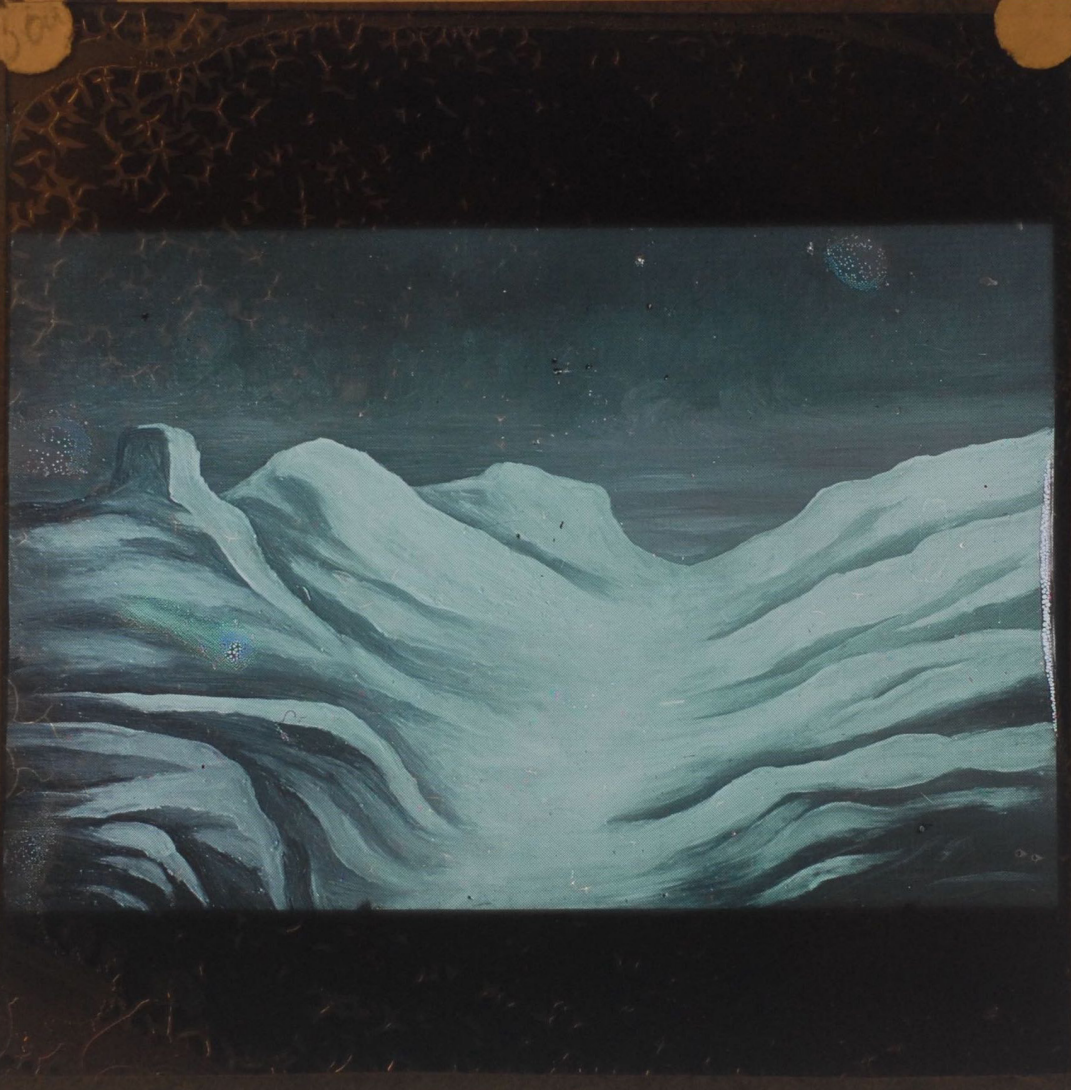


SIBERIA. The stony tundra. Cz.



Translating the Field

The Abundance of Possibilities in Maria Czaplicka's Siberian Expedition (1914–1915) Photographs

JAAFIKA VIDER 

ABSTRACT

The University of Oxford Siberian expedition (1914–1915) led by Maria Czaplicka brought to the United Kingdom knowledge and objects from the little-known Yenise region in Siberia. The photographs taken during this expedition exemplify the uncertain role of photography in anthropology at this time and speak of the possibilities afforded by the abundance of the medium. Comparing the photographic outputs of the expedition to those of the first British generation of field-working ethnographers and Arctic explorers, this article examines early ethnographic photography as a form of translation aimed at diverse audiences.

KEYWORDS

Ethnographic photographs, Maria Czaplicka, Siberia, Arctic anthropology, history of anthropology

This article examines the photographic outputs of the 1914 Yenisei expedition led by Polish-British anthropologist Maria Czaplicka—one of the first university-trained anthropologists in the UK and, for the general public, a “lady explorer” of the Arctic (see [Figure 1](#)). I argue that the photographs’ abundance and their uncertain disciplinary status were actively utilized to translate the Siberian field for academic and popular audiences. Focusing specifically on the emergence of a British anthropological tradition, I adopt a material approach to the visual outputs of the expedition. I reveal the processes of production, manipulation, and circulation as moments of translation when meanings and materials were refracted through the professional anthropological vision and the popular gaze and carried across different media.

In framing my analysis through the concept of translation, I do not wish to reduce photography to semantics but rather to seek inspiration from the etymology of the word. To translate means to “carry across,” and while translation is predominantly used in relation to the movement of words from one language to another, it can also be used to analyze the movement of experiences and viewpoints between different contexts. Significantly, despite the illusion of timeless and fixed expression, neither linguistic nor photographic translations operate with stable meanings; rather, the transformation process draws from a plethora of possibilities. The contingent and mutable nature of photographs has been theorized extensively, notably by the philosophers Roland Barthes (1981) and Walter Benjamin (2015). The insights of visual anthropologists—such as Deborah Poole’s notion of photographic “excess” (2005) and Elizabeth Edwards’s concept of “abundance” (2015)—are particularly relevant to understanding the role of photographs in the epistemological framework of early anthropology.

Poole usefully highlights the tensions embedded within ethnographic photographs by analyzing the undesirability of their contingent nature and excessive detail, while Edwards acknowledges the same contingency as a site of potential both at the time the photographs were made and for contemporary anthropological research. Edwards’s observation that the turn-of-the-century anthropological photographs were characterized by an “abundance of scientific possibility” (2015, 238) drives my argument that the mutability and the contingency of photographs were integral to early anthropological practice, with meanings altered and constrained for audiences enmeshed in different “visual economies” (Poole 1997).

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FIG. 1

Contextualizing the Archive

Images from the Siberian expedition are a unique example of early twentieth-century fieldwork at a moment of methodological uncertainty as well as of the exploration and depiction of the Russian North in the English-speaking world. In addition to the British anthropological tradition and her Polish background, Czaplicka's work was also influenced by ethnography as practiced in Russia and the US (Collins and Urry 1997; Kubica 2020). In particular, the Jesup North Pacific Expedition and Sergei Shirokogoroff's research among the Evenki informed Czaplicka's research in Siberia. While there are interesting parallels to be drawn with ethnographic photographs from Siberia by Russian ethnographers (see, for example, Anderson and Campbell 2009; Campbell 2014; Kendall 1997), this article focuses specifically on the role of photographs in the British field-working tradition. As such, main comparisons will be drawn with the photographic archives of Czaplicka's contemporaries: Alfred. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Diamond Jenness, Gunnar Landtman, Rafael Karsten, Barbara Freire-Marreco, John Layard, Northcote Whitridge Thomas, and Bronislaw Malinowski.

Like Malinowski, Czaplicka arrived in London from Poland in 1910. After completing the University of Oxford Diploma in Anthropology course in 1912 (Kubica 2015), she began writing *Aboriginal Siberia: A Study in Social*

FIG. 1 Lantern slide of Maria Czaplicka in Evenki clothing, Illimpei tundra, 1915. Image courtesy of the PRM Photograph Collection (1998.385.30) and a page from the New York World Magazine, April 4, 1920. [This figure appears in color in the online issue.]

Anthropology, which, despite being based on secondary sources, remained an important textbook in the field with reprints issued as late as 1969. The 1914 expedition was a progression to the research Czaplicka began while writing the book and responded to the emerging paradigm of the “intensive study of a limited area,” promoted at the time by the leading anthropologists, such as Alfred C. Haddon and William H. R. Rivers in the UK (Stocking 1992, 27–32). Accompanied by ornithologist Maud Haviland, artist Dora Curtis, and anthropologist Henry Usher Hall,¹ Czaplicka traveled to Krasnoyarsk via the Trans-Siberian Railway and then down the Yenisei River to a small trading post by the Golchikha River on the shores of the Arctic Ocean. Historians of anthropology, David Collins and John Urry (1997) situate Czaplicka’s research among the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century survey expeditions. However, as Curtis and Haviland left after the summer and joint research—which I have characterized (Vider 2020) as that of an ethnographer and her assistant—was only undertaken by Czaplicka and Hall, the expedition is better understood in relation to the practice of the first generation of professionally trained British ethnographers who left for fieldwork in the prewar era (Vider 2017). Consequently, the expedition photographs are likewise more strongly linked to sensibilities cultivated among the first lone fieldworkers.

Visual anthropologists Christopher Pinney (2011) and Elizabeth Edwards (2016) note that the ingrained tension in anthropology between experiencing culture as a lived practice and collecting it through visual and material objects is crystallized in its use of photography. A. C. Haddon’s insistence that this technology was “an indispensable piece of anthropological apparatus” (quoted in Grimshaw 2001, 16) bears witness to the centrality of photographic technologies to the visualization and the collecting of cultures (Bell 2009; Fabian 1983). However, his use of photography, oscillating between staged reenactment scenes and snapshot-style photographs (Bell 2009; Chiarelli and Guntarik 2013), accompanied by the recommendation to take photographs “that illustrate several points” (Haddon and Myres 1912, 269) in the 1912 edition of the *Notes and Queries*, also speak of the ambiguity that surrounded the practical use of this medium in ethnographic research.

Edwards elegantly encapsulates the turn-of-the-century photographic practice in anthropology as a “struggle to create adequate scientific documents during a period of methodological development and uncertainty” (2016, 91). In both Edwards’s and Pinney’s analyses, the moment that follows this uncertainty at the close of the century is Bronisław Malinowski’s methodological innovation, when photographs,

“gathered around the fieldworker as the embodied center of anthropological knowledge” (Edwards 2016, 115), began to be “processed theoretically in the same location” (Pinney 2011, 52) with the roles of participant, observer, and analyst merged into one. Czaplicka’s archive, like that of many of her contemporaries, is situated between the turn-of-the-century anthropological model that struggled to contain the “excess” of fieldwork photographs in the name of scientific objectivity and the Malinowskian context-focused *aide-mémoire pratique*.²

There is a tendency to characterize these early professional ethnographers’ fieldwork as collecting scientific data in forms such as anthropometry (Stocking 1984; 1995) and their photographs as distanced and formal. For example, describing John Layard’s photographs from Vanuatu taken between 1914 and 1915, curators and anthropologists Haidy Geismar and Anita Herle argue that, “unlike the photographs of many of his contemporaries, characterized by formally posed scenes or surreptitious shots, Layard’s photographs reveal the participatory and experiential nature of his anthropological fieldwork” (Geismar and Herle 2010, 5). Upon inspection, it becomes clear that the photographic archives of Layard’s contemporaries were likewise indexing their social engagement in the field. Indeed, already in 2001, Edwards argued that Diamond Jenness’s photographs from the d’Entrecasteaux Islands, taken between 1911 and 1912, “challenge the stereotype of pre-Malinowskian fieldwork as distanced and non-participatory” (Edwards 2001, 89).

Of all the photographs taken by the new generation of field-working ethnographers in the UK, Radcliffe-Brown’s formal half- and full-length portraits of Andaman Islanders, taken between 1906 and 1908 and now held at the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) at the University of Oxford, most closely match this stereotyped view. In Layard’s case, his intimate snapshot-style photographs and his photographic series on pottery-making point to two different styles and uses during production. The series was “strongly influenced by the theoretical concerns advanced by his mentors” (Geismar and Herle 2010, 75), helping to examine the spread of techniques and styles in Melanesia and serving as illustrations of technological processes to accompany museum objects. However, producing photographs that would act as raw data was not always easy or indeed possible. For example, Rafael Karsten, researching the religious life of South American tribes, was unable to photograph sacred ceremonies (Salomaa 2002); most of his photographs exhibit a contextual approach with people situated in their environment, a style that resonates with Malinowski’s approach.

Frequently, as argued by Edwards in Jenness’ case, the photographs were refigured into “more structured,

homogenized, and stereotypical” forms during their institutional life (Edwards 2001, 93). Discussing the N. W. Thomas archive at the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI), anthropologist Paul Basu (2018) notes that while the images published in Thomas’s *Anthropological Reports* conformed to the objectifying “racial type” style, the examination of the larger corpus of his work that includes the names of his sitters and outtakes of smiling people reveals a “more personal relationship between the anthropologist and the person being photographed.” Likewise, photographs in the Freire-Marreco collection at the PRM are indicative of close relationships with individuals identified in albums; however, the lack of identification in the loose prints opens them to typological classification in the museum (Treier 2018, 33). The Siberian photographs discussed in this article were likewise subject to multiple framings through post-production inscribing practices. Herle’s argument that Layard’s photographs “embody and visually extend this transition from a typological to a more sociological mode of enquiry” (2010, 94–95) can, therefore, be applied to the practices of this generation of anthropologists more generally.

This brief survey of the photographic outputs of this group of ethnographers suggests that most did not actively seek to constrain what was captured in their photographs. Many appear to have embraced the snapshot style, which captured moments in all their abundance. The collections index both the desire to create specific anthropological documents and the happenstance of everyday encounters and demonstrate the epistemic shift from a comparative practice based on collected data toward experiential fieldwork-based anthropology.

Visual Economies of Popular Imagination

The contingency of ethnographic photographs at the time of anthropology’s professionalization also enabled their use in different registers of ethnographic imagination. It is well established that the scientific and popular systems of value in the history of ethnographic representation were intertwined. Nineteenth-century visual projects that intended to create a racial typology drew from a wide range of sources (Edwards 1992), while “scientific”-style photographs were also used in world fairs, museum exhibitions (Banta et al. 1986), and albums and atlases aimed at shaping imperial and national identities (Manikowska 2019). The esthetic appeal and scientific credibility of photographs, as well as their potential to entertain, have long been weaponized to promote particular

political agendas; the role of anthropological image-making for colonial endeavors need not be repeated here.

The various uses and modifications of ethnographic photographs have been studied in museum studies, where vast photographic archives have been conceptualized as “visual ecosystems” by Edwards and Lien (2014). What has received less attention is how the visual outputs of professional ethnographers were influenced by and used in an overtly popular realm.

Polar exploration—which, like anthropology, embraced photographic practices to gain “new visibility” and “claim authenticity and authority” (Aarekol 2014, 149)—was a major influence on the representational practices adopted by Czaplicka. In their discussion of ethnographic photographs from the Arctic, Jonathan King and Henrietta Lidchi remark that “the Arctic functioned as a separate space in the Euro-American imagination” (1998, 14). Partly, this was because “the far North has remained, despite its ostensible ‘discovery’, a largely *unseen* country, more vividly alive and alluring in its absence from actual sight than ... other regions of the ‘New’ world” (Potter 2007, 3, emphasis in the original).

Drawing on the public’s fascination with the physically inaccessible polar regions and the fame of Arctic explorers, Czaplicka directed much of her written work and presentations to the non-expert audiences. Within weeks of her arrival in London, she published her first popular account of the expedition in the Russian supplement of *The Times*. “Tribes of the Yenisei” occupied most of a single page of the paper and was illustrated by five drawings by Ulric van den Bogaerde from photographs (see Figure 2). In 1916, her popular travel book, *My Siberian Year*, was published by Mills & Boon. Featuring thirty-two illustrations from photographs, the book was to be a counterpart to an official expedition report, much like Haddon’s *Head-Hunters* (illustrated with sixty-two photographs) was to the six volumes of *The Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Straits* (Haddon, 1901–1935).

Czaplicka’s research in the Yenisei province was guided by the accounts of explorers such as Alexander von Middendorff and Fridtjof Nansen and the mariner Joseph Wiggins.³ Her association with such men was not based only on academic study; Czaplicka, like many of her contemporaries, relied on politically and economically influential persons linked to the proposed research site and sought support from networks of learned societies. Her expedition benefited from the assistance of the Siberian Steamship Company, which at the time was lobbying for the opening of the Northern Sea Route to Siberia.

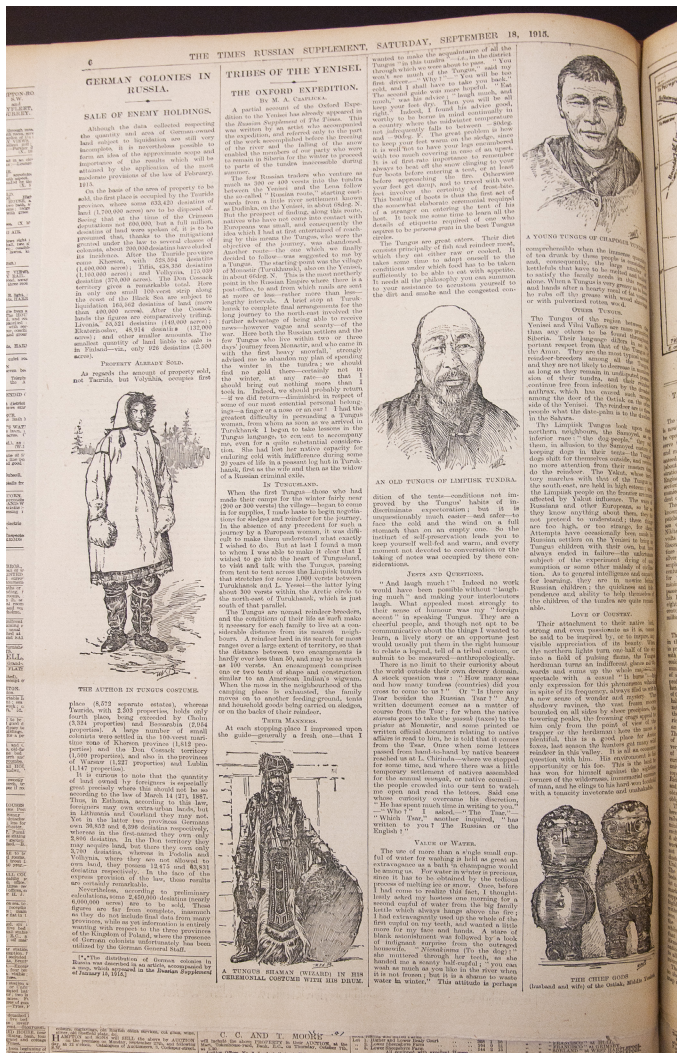


FIG. 2

In 1913, one of the company directors, Jonas Lied, engaged Fridtjof Nansen on a voyage via the Kara Sea and down the Yenisei River (see Lied 1914). That voyage became the basis of a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) in London, several press reports, and Nansen's 1914 travel book, *Through Siberia*. Czaplicka, too, would subsequently talk about her research at geographical societies across the UK, and in 1921, she, like Wiggins before her, was awarded the Murichson Grant by the RGS. She was thus intimately acquainted with the circles in which Arctic explorers moved and was aware of the public's interest in their work and the kinds of visual narratives that were employed in describing their exploits.

FIG. 2 Newspaper page "Tribes of the Yenisei" by Maria Czaplicka, Times Russian Supplement, 16 September 1915. [This figure appears in color in the online issue.]

With the help of the illustrated press, public lectures, and books, Nansen's reputation as an Arctic explorer, scientist, and public intellectual was firmly established (Riffenburgh 1993) by the time he embarked on his trip to Siberia. His 1888 crossing of the Greenlandic ice sheet on skis and subsequent attempt to reach the North Pole were subject to intense media interest. It is, therefore, significant that a number of direct comparisons between Czaplicka's and Nansen's travels in the Yenisei region were made at the time. In *My Siberian Year*, Czaplicka noted that Nansen's trip was "still one of the chief topics of conversation" (1916, 240) and expressed conviction that her expedition would make a similar impression. In 1919, an advertisement for her lecture tour in the US scheduled for the following year advised that "while Nansen also visited parts of Arctic Siberia, his reports are less authoritative and more limited" than Czaplicka's. It also indicated that she stayed in the region longer and came "into immediate contact with the Tungus tribes". The same ad went on to say that the proposed lectures "may be profusely illustrated with lantern slides" (Lucy Cavendish College—LCCA EJL 8). By drawing these parallels, Czaplicka was placing her own expedition in a similar genre to those of established Arctic explorers.

Cultivated over the course of centuries with the aid of paintings, panoramas, photographs, magic lantern lectures, and the illustrated press (Potter 2007; Riffenburgh 1993), the fascination with the Arctic began to escalate from the mid-nineteenth century. Sir John Franklin's lost expedition of 1845 and subsequent attempts to locate the ship and its men were particular focal points for popular imaginings, where existing conceptions of the Arctic as terrible and sublime were blended with personal accounts in depictions such as Edwin Landseer's painting *Man Proposes, God Disposes* and Wilkie Collins's play *The Frozen Deep* (Potter 2007).

The physical presence of this distant, unattainable, and dangerous landscape in tangible visual forms in the European metropolises exemplified the success of Western scientific technology in capturing the North. Moreover, the earliest photographs of the Arctic were dominated by landscapes, ships, and expedition members, signaling the triumph of man over nature. In the subsequent years, photographic technologies enabled even more immediate portrayals of Arctic explorers' experiences that were disseminated faster and farther afield through lecture tours, illustrated press, and touring panoramas. Photographs, whose "ontological stream" is that of "presence," of having been there in the moment of capture (Edwards 2015, 240), were uniquely positioned to relay the very personal encounters into the public realm.

However, even as the representation of the Arctic began to be based on the actual observations of explorers, the “limited number of images generated multiple imaginings of the Arctic” (Potter 2007, 7). As travel to circumpolar regions remained rare, images produced for anthropological science would, therefore, be of interest to broader audiences. In promoting herself through a popular book, photographically illustrated lecture tour, and popular press, Czaplicka followed the footsteps of Arctic explorers such as William Bradford and Fridtjof Nansen. The ethnographic practices and material legacies of the Siberian expedition must, therefore, be understood in relation to the broader visual sensibilities cultivated in relation to Arctic exploration. These privileged the experiences and presence of the explorers on site and the success of overcoming difficulties in what was deemed to be hostile environment.

Visions of Siberia

The Pitt Rivers Museum and the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology archives hold 168 unique film negatives from the Yenisei expedition; however, the surviving lantern slides and prints suggest that more negatives were made. Once transported to the UK and the US, these were rendered into prints on paper, and duplicate glass negatives were used to create lantern slides and printing plates. The expedition photographs were taken with handheld cameras and shot on wide film, resulting in square (approximately 8 cm x 8 cm) and rectangular (approximately 6 cm x 9 cm) images. With the exception of some gathered groups, the photographs do not appear to be staged and thus conform most closely to the advice in Notes and Queries to take snapshots that “seize incidents as they occur” (Haddon and Myres 1912, 268). However, unlike photographs by Jenness and Layard, these images, on the whole, convey a sense of distance rather than intimacy and engagement with the locals. Of the sixteen images, which show one or several of the expedition team, only one shows a social interaction with the locals and that, too, is an arranged photograph of a European woman holding a baby among a group of Native people standing in front of a chum (tent). The rest of the images show the expedition members in a group or individual setting where they are separate from the locals or capture them in the background of Indigenous subjects (see Figure 3).

The photographs trace social interactions while also attempting to conform to the stylistic conventions of anthropometry to enable their conversion into anthropological documents in Edwards’s (2016) sense, with most taken at

**FIG. 3**

a distance, showing their subjects momentarily disengaged from their other activities and surrounded by curious onlookers. This is particularly evident in the fifty-eight photographs taken between June and September, almost all of which capture Indigenous people in casual social settings. However, almost half of those attempt to frame their subjects in frontal and profile views to facilitate their later use in racial classification (see [Figure 4](#)).

Collectively, the negatives, created over the duration of a year, each capturing a specific moment in the field, encapsulate the contingency and uncertainty of ethnographic encounters. Each negative was encoded with the potential for multiple readings and reactions, which were managed for Euro-American audiences. At least twenty photographs were retouched, several were rendered into drawings for publications, and many were inscribed with racial typology markers. Focusing on these moments of material transformation, I analyze three sets of photographic objects that were made from the negatives—lantern slides, print reproductions, and loose prints—to draw out the visual economies they were most strongly responding to.

Soon after returning to the UK, Czaplicka requested a number of the expedition photos to be made into lantern slides. On October 15, 1915, she wrote to her mentor, R.R. Marett: “I have ordered some lantern slides for the lecture, about 80, which will cost nearly £5. Are there any funds at your disposal to cover this expense? I doubt it” (University of Oxford—OUA

FIG. 3 A digital positive image of a negative depicting of a group of Indigenous people near Golchikha with Henry Usher Hall and Maria Czaplicka in the background, 1914. Image courtesy of the PRM Photograph Collection (1998.321.116).



FIG. 4

DC 1/4). That Czaplicka ordered a significant number of lantern slides to illustrate her debut account of the expedition, despite the burden it imposed on her very limited finances, demonstrates the significance attached to visually augmented performances. From the outset, the slides were aimed at both academic and popular audiences, with Czaplicka explicitly requesting a venue for her first lecture that could accommodate both the Oxford Anthropological Society and members of Somerville College. The slides were later used for lectures at the Royal Asiatic Society, the Manchester Geographical Society, the Women's Institute, the Imperial College, and Bedford College and in teaching at Oxford University and the London School of Oriental and African Studies. Visually illustrated lectures were by this point a common practice among anthropologists, with nearly all the lectures by anthropologists at the Royal Anthropological Institute employing lantern slides.⁴

While not all of the original eighty slides are extant, at least forty-five were incorporated into Beatrice Blackwood's teaching slide collection at the PRM. Number labels remaining on some of the slides suggest that Czaplicka's lectures followed the chronology of the expedition. Interestingly, some stages of her travels were illustrated through images acquired from other sources. For example, numbers 74 and 80 in the series depict landscape imagery from the southern Krasnoyarsk region, which was the last stop for Czaplicka and Hall. Glass negative images stored at the museum reveal that both of these lantern slides were generated from previously published images, with the Russian text appearing on the glass negative taped over before creating lantern-slide number 74.

The primacy of a travel narrative resonates strongly with the dominant narrative of the Arctic exploration, such as that

FIG. 4 A digital positive image of a negative depicting an Indigenous man holding a pipe photographed in a frontal and profile view onboard a steamer. Images courtesy of the PRM Photograph Collection (1998.321.49 and 1998.321.50).

**FIG. 5**

promoted in Bradford's photographically illustrated lectures of his artist-led trip to the Arctic in 1869 (Potter 2007, 200). The recourse to substitutions to convey a full and detailed account is further reminiscent of written accounts by the likes of Adolf Nordenskiöld, where in the absence of field photographs, sketches, or drawings, woodcut illustrations were instead created from museum objects (Nordenskiöld 1883, 41). Of course, similar bricolage of images was also commonplace in early anthropological work when "armchair anthropologists" relied on data from a variety of sources; however, it sits at odds with the notion that the ethnographer's or explorer's authority in speaking about a particular place derived from their physical presence and observations therein.

In placing non-fieldwork photographs alongside her own photographs, including six that showed some or all of the expedition members in the field, Czaplicka blurred the boundaries between Siberia illustrated and Siberia experienced. The color and visible brushstrokes of the "Stony Tundra" slide (see Figure 5), for example, are reminiscent of the painting of lantern slides in the nineteenth-century entertainment industry and highlight such blurred boundaries between popular and scientific depiction. The photographic negative from which this slide

FIG. 5 Lantern slide. Stony tundra, 1915. Image courtesy of the PRM Photograph Collection (1998.385.30). [This figure appears in color in the online issue.]



FIG. 6

was created, in fact, captured a painting (see [Figure 6](#)). The use of this non-photographic but photographically mediated image among the series described as “vivid photographic views” in the *Glasgow Herald* newspaper (included in the Czaplicka’s scrapbook of newspaper clippings at the [University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology archives](#)) imbued it with a degree of authority reserved for photographs. This projection of an empty, otherworldly landscape conformed to the popular images of the sublime North but also gained authenticity through its placement among projected photographic images of Siberia. The immersive lantern-slide presentations created spaces in which the audience shared moments of presence with Czaplicka, portrayed in the “iconographic polar hero style” (Aarekol 2014, 150), moving from landscape illustrations to encounters with local Indigenous people.

The “Stony Tundra” also appears in Czaplicka’s popular book, *My Siberian Year*, which straddled the boundary between the popular and the academic. The book was issued by Mills & Boon that “published in a form and at a price that was within the reach of a wide readership” (McAleer 1999, 17). Although ostensibly a popular travel book, it was organized thematically with chapters such as “Love and Marriage in the Arctic,” “Religion,” and “Native Law,” in which Czaplicka gave a popular account of anthropological themes with reference to her own experiences. The book was thus framed within the emerging epistemic practices of anthropology configured for the general public curious about Arctic travel.

FIG. 6 Glass negative of the 'Stony Tundra'. Image courtesy of the PRM Photograph Collections.



FIG. 7

My Siberian Year's appeal to a wide readership, while also seeking to assert the expertise of a trained anthropologist, is evident in its illustrations' claim for photographic authority. The frontispiece advertises thirty-two of the thirty-six illustrations as deriving from photographs and a note preceding the list of illustrations states:

Most photographs which illustrate this book were taken by the members of the expedition; the rest are the works of Messrs. Svyagin, Dudin, Shchokin, and Golvacheff. The drawings from photographs by Mr. U. van den Bogaerde, are reprinted by kind permission of The Times from its Russian Supplement.

The book does not specify which illustrations are not by expedition members nor which are not based on photographs. Reassembling archival traces such as inscriptions, accession lists, and intermediate photographic forms revealed the signature “Shchokin 20 March 1915” on a large glass plate negative of the “Stony Tundra” (Figure 6) that links the artist with one of the named photographers. The painting, photographically

FIG. 7 Clockwise from the top: film negative showing two men on a steamer on the river Yenisei (PRM 1998.321.33), a photographic print with the background opaqued (PRM 1998.258.10.6), glass negative generated from retouched print, and lantern slide from the glass negative (PRM 1998.385.5.30).

translated, is once again granted a privileged place in a visual narrative whose authority largely emanated from the indexical trace the photographs have with the field.

Illustrations in the book employed a common visual language of scene-setting landscapes, positioning of the explorer in Native clothing in the field, and portraying of Indigenous people. A comparison of Nansen's *Through Siberia* and *My Siberian Year* shows that the two had a similar prevalence of images of their party members, landscapes, maps, Indigenous people, and the author. That Indigenous people were more commonly represented in Czaplicka's book is not surprising, considering her anthropological background. Interestingly, despite having only thirty-six illustrations to Nansen's 122, both have images of themselves twice in the book. Reports of Czaplicka's expedition were, in most cases, also accompanied by her portrait, and she is depicted in five lantern slides. Such persistence in positioning herself in the field suggests that as a relatively little-known female traveler, she had to assert her presence in the North more strongly.

Wholly absent from Czaplicka's illustrations, however, are urban views, images of significant men, and snapshots of expedition activities that are depicted in *Through Siberia*. Here, a possible explanation is Nansen's aim of relaying a story of progress to facilitate the establishment of the Northern Sea Route—a theme that, while present, was not the overarching one in Czaplicka's narrative. This idea is supported by the comparison of the wider assemblage of photographs from the Yenisei by Nansen and Czaplicka. There are strong resemblances between the two authors' images of Indigenous people of the Yenisei. However, while Nansen shows many of them aboard steamers and ships on the Yenisei River,⁵ the few of Czaplicka's photographs from steamers were later retouched to remove the backgrounds (see [Figure 7](#)).

A third of photographic illustrations in *My Siberian Year* had undergone retouching, which destabilizes the notion that the value of photographs is to be found in their direct and unmediated connection with the subject. Photographic prints were pinned to boards and painted over to add contrast and definition, to ink out background but also to highlight particular features on people. Such modification was not limited to photographs destined for the popular or semi-popular outlets. Of the twenty-six photographs received by A. C. Haddon, nine had undergone some retouching. While not used in the book, the negative and prints shown in [Figures 8](#) and [9](#) exemplify how details such as cheekbones and facial hair were highlighted or even added.



FIG. 8

The manipulated photograph, with its added contrast and highlighted features, as well as the added beard on the man in the middle shown in [Figure 9](#), was also reprinted in Czaplicka's academic paper, "On the track of the Tungus" (1917). The presence of this image, manipulated to add detail, in a scholarly setting where one would not expect excessive retouching, suggests a slippage between the imagined and the real as well as the popular and the scientific.

The content and meaning of the photographs were also controlled and managed through processes of inscription. For example, three prints from the same negative describe the man in the image as "Samojed Tavje," "Type A Samoyed," and "Sylkin" (see [Figure 10](#)). The inscriptions on the prints from the PRM and Haddon collections reduce this man to a type for the purposes of comparative anthropology. However, the print owned by Maud Haviland allows for some of the original field experience to be reassembled. The naming of the man reconnects the photograph with Czaplicka's interpreter and teacher, Silkin, an Enets man of Bai clan, a crucial intermediary, with whom Czaplicka formed a significant relationship (Czaplicka 1916, 73). The absence of identifying features and his objectification as a "type" in the museum photograph reveals the extent to which the production of "anthropological

FIG. 8 Digital positive images of a film negative of three Evenki men, 1915. Image courtesy of the PRM Photograph Collection (1998.321.24).



FIG. 9

documents” could lend a double existence to the fieldwork encounter. Once reconnected with his name, Silkin emerges as a man who liked to wear glasses and lived in a wood hut near the expedition members (Haviland 1915, 102). Photographs of him and his family, once understood as images pertaining to known people, begin to appear out of place as data for comparison.

Czaplicka’s field photographs underwent further translations at the Pitt Rivers Museum, where the prints were used by the curator, Henry Balfour, in comparative series. These photographs were arranged on large cardboard mounts, categorized according to region and type. Bearing resemblance to the museum object catalog, the boards were designed for teaching and comparative analysis (Morton 2012). Figure 11 shows two images acquired by Czaplicka placed within this particular classificatory system of the museum. Morton describes Balfour’s comparative series as a “still-born” project (2012, 370), out of sync with developments in the discipline, that remained unfinished and unused after Balfour’s death.

The empty spaces around Czaplicka’s photographs on the two picture boards bear testimony to this unfinished translation—one that sought to generate meaning through accumulation and juxtaposition. The empty spaces here speak not of deliberate erasure of experiences but rather of the potential to create new ones.

Photographic Translations

The Siberian expedition photographs are representative of the uncertainty surrounding the use of photographs in anthropological research in the early-twentieth century. The images that captured

FIG. 9 Three prints showing image retouching, 1915. Image courtesy of the PRM Photograph Collection (1998.258.10.49.1-3).

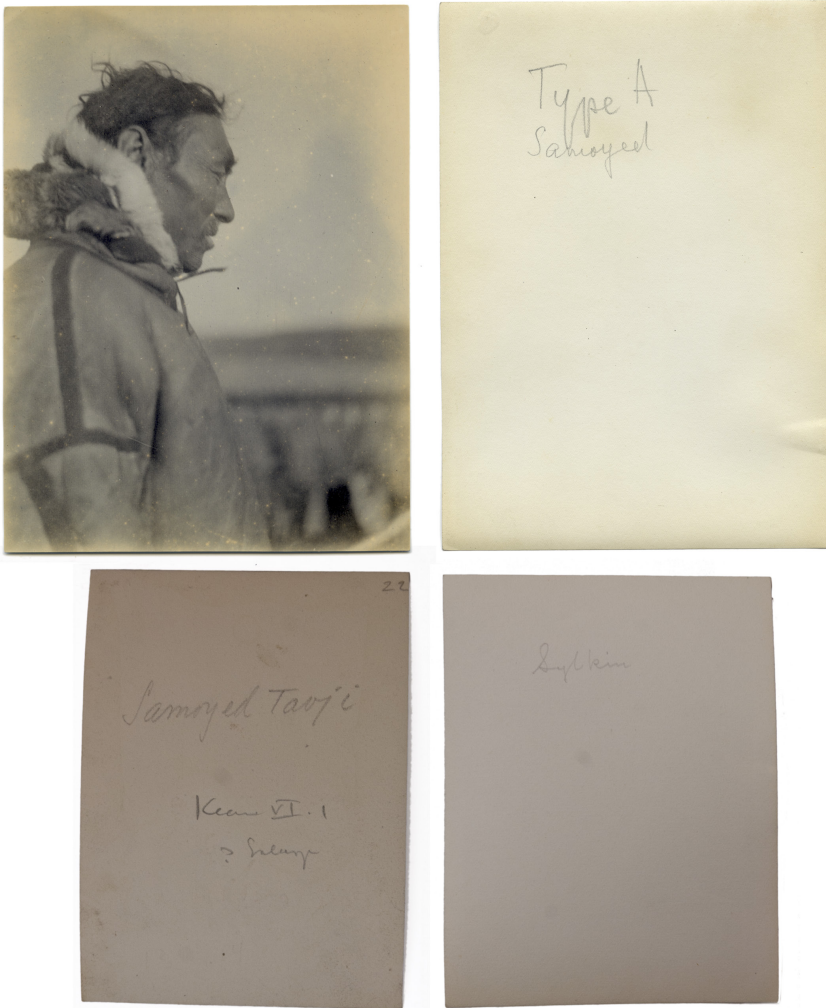


FIG. 10

moments as they occurred while also attempting to generate standard type-style photographs, were encoded with potential, which was translated into narrower, specified sets of meanings, in particular photographic forms, such as lantern slides, loose prints, and halftone reprographics. As the archeologist Jonathan Westin argues in his study of cultural heritage visualization studios, “uncertainty is displaced through a succession of translations making the image stronger and thus the subject of what is represented less open to questioning” (2014, 140). In his analysis, Jonathan Westin employs the actor–network theory (ANT) and Bruno Latour’s (2000) notion that scientific facts are made more durable through their associations. Likewise, Marcus Banks and

FIG. 10 Clockwise from the top: front and back of the photographic print of Silkin at the PRM (1998.258.10.45), back of another photograph of Silkin sent to A.C. Haddon (Lucy Cavendish College—LCCA EJL 8), and back of the print owned by Maud Haviland (Lucy Cavendish College—LCCA EJL 8).

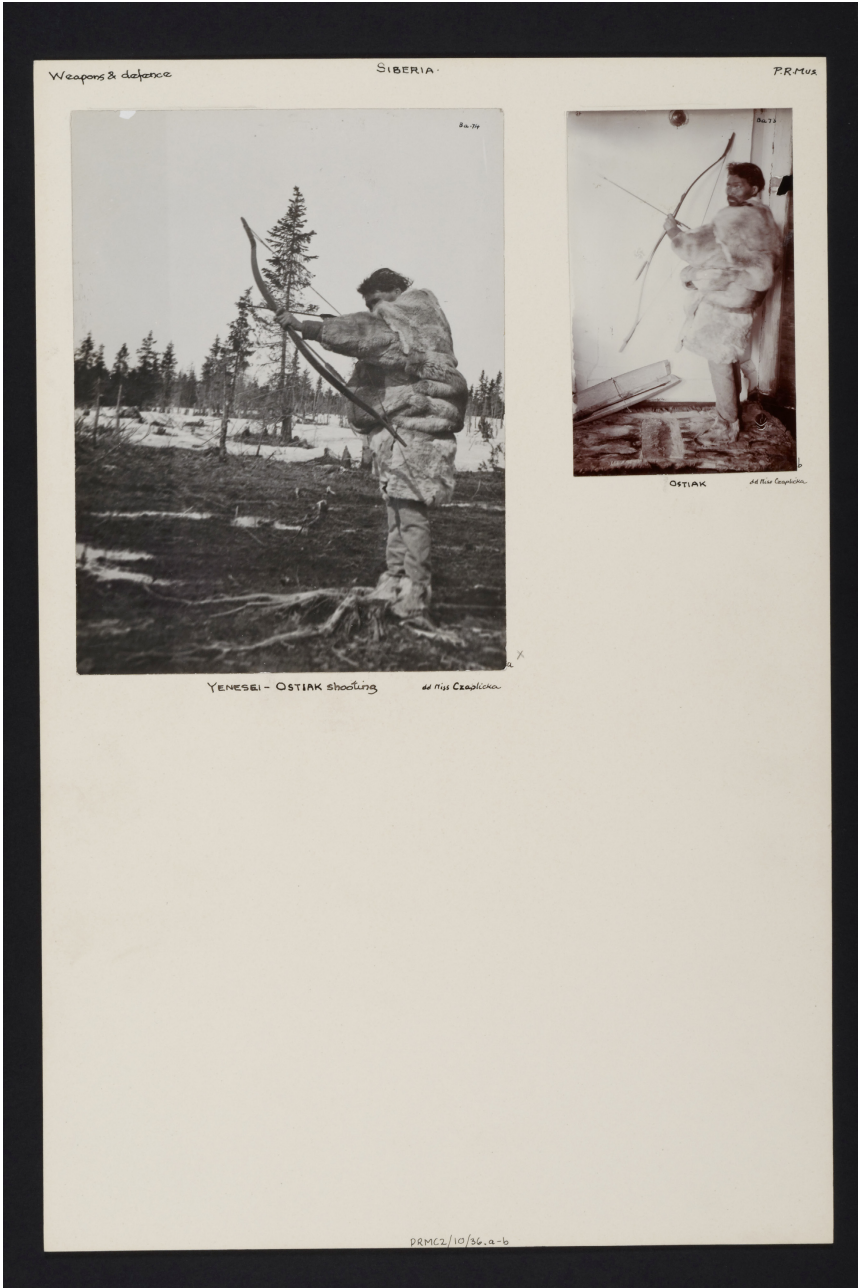


FIG. 11

Richard Vokes draw on Latour in considering mobile images as “circulating referents” that “through multiple acts of translation... become subject to multiple erasures” (Banks and Vokes 2010, 340). In the first case, deliberate shedding of uncertainty enables

the visual representation of a prehistoric past, while in the second case, the movement of photographs across domains causes slippage in meaning and relevance.

Translation of photographs as understood through ANT is helpful in conceptualizing the deliberate constraining of meanings to fit different contexts. This is not to say that translated photographs lose their performative or “agitating” power (Campbell 2014). Conversely, once modified for a particular purpose, the images begin to draw attention to themselves in new contexts, demanding new kinds of engagement.

There is also a resemblance between the conception of ethnography as a cultural translation that grew dominant in British social anthropology after the 1950s and the use of photography during prewar anthropology as a means of relaying experiences, ideas, and arguments to different audiences. In both cases, the need to create representations that would be understood in an etic framework by one’s home audiences dominates the production of anthropological documents—be they ethnographic monographs or photographic objects. Critical engagements with the question of ethnographic translation since the 1980s have recognized the contingent nature of this process. As Howard Morphy, one of the founders of anthropology of art, points out, conceptualizing anthropology as a process of cultural translation “depends on the existence of implicit or explicit cross-cultural categories” and becomes increasingly problematic when one appreciates that “anthropology originated as a European discipline and the main goal of translation was to satisfy a European audience” (Morphy 1996, 206).

In both prewar and the postwar anthropology, the transference of findings between the field and the European audience remained an essential purpose, even if the aims and methods of investigation differed considerably. In his powerful critique of the concept of cultural translation, anthropologist Talal Asad observes that,

When anthropologists return to their countries, they must write up “their people” and they must do so in the conventions of representation already circumscribed by their discipline, institutional life, and wider society... the translation is addressed to a very specific audience, which is waiting to read about another mode of life and to manipulate the text it reads according to established rules. (1986, 159).

In translating for “very specific audiences,” ethnographers were creating a product that is recognizable to those who encounter it. To translate, to carry across meanings, experiences,

FIG. 11 Henry Balfour’s “C” series board for “Weapons and Defense” on Siberia showing a Ket man using a composite bow. Image courtesy of the PRM Photograph Collection.

and knowledge, the ethnographer “must render the foreign familiar and preserve its very foreignness” (Crapanzo 1986, 52). The nature of this familiarity depends on the audiences and the visual economy in which they operate. During the early nineteenth century, the unstable position and broad remit of anthropology entailed multiple and shifting spectators. Early ethnographers, like travelers, administrators, and missionaries, were first and foremost tasked with translating a foreign place to home audiences in familiar terms. What these field collectors had in common is travel, which, as the architectural historian Karen Burns argues, “is not a story founded in sameness, in transcription, but in difference, in translation” (1997, 24). It is thus that we must look for the “semantic outcome” of photographs “in particular and specified situations” (25) where such translation—the meeting of familiarity and difference—occurs. In the photographic practices of early ethnographers, the foreignness originated primarily from the subject matter, while the framing and the material characteristics of the photographic object could lend familiarity. Material transformations that involved printing, retouching, rephotographing, projecting, and arranging on boards all served particular purposes. The abundance of photographs taken in the field enabled flexibility in the production of ethnographic representations.

The Siberian expedition photographs, as translations of field experiences, were shaped by disciplinary conventions, preconditioned imaginings, and encounters in the field. Photography’s contingency and abundance are thus understood as productive and integral aspects of the anthropological method that create possibilities for translating field experiences into specific material outcomes.

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Endnotes

1. Hall had no formal qualifications at the time but following the expedition he was hired as a curator at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.
2. For more in-depth discussion of Malinowski’s photography see Michael W. Young’s *Malinowski’s Kiriwina: Fieldwork Photography 1915–1918* (1998).
3. Middendorff was a Baltic German zoologist and explorer who, in *Puteshestvie na Syever i vostok Sibiri* (1869) and *Sibirische Reise* (1875), provided some of the first ethnographic and linguistic accounts of the Evenki and Yakuts living near the Yenisei River. Wiggins and Nansen both navigated the Kara Sea and so helped to build the case for the Northern Sea Route to Siberia (see Johnson 1907).
4. For an overview of lecture themes, see the proceedings in the 1912–20 issues of the Royal Anthropological Institute’s journal *Man*.
5. Nansen’s collection of Siberian photographs is held in the University of Oslo’s archive.

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