

Northern Caucasus Literatures – 19TH Century

Contents (Poetry – Drama – Fiction – Essay – Autobiography)

POETRY

Poetry written during the period after the annexation of the North Caucasus to the Russian empire greatly enriched literary production and added an entirely new set of repertoires and genres, while also facilitating access to a new range of European authors, whom North Caucasus writers read in Russian translation. And yet, for many writers in the 19th century North Caucasus, Arabic and vernacular literary production continued to determine their literary output. Tsarist and Soviet narratives often locate the beginnings of written culture in the northern Caucasus in the late 19th century with contact with Russian and European modernity, but, as the preceding sections have shown this narrative is false.

Poetry of Forced Migration

During the 19th century, the literatures of the Caucasus in the *ajami* script attained the widest circulation that they ever received. Poets such as the migrant (*muhajir*) Temirbolat Mamsurov (1845-1998) and Kosta Khetagurov (1859-1906), produced new and original work in Ossetian, and in a variety of scripts, including *ajami* and Cyrillic. Although Khetagrov achieved fame during his own lifetime, Mamsurov's work only became widely known in 1920, when the Turkish diplomat Bekirbey Sami, who was the son of tsarist official Musa Kundukhov, gave the Ossetian Historical Society in Vladikavkaz a typescript entitled *Ossetian Songs. Written by Temirbolat Mansurov. Turkey. Anatolia. Batmantash. 1868-1898*. In 1922, it was discovered that Miller had included one his poems, called "Thoughts," in his pioneering study, *Ossetian Etudes (Ossetinskie Etiudi, 1881)*. Similarly, the German author Arthur Leist translated part of a poem by Mamsurov and published it in the newspaper *Kaukasische Post*, without however naming the author, whose identity he was ignored of. Ten further of Mamsurov's poems have subsequently have been identified. Based on the typescript discovered in 1920, Mamsurov is widely considered to be the first Ossetian poet.

Ossetians are often remembered in the annals of the 19th century Caucasus as a group that worked alongside Russian colonial officials to facilitate the deportation of northern Caucasus peoples. Musa Kundukhov, an Ossetian who helped to engineer the deportation of the Chechens to Ottoman lands, is a case in points. Yet, many Muslim Ossetians were subjected to the same forced deportations to which their fellow Muslims of other Caucasus backgrounds—Chechens, Ingush, Ubykhs, Abaza, Adyghe—were subjected. Like his fellow Muslims of the North Caucasus, Temirbolat Mamsurov was forcibly deported, and belonged to the category of *muhajirs*, Muslims from the Caucasus who were compelled by Russian colonial forces to abandon their homeland and relocate to Ottoman lands. Mamsurov wrote extensively about the years of his exile to Ottoman lands in his poetry. He died in the Ottoman empire and never had the opportunity to return to his homeland following his expulsion from it.

Although the connection may have been indirect, the motif of the *muhajir* poet was later picked up in Georgian during the 20th century, in a poem by Galaktion Tabidze called "Muhajir [*maxajiri*]." This poem, which was completed during the Soviet period, is given in the first-person voice, form the vantage point of an imaginary *muhajir*. The *muhajir's* probing monologue is dominated by memory as a kind of ritual practice, through which the speaker comes to terms with his own sense of being forsaken. In "Muhajir," Galaktion states:

I breathe the dryness of your silence.
I rub a fist of your flesh against my brow.

The peoples of the northwest Caucasus as well as the Vainakhs (Chechen and Ingush) further east were most severely affected by the forced deportations of the 19th century. Relative to these groups, the peoples of Daghestan were more able to remain in their homeland for a longer period, although many Daghestani were also eventually compelled to leave Daghestan following the

surrender of Imam Shamil in 1859. These Daghestanis migrated to Syria, Jordan, and other parts of the Arab world which were then under Ottoman rule.

Daghestani Poetry

Even amid forced migrations and other turmoil, Daghestan witnessed the flourishing of poetry alongside other literary genres during the 19th century. Among the key figures in this literary revival are the poet and scholar Abusufyan Akaev (1872–1931), born in the town of al-Gazanishi. Like many of his fellow North Caucasus writers, Akaev was fluent in his native Qumyq, Arabic, Persian, Azeri Turkish, Tatar, and Crimean Tatar. Akaev also knew Avar, Lak, Dargi, Chechen, and Russian. In 1903, Akaev compiled the first anthology of Qumyq poetry, which he published in the Crimean city of Simferopol. He produced a second, much revised, edition of this work in 1912 and published it in Temir Khan Shura in Daghestan.

Alongside his poetic activities, in 1908, Akaev compiled a dictionary, called *The Staircase of Languages (Sullam an-Lissan)*, comprising many of the languages with which he was familiar. Akaev also translated a great deal of classical Persian and Turkic poetry into the indigenous languages of Daghestan. His literary activities were greeted with some resistance by conservative local scholars. In his memoirs (discussed below in the article on lifewriting during the Soviet period), Akaev recounts this resistance as well as his response: “At that time, a certain category of scholars opposed us, claiming that the production of books in an *ajami* language was forbidden by Islam, and that the composition of poetry and such was, in their opinion, a great sin [...] we regarded such words with relative indifference.”

In 1907, Akaev worked together with his close friend and collaborator Magomed Mirza Mavraev to found the first and most important Arabic-script publisher of the North Caucasus, known as the Mavraev publishing house. Mavraev appointed Akaev as editor in chief. At first, all of the books published by the Mavraev publishing house was produced for schools and mosques. Their circulation raised the level of knowledge within Daghestan in both the religious and secular sciences.

In addition to his own writings and publishing activities, Akaev made an important contribution to Daghestani literary history through his editing of major Arabic works such as the *Diwan al-Mamnun* of Hasan al-Alqadari (1834–1910), a work discussed in the next article. Akaev edited this work during the course of his work at the Mavraev publishing house. Like Akaev, al-Alqadari operated in a multilingual environment and produced original work in several different languages. These developments in Arabic Daghestani literature were accompanied by the emergence of poets such as the Qumyq poet Yirchi Kazak (spelled Irçi Qazaq in Azeri, 1830-1879), who is regarded as a founder of modern Qumyq literature.

Alongside the flourishing of vernacular literatures in *ajami* and Cyrillic scripts, the 19th century also saw the earliest fruit of the encounter between indigenous Caucasus literatures and Russian and European literatures that introduced new literary genres into the Caucasus literary landscape. While Arabic, Persian, and Turkic retained significance throughout this period, as they did well into the 20th century, this was a period when indigenous literatures flourished alongside Russophone literature.

Further Reading:

Boris Andreevich Alborov, *Pervyi osetinskii poet Temirbolat Osmanovich Mamsurov* (Vladikavkaz, 1926).

Hasan al-Alqadari. *Diwan al-Mamnun* (Mavraev, 1912).

Temirbolat Mamsurov, *Osuri simgherebi*, trans. Naira Bepieva; ed. Nino Popiashvili (Tbilisi: kavkasiuri saxli, 2007). Bilingual Georgian-Ossetian edition of the poetry of Temirbolat Mamsurov (Tbilisi: kavkasiuri saxli, 2007).

Osuri mtserlobis antologia, ed. Nino Popiashvili (Tbilisi: Universali, 2007). Georgian-language anthology of Ossetian literature. This is the most comprehensive of Ossetian literature in translation.

Шабаху Алиевна Алиева, “Поэтическое наследие Абусуфьяна Акаева,” PhD dissertation. Makhachkala, 2006.

Гасан Магомед-Расулович Оразаев and Исмаил Ибрагимович Ханмурзаев, “Арабоязычные произведения в творчестве Абусуфьяна Акаева,” *История, археология и этнография Кавказа* 14.4. (2018): 53-62.

Discussion Question:

Many poets began writing in their native languages during the 19th century. What similarities and differences did these writers exhibit from each other?

DRAMA & THE PERFORMING ARTS

During the early decades of the 19th century, before most parts of the North Caucasus had been fully exposed to European literary norms, public performances comprised dances, such as the *adyge jegu* (Circassian festival), or the dance practiced in different versions by many Caucasus peoples, called the *lezginka*, and songs, including *illi* for Chechens or and Nart sagas for other cultures, performed with ancient musical instruments, such as the *ponder* and *dechig* in Chechnya, and harps such as the *duuadæstænon fændyr* (in Ossetian), *pshyne-dukuakue* (in Kabardian), and the *kyngyr-kobuz* (in Balkar). Such performance practices belonged to highly developed and sophisticated indigenous traditions, and they were quite unlike from the norms of European drama. The influence of European drama became evident in the last decades of the 19th century, when indigenous writers who had been educated in Russian schools began to compose plays that applied European dramatic norms to local histories and contexts. Even when their exposure to a foreign curriculum and to new pedagogical methods gave these writers contact with a new literary culture, they continued to write creatively in their native languages, and most plays by indigenous pre-revolutionary North Caucasus writers were staged in local vernaculars rather than in Russian.

Ossetian Drama

Among the peoples of the northern Caucasus, Ossetians had the most exposure to Russians and to Russian rule. Perhaps for this reason, Ossetian playwrights played a pioneering role in introducing European-style drama to the northern Caucasus. An early example of such a play by an Ossetian author who also wrote in Russian is the unfinished *Late Dawn*, composed from 1881-1885 by Ossetian poet Kosta Khetagurov (1859-1906). Another important Ossetian playwright is Batyrbek Tuganov (1866-1921), who became close friends with Khetagurov while he was studying law in Vladikavkaz. Tuganov began his writing career while he was a practicing lawyer, with the short story "Hanifa." In 1904, he wrote the play *Parallels (Paralleli)*, which deals with the difficult working conditions in a factory where the workers experience exploitation. The play could not be published before the revolution due to government censorship.

From 1905, Tuganov translated Marx into Ossetian and set up an underground printing house for printing anti-government leaflets. Tuganov was arrested in 1905 for revolutionary activities. He was released from prison in 1907, and moved to Moscow, where he was nominated as a delegate to the Second State Duma. Following the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, Tuganov worked for the newly-formed Soviet People's Commissariat for Nationalities Affairs prior. He died in Daghestan of cholera a few years later, before he managed to complete two plays he wrote during the 1910s: *Batanoko tembot*, a play centered on the hero Digor-Khaban, who led an uprising of the Ossetian peasantry during the 16th-17th centuries, and *Play without a Name*.

Elbazduko Britayev (1881-1917), known as the founder of Ossetian dramaturgy, began his literary activities after graduating from St. Petersburg University's Law Faculty. Britayev's earlier plays, such as *Having Been to Russia* (1904) mocked and derided the traditional customs of the Ossetian peoples. However, his later plays drew heavily on traditional Ossetian literature and helped to revive it. A case in point is the tragedy *Amran* (1913), which is a modern rewriting of the tales of the Ossetian narrative cycle of the heroes of the Daredzan family. As with much other North Caucasus literary production, this work is also linked to the figure of Prometheus. The origins of these tales, which are separate from and less widespread than the Nart sagas, are diverse, and include Mose Khoneli's Georgian-language *Amiran-Darejaniani* (dating to the 12th century), elements of the Persian *Shahnama* of Ferdowsi (or perhaps the oral traditions that found their way into Ferdowsi's text), and Nart sagas. In this way, we see Ossetia's ancient multilingual situation stimulating new literary forms in the 20th century.

David Grigorievich Korojev (1890-1924) was another important pre-revolutionary Ossetian playwright. Born in the village of Ermen, Korojev moved while still a child to the city of Alagir, where he finished school. After a period of study in Vladikavkaz, Korojev completed his training as an accountant in Tiflis. Korojev's most famous play is the widely-staged *I wasn't there, it was the cat* (*Æз нæ уыдтæн, гæды уыди*, 1910). Two years after publishing this play, Korojev published the play *The Fortune Teller* (*Dusny*, 1912). He was also a poet, and played a role in the founding of the Ossetian

publisher “Ir” (*Ir* being the ethnonym through which Ossetians refer to themselves) in 1906. Although the publisher lasted only from 1911 to 1917, its founding was a turning point in Ossetian literature, and played a significant role in making available works such as Kosta Khetagurov’s *Ossetian Lyre* (*Iron fundyr*, 1899), Blashka Gurzhibekov, Georgy Tsagolov, Sek Gadiev, Alexander Kubalov, Rosa Kochisova, the journalism of Alikhan Ardasenov, as well as the aforementioned Tuganov, Britaev, Koroev.

Plays were also authored in the Ossetian language by women writers such as Lena Afakoevna Kotsoeva (1885-1923). Kotsoeva was born in rural Ossetia, to the family of one of the leaders of the peasant uprising of Afako Kotsoev in 1901. Kotsoeva’s mother died when she only five years old, and she was raised in the Vladikavkaz orphanage for girls, after which she returned to Gizel and worked as a teacher. In 1911, Kotsoeva graduated from the Transcaucasian Obstetric School in Tiflis. Kotsoeva’s play, *The First Day of a Young Teacher at School* (*Nog ahuyrgunadzhy fystsag bon skolayy*) was published in Vladikavkaz in 1908. One of the first Ossetian comedies, this play depicts the experience of teaching in a typical Ossetian rural school in the pre-revolutionary period. Through her protagonist Akso, who opposes corporal punishment, loves children, and embraces the newest pedagogical methods, Kotsoeva promotes the philosophy of education that she developed while teaching in her native town.

Further reading:

G. Dzagurov, “Zabyitaia osetinskaia pisatel'nitsa Kotsoeva Lena,” *Izvestiia YuONII* XI (1962).

D. M. Lang and G. M. Meredith-Owens, “Amiran-Darejaniani: A Georgian Romance and Its English Rendering,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 22.1/3 (1959): 454-490 (p. 467 for background on the Ossetian narrative cycle of the Daredzan family).

A. Khadartseva, *Istoriia osetinskoï dramy*. 2 vols. (Ordzhonikidze [Vladikavaz]: Izd-vo “Ir” 1983).

Batyrbek Tuganov, *Batanoko tembot : poviest' iz vremen geroicheskoi bor'by kavkazskikh gortsev i drugie rasskazy*, ed. O Ė Tuganova (Moscow: Izd. kn-stva “Vostok”, 1913).

Sufian Zhemukhov and Charles King, “Dancing the Nation in the North Caucasus,” *Slavic Review* 72.2 (2017): 287–305.

Discussion Questions:

How did North Caucasus playwrights incorporate the folkloric traditions and performance practices of their people into modern dramatic productions?

What role did European dramaturgy play in the development of drama in the North Caucasus?

FICTION, LEGENDS, MYTHS

The 19th century was a turning point for literary production throughout the Caucasus. Although the northern Caucasus had a developed oral and folkloric tradition, it was in the 19th century that writers began to consciously position themselves within the emerging marketplace of world literature. Writers who were educated in Russian schools and who on occasion served in the Russian army tended to write in Russian, sometimes while also writing in their native language. A nascent engagement with what we now call modernity is evident in all the regions with which this study guide is concerned—Chechnya, Circassia, Abkhazia, Daghestan, and Ossetia—albeit in different ways, in different languages, and to differing degrees.

Adil-Girey Ch’ashe

The most prominent northwest Caucasus fiction writer of the 19th century is Adil-Girey Ch’ashe (1840-1872), who published in Russian under the penname of Kalambii (Qalembiy, a possible pun on the Arabic word for “pen”) in leading Russian periodicals. Born to an impoverished family of the Circassian nobility, Ch’ashe was one of the first Circassians to study at St. Petersburg University. Soon after he began his university studies, he was expelled for his association with revolutionary groups. Although Ch’ashe’s stories are often read as ethnographic commentary, and are indeed presented as such by the author, they operate within a literary tradition and deploy the

traditional devices of 19th century realism, that characterizes for example Tolstoy. In *Abreks* (1860), Ch'ashe selected the time-honored theme of the Caucasus *abrek*, a kind of noble bandit who permeates the literary imagination during this and the following century. The genre of this work, which was first published serially in the newspaper *Russian Messenger*, is disputed, with some referring to it as a novel and others calling it an article. This genre fluidity is reflective of the fact that many works of 19th century north Caucasus fiction were treated like ethnographic sources by contemporary readers.

Arsen Kotsoyev

Arsen Kotsoyev was a luminary of Ossetian literature and one of the founders of modern Ossetian prose. He was born to an impoverished family in northern Ossetia in 1872, and studied at a nearby seminary until he had to leave his studies due to illness. He was expelled from his native village of Gizel for participating in an uprising against the tsar in 1912, following which he moved to South Ossetia, where he worked as a school teacher, wrote essays and short stories, and contributed to major Russian language newspapers such as *Kazbek* and *Terskie Vedomosti*. Kotsoyev's fiction focuses on mountaineer traditions, including the custom of blood revenge. In his fiction, he excelled in staging encounters between the rural mountaineer culture of his childhood. Unlike many of his fellow writers from the northern Caucasus, Kotsoyev adjusted successfully to the norms of Soviet rule.

Daghestani Literature

Daghestani writers were less active than their counterparts in the northwest Caucasus in the production of fiction that conformed to the norms of European Romanticism and subsequent realism. Instead of imitating Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoy and other Russian authors, Daghestani writers by and large occupied themselves with ethnographic writings and with reviving—and transforming—Daghestani Arabic literature. While Arabic and indigenous-language historiography, biography, and poetry flourished throughout Daghestan during this period, fiction in the modern sense was a relatively marginal genre of literary production within the northeast Caucasus. When Daghestan scholars turned to writing in Russian, it was usually in order to produce ethnographies, for example D. M. Shikhaliev's *Story about Qumyq and Qumyqs* (1848), Aidamir Chirkeev's *Avar Songs and Tales (Avarskikh pesen i skazov, 1869, in SSKG)*, and Abdullah Omarov's *How the Lak Live* (1868-1970), described in the section on life-writing.

Russian Romanticism

Finally, although this study guide focuses on the literatures of the North Caucasus, rather than on the better-known Russian representations of the Caucasus, mention should be made of the tremendous influence that the northern Caucasus and the struggle of its peoples for freedom from Russian rule exerted on the development of 19th century and more broadly European Romanticism. Although Pushkin and Lermontov are best known as poets, they both composed fiction in the Caucasus. Their best-known works in this tradition are Pushkin's verse narrative *Caucasus Captive (Kavkazskii plennik, 1820)* and Lermontov's novel *A Hero of Our Time (Geroi nashevo vremeni, 1839)*. In the next generation, after breaking with certain aspects of the Romantic tradition, fiction writers such as Tolstoy and Bestuzhev-Marlinsky developed a more ethnographic approach to the North Caucasus. These writers regularly use words from the indigenous languages of the northern Caucasus in their fiction, especially Qumyq, the Turkic language spoken by Akaev and others that was in wide use as a local lingua franca.

Further Reading:

Susan Layton, *Russian literature and empire: conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Paul Friedrich, "Tolstoy and the Chechens: Problems in Literary Anthropology," *Russian History* 30.1/2 (2003): 113-143.

Discussion Question:

How did North Caucasus writers negotiate the relationship between fiction and documentary prose genres such as journalism and history?

ESSAY : Documentary Prose

Across the North Caucasus, literary production took place overwhelmingly in Arabic-script literatures in the years leading up to the 1917 revolution and in many cases after that date as well. The writing of *risalas* flourished throughout the post-classical and early modern period, but their number dramatically increased during the 19th and early 20th centuries. One such example that emerges directly from the Daghestani Arabic tradition is Sharafaddin al-Kikuni's *Tales and Virtues of the Naqshbandiyya Shaykhs (Hikaya va Manaqib al-Mashaikh an-Naqshbandiyina)*. This work contains biographies of famous Sufi sheikhs such as Abdurahman-Haji al-Suguri.

Historical Chronicles

However, by the 19th century, the documentary prose tradition was no longer exclusively in Daghestani or in Arabic. One of the most significant developments in the 19th century prose of the North Caucasus is Abbas Qoli Aqa Bakikhanov's (1794-1847) *Heavenly Garden (Gulistan-i Iram)*, written in Persian by an author who was also fluent in Arabic and Azeri. *Heavenly Garden* brings together the histories and literatures of the northern and southern Caucasus, and draws on sources in Greek and Armenian as well as Russian, Arabic, Turkic, and Persian to present a narrative about the multilingual literary landscape of the past and present Caucasus. The work is a masterpiece not only in terms of its historiographic vision, but also in its presentation of Persian poetry across the long durée of Caucasus history.

Journalism

Among the major venues for the development of the Russophone literature of the northern Caucasus are *Collection of reports on Caucasus mountaineers (Sbornik svedenii o Kavkazskikh gortsakh, SSKG for short)* arguably the premier venue for longform journalism in the 19th century Caucasus. SSKG was published in Tiflis (colonial-era Tbilisi) in ten volumes from 1868-1881. Its readers and subscribers included the literary elite of Russia, such as Leo Tolstoy, who drew on the materials contained in these volumes for his fictional writings about the Caucasus, including his famous novella *Hajji Murat* (1912). SSKG was an important venue for many North Caucasus authors who would go on to become pioneers within their respective literary cultures, including Ingush ethnographers such as Chakh Akhriev, Abdullah Omarov (discussed in the section on life-writing), and Adil-Girey Ch'ashe (discussed below). When SSKG ceased publication, a new series, called *Collection of material for the description of the localities and peoples of the Caucasus (Sbornik materialov dlia opisaniya mestnostey i plemen Kavkaza, SMOMPK for short)*, appeared. SMOMPK was published, also in Tiflis, from 1881–1916. Both of these venues laid the foundations for later ethnographic and historical research, and included many Russian-language contributions by indigenous North Caucasus authors.

One indigenous writer who published groundbreaking work in SSKG is Umalat Laudaev (1827-1890s). Laudaev's ethnographic study of "Chechen Tribe" (1872) is the first extended study of Chechen social institutions in the Russian language, written for an audience of Russians and Russian-literate members of the north Caucasus reading public. Although Laudaev's work was later surpassed by Magomed Mamakaev's Soviet study of Chechen *teips* (tribes) (discussed in the next article), it created a framework for the efflorescence of ethnographic writing that followed from an indigenous point of view. Indeed, Laudaev himself emphasizes the uniqueness of his work when he writes in his opening: "I am the first among the Chechens to write in Russian about my country, which remains as yet badly understood." Born in the Chechen village of Nogai-Mirza Yurt, Laudaev was educated at a school for children of the Terek Cossacks. On becoming an adult, he entered the Cadet Corp and participated in the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848-1849 by Russian imperial forces.

Recording Oral Traditions

When Chechen authors such as Laudaev were recording the customs of their people for the first time in Russian, Circassian authors such as Shora Negwme (Nogmov) was occupied with translating the folkloric traditions of their people into Russian. Born in a small village on the near Pyatigorsk, Nogmov was educated at a theological school in the village of Endirey. He refused to pursue a career as a mullah, although he had been trained in the religious sciences, and instead entered the service of the Russian army. Nogmov climbed the same ladder of social ascent within the ranks of Russian bureaucracy that Laudaev and many mountaineers were to ascend in subsequent decades. He began his career in the service of the tsar as a translator, later becoming a clerk. During his service in the army, Nogmov impressed his colleagues with his knowledge of Arabic, Turkish,

Persian, Russian and Abaza. Just as Laudaev was to participate in the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution, so did Nogmov participate in the suppression of the Polish movement for independence from the Russian empire. Nogmov died in 1844, before he had managed to publish the scholarly work that appeared soon after his death under the imprimatur of the Russian Academy of Sciences: *The History of the Adyghe People, Compiled According to the Legends of Kabardians (Istoriia adygeiskogo naroda, sostavlenaia po predaniiam kabardintsev, 1844)*. The works of Laudaev, Nogmov, and others were the first modern studies of the indigenous languages and oral traditions of the North Caucasus by natives of the region.

Concurrently with Nogmov, the Circassian scholar Sulht'an Khan-Girey published his translations of the Nart sagas, first in the newspaper the *Russian Herald*, beginning in 1841, and subsequently in *Kavkaz*, the primary newspaper of the Caucasus, from 1846 onwards. Two decades later, the Kabardian Kazi Atazhukin (1841-1899), published another such collection in 1864. However, the most substantive effort to continue Nogmov's legacy by a Circassian scholar belongs to Adil-Girey Ch'ashe (1840-1872), whose life and legacy is discussed in more detail below in the section on fiction. In a series of critical essays, written from 1862 to 1871, Ch'ashe reassessed Nogmov's legacy, which he described as "the first attempt at a systematic presentation of legends about the past fate of the Adyghe tribe that have survived in the people's memory." Ch'ashe's critical writings on "The Qualities of Adyghe Song" (1869) and on "On the Barely-Noticed Extinction of Mountaineer Songs and Legends" (1871), set the stage for the more extended inquiries into the indigenous folkloric and oral traditions of northern Caucasus peoples, which would proliferate during the Soviet era.

Further Reading:

Abbas Qoli Aqa Bakikhanov, *The heavenly rose-garden: a history of Shirvan & Daghestan*, trans. Willem M. Floor and Hasan Javadi (Washington, DC: Mage, 2009).

Brian J. Boeck, "Probing parity between history and oral tradition: Putting Shora Nogmov's History of the Adyghe People in its place," *Central Asian Survey* 18 (1998): 319-336.

Rebecca Ruth Gould, "The Persianate Cosmology of Historical Inquiry in the Caucasus: 'Abbās Qulī Āghā Bākīkhānūf's Cosmological Cosmopolitanism," *Comparative Literature* 71(3): 272-297.

Austin Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845-1917* (McGill-Queen's Press - MQUP, 2002).

Shora Negwme (Sh. B. Nogmov), *Istoriia adygeiskogo naroda, sostavlenaia po predaniiam kabardintsev* (Maikop: Blagodarenie, 1994).

Discussion Question:

What role did indigenous writers play in codifying the oral folkloric traditions of the North Caucasus?

LIFE WRITING

Biographical Dictionaries

Autobiographical writing in the North Caucasus under Russian rule is encompassed within the wider genre of the biographical compendium, known in Arabic as *tabaqat* and in Persian as *tazkira*. Although these traditions proliferated during the 19th and 20th centuries, there are also earlier Arabic and Persian examples of such works, including al-Darbandi's *Basilica of Verities and Garden of Delicacies*, discussed above in the section on documentary prose. Often, autobiographies are nested within such biographical texts. One example is Bakikhanov's *Heavenly Garden*, a work that combines the genre of *tazkira* and history, and includes an autobiographical account of the author's journeys throughout the world at the end.

In parallel with the *tazkira* tradition that flourishing in the Persian-speaking and Persian-literate regions of the Caucasus, the *tabaqat* tradition flourished among the Arabic-literate communities of the North Caucasus, including in particular Daghestan. Key works in the *tabaqat* tradition include Shu'ayb al-Bagini's *Compendium of the Lives of the Naqshbandiyya Teachers (Tabaqat al-khwajagan al-naqshbandiyya)*. This work exists in a unique manuscript, that was copied in 1906. Often focusing on Sufi saints and their teachings, such works are vital historical sources that also offer insight into the construction of the self in Daghestani literature. These works provided

detailed overviews of the lives of various pious Muslims, who are often scholars, or who are well-known for their achievements in other areas of literary endeavor.

Abdullah Omarov

Daghestani teacher Abdullah Omarov from the village of Kukli had the good fortune to meet the philologists P.K. Uslar during his studies in Temir-Khan-Shura. At that time, Uslar was compiling the first alphabet for the Lak language that was based on Cyrillic script. Omarov assisted with preparing Uslar's primer for the Lak language, which was published in 1865. When Uslar founded one of the first secular schools in the region, located in Ghaziqumuq, he appointed Omarov as a teacher there. In 1868, Omarov published the first instalment of his memoirs, which focused on his experience of teaching the Lak language to his fellow Daghestanis. Like many other important works of the period (e.g. Laudaev's work on Chechen tribes) this was published in the first issue of the premier venue for longform journalism on the Caucasus, *Collection of reports on Caucasus mountaineers (Sbornik svedenii o Kavkazskikh gortsakh*, abbreviated here as *SSKG*). Two further installments followed in 1869 and 1870, in the same venue. Tolstoy drew heavily from Omarov's memoirs while producing the early drafts of his *Hajji Murat*, a novella widely regarded as among the most visionary accounts of the mountaineer resistance to Russian conquest. Omarov noted in these memoirs that, although he was focused on one specific Daghestani people—the Lak of Ghaziqumuq—"Daghestanis resemble each other so much that it is possible to develop a picture of Daghestani ways of life in general based on the life of the Laks."

Omarov passed much of his life in Tbilisi, where he belonged to a growing community of North Caucasus mountaineers residing there, who helped to shape Russian rule and also often participated in it. In his others writings for *SSKG*, Omarov contrasted his own activities with those of local Sufi leaders who, in his assessment, had nothing to offer Daghestanis. In the preface to his translation of Muheddin-Muhammed-Khan's Arabic-language treatise on "Truthful and Deceitful Followers of the Righteous Brotherhoods [*tariqat*]," published in the fourth volume of *SSKG* in 1870, Omarov expressed his reservations concerning the militant anti-colonial jihad led by Imam Shamil. The author of the, Muheddin-Muhammed-Khan, had recently been released from a Russian jail. On his release, he was invited by the Russian authorities to explain the differences among the various Sufi brotherhoods (*tariqats*), in order to help officials distinguish between those that should be respected and the one that should be condemned. He accepted the invitation, and produced the treatise which Omarov translated. In his prefatory remarks, Omarov reflects on the increasing irrelevance of the mullah's profession and of his religious knowledge for Daghestani society following its incorporation into the Russian empire. Omarov writes and translates for a culturally distant audience, explaining and translating vanishing modes of Daghestani religious existence to a Russian colonial readership.

Further Reading:

al-Bagini al-Daghistani, Shu'ayb b. Idris. *Tabaqat al-khwajagan al-naqshbandiyya*. (Damascus: Dar al-Nu'man li l-'ulum, 1999).

Abdullah Omarov, *Kak zhivut laki: Vospominaniia mutalima*, ed. A. Guseinov (Makhachkala: Epokha, 2011). Originally published in *Sbornik svedenii o Kavkazskikh gortsakh*, 1868.

Muheddin-Muhammed-Khanov, "Istinnie i lozhnie posledovateli tariqata," trans. Abdullah Omarov *Sbornik svedenii o Kavkazskikh gortsakh*, vol. 4 (1870).

A. P. Sergeenko. "Hajji Murat: Istoriia pisanie," in L. V. Tolstoi. *Polnoe sobranie sochineni v 90 tomakh*. Vol. 35 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennii Literatura, 1950).

Discussion Question:

What role did life-writing play in enabling 19th century North Caucasus intellectuals to articulate an identity for themselves and their people?