nechaev.⁴⁹

The seemingly successful career of our protagonist thereafter stumbled following the large-scale rebellion that unfolded in 1916 across Central Asia. Although, as Morrison has shown, Lykoshin in fact handled events with some skill, and succeeded in defusing tensions in Samarkand and Jizzakh District,⁵⁰ the well-known tendency of the Russian authorities to seek scapegoats in the light of any setback cost Lykoshin dear, and brought about his resignation. (Lykoshin's personal differences with Turkestan Governor-General Kuropatkin over the issue seem to have been a further factor prompting his departure.⁵¹) In the light of these events, on 5 January 1917 Lykoshin tendered his resignation, ostensibly on grounds of health.⁵²

However, worse was yet to come. Following the Bolshevik takeover of power in 1917, as a former high-ranking tsarist officer, Lykoshin could have hoped for little sympathy from the new authorities. He was able to escape with his life only thanks to the scholarly esteem that he continued to enjoy among renowned academics such as Vasilii Bartol'd. For several years he held teaching positions in various educational facilities in Turkestan, lecturing on the Turkic languages and the region's history and ethnography.⁵³ In

⁴⁹ Pugovkina, "Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin", p. 128.

⁵⁰ Morrison, "Sufism, Panislamism and Information Panic", pp. 290–292.; idem, "'Applied Orientalism' in British India and Tsarist Turkestan", p. 633.

⁵¹ Morrison, "Sufism, Panislamism and Information Panic", p. 293.

⁵² M.E. Masson, et al., "Pamiati Evgeniia Karlovicha Betgera (Ot redaktsii)", in *Trudy Sredneaziatskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta im. V.I. Lenina. Arkheologiya Srednei Azii* 4 (Tashkent: SAGU, 1957), p. 9.

⁵³ Pugovkina, "Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin", pp. 133–135.

1921, however, the 60-year-old Lykoshin was expelled from Turkestan and found himself in Samara where, after long ordeals, thanks to the assistance of the same Bartol'd he was offered a professorship at the Samara State University.⁵⁴ However, the new activity did not last long: on May 4th, 1923, Nil Lykoshin died following a serious illness.



N.S. Lykoshin (in center) along with his family in late 1910s (the only known photo of N.S. Lykoshin). From the left: L.N. Silnitskaia (second daughter), E.A. Lykoshina (his wife), Yuri Mikhailov (the son of the elder daughter S.N. Mikhailova-Lykoshina), and T.N. Lykoshina-Barnovskaia (the younger daughter). Photo credit: O'zMA, f. R-2499, op. 1, d. 5.

As a coda to this overview of Lykoshin's career it is perhaps worth making an observation. Over his four decades of administrative service Lykoshin, unusually among his administrative contemporaries, does not seem to have been accused at any point of abusing his power. His daughter recalled the economic hardships that the family of five experienced during her father's service in Turkestan. She wrote, for instance, that "for all I remember, he [=my father] was always

⁵⁴ Pugovkina, "Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin", pp. 137–138.

immersed in debt and [for that reason] he was so torn up”.⁵⁵ This is all the more striking because colonial service frequently offered opportunities for illicit enrichment. The Tsarist authorities were well aware of this, and in 1916, following the Turkmen uprising in Khorezm, the authorities launched a mass-scale interrogation on the possible misuse of power by the officials in charge.⁵⁶ “In accordance with the laws of war”, agents of the *Okhranka*, or Russian secret police,⁵⁷ questioned dozens if not hundreds of individuals, from among both Russian and Khivan subjects. The investigation yielded some shocking results, revealing the systematic misuse of power by Tsarist officials, and multiple cases of the Khivan authorities bribing the Russian authorities, not only those in Petro-Aleksandrovsk or Tashkent, but even as far away as in the imperial capital. The interrogators also paid distinct attention to the possible involvement of Lykoshin, who had been Commandant of ADO until shortly before the uprising. Yet, the interrogation materials univocally emphasized the fact that the cases of misuse of power were ubiquitous among Tsarist officials, “... except for General Lykoshin, whose reputation is not called into question by anyone, not even in gossip ...”.⁵⁸

In his overview of the existing studies of Lykoshin’s life and career, Alexander Morrison has noted that presently far more is known about his scholarly than about his administrative activities.⁵⁹ As an addendum to this observation, we note that next to nothing is known about his activity in the position of Commandant of ADO (off.: 1912–1914).⁶⁰ In the existing studies this period of his career

⁵⁵ Mikhailova, *Vospominanie o N.S. Lykoshine*, 1. 35.

⁵⁶ A.N. Kuropatkin, *Nachal’niku Turkestanskogo Raionnogo Otdeleniia, 04.10.1916*; O’zMA, f. I-461, op. 1, d. 1889a, ll. 143–145.

⁵⁷ The Department for Protecting the Public Security and Order, or *Okhranka*, was a secret police force in late 19th- and early 20th-century Russia.

⁵⁸ See for instance the interrogation report by the *Okhranka*’s officer in charge captain M. Volkov: Volkov, *Raport G. Turkestanskomu General-gubernatoru Kuropatkinu, 04.11.1915*; O’zMA, f. I-461, op. 1, d. 1889a, l. 68.

⁵⁹ Morrison, “Sufism, Panislamism and Information Panic”, p. 264.

⁶⁰ This has been previously stated also by Akifumi Shioya in his “Who Should Manage the Water of the Amu-Darya? Controversy over Irrigation Concessions

is generally glossed over in a couple of sentences, if indeed it is mentioned at all. This is particularly unfortunate given that, as we noted at the outset and hope to be able to show further, Lykoshin's tenure in ADO unfolded in the midst of some turbulent developments in the Khivan Khanate, which would have far-reaching ramifications for the history of the Russian protectorate. Furthermore, during these years in ADO he authored a host of administrative texts, including the text of the given *Zapiska*, whose readers included the highest ranking officials in the Turkestan colonial hierarchy,⁶¹ through whom some of his observations, albeit in more condensed fashion, reached the desks of the imperial ministers.⁶²

between Russia and Khiva, 1913–1914,” in Paolo Sartori ed., *Explorations in the Social History of Modern Central Asia (19th – Early 20th Century)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), p. 117, fn. 1.

⁶¹ Most of Lykoshin's reports and memoranda have distinct notes (in the form of underscores of certain passages of the Lykoshin's text, marks “NB”, or as comments and resolutions on the marginalias) left by the Turkestan Governor-General Samsonov upon reading (see for instance: Lykoshin, *Raport G. Turkestanskomu General-gubernatoru*, 30.09.1912, no 15, ll. 160–165). Another official who had immediate access to this body of texts was a diplomatic officer at the Governor-General of Turkestan. This latter individual was responsible not only for delivering Samsonov's instructions to Lykoshin, but also for preserving these administrative texts. From the available correspondence we see that over most of the period of Lykoshin's tenure as the ADO Commandant it was A.R. Baranovskii who occupied that office. We further learn that at a certain point between 1912–1913, this office was temporarily occupied by A.A. Semenov, who later became a renowned oriental studies scholar (see for instance: A.A. Semenov, *Ego Vysokoblagorodiiu N.S. Lykoshinu*, 28.01.1912, no. 111; O'zMA, f. I-2, op. 1, d. 305, ll. 1–1 ob.). In one of his letters to Semenov, Lykoshin requested his interlocutor to keep him notified about the Governor-General's instruction with the same frequency as had been previously done by Baranovskii, see Lykoshin, *Glubokouvazhaemyi Aleksander Aleksandrovich*, 24.12.1913; O'zMA, f. I-2, op. 1, d. 352, ll. 11–11 ob.

⁶² We see that while reporting to the authorities in the imperial metropole, such as the Ministers of Defense and/or Foreign Affairs, about political developments in Khiva, Turkestan Governor-General Samsonov often employed passages from Lykoshin's reports – either in full or with slight rephrasing. For instance, Samsonov's report to the Russian ministers in early January 1913 is based entirely on such information (sometimes using similar wording derived from Lykoshin's memoranda), see: Samsonov, *G. Munistru Inostrannykh Del*, *G. Voennomu*

