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«I urgently ask for your help», letters from A. K. Tageeva to Count P. A. Valuev about life in the Turkestan region, 1850s–1890s

Abstract

During the advance of Russian troops into Central Asia in the 1850s–1890s, military personnel, scholars, missionaries, administrative officials, and their wives arrived in the region and settled permanently. This influx of people facilitated cultural exchanges and practices. Historiography has primarily examined the European residents of Tashkent, the capital of the Turkestan Governorate-General. Fergana remains largely unnoticed by researchers. In the second half of the 19th century, Fergana became the center of the European population in the region, serving as an administrative hub. Military personnel, judges, and officials from the Fergana region resided in Fergana with their families. This article examines the correspondence between A. K. Tageeva (Marcuse) (1848–1930) and retired minister Count P. A. Valuev (1814–1890). She was the wife of a local judge in the Fergana region, the Turkestan Governor-General L. B. Tageyev (1840–1905). The family's annual income was approximately 2,000–2,500 rubles. She was a noblewoman who had previously lived in St. Petersburg, moved in aristocratic circles, spoke German and French, and was well-read. However, upon arriving in a remote Muslim region, she found herself in a difficult situation. A. K. Tageyev lived in the Fergana Valley, in the city of Novy Margilan (present-day Fergana), and attempted to adapt to the local customs. Her views on local life, customs, and culture reflect the typical perspective of a metropolitan lady on life in a remote province. A detailed description of local customs provides insightful material about the lives of imperial officials in a Muslim region. In our opinion, modern historical scholarship lacks a female perspective on everyday life on the imperial periphery. Alexandra Karlovna Tageeva's letters to Count P. A. Valuev about life in the Turkestan region, the daily life of local Russian officials, L. B. Tageev's official position, and her family and personal affairs from 1888–1889 fill this gap. Unfortunately, no material on A. L. Tageeva's subsequent life has been found, so the research is limited to archival documents. It remains unclear why Count P.

A. Valuev helped her by arranging the lives of her children. It is also unclear how close they had been previously, and how this affected her relationships with her husband and those around her. It should be noted that A. K. Tageeva had ingrained stereotypes about life in Fergana, which can be classified as orientalist. Despite all the difficulties, she tried to adapt to the realities surrounding her. The correspondence is stored in the Russian State Historical Archive.

Keywords

Correspondence, Count P. A. Valuev, A. L. Tageeva, Fergana, Turkestan Governorate-General, New Margilan.

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