

CAUCASUS HISTORY – Literature

Overview

Literature in the Caucasian states began to develop after the spread of Christianity, and was heavily influenced by Byzantine, Persian and Arab culture. Early literature consisted of hagiographic literature, translations, biographic works, chronicles, epics and odes. From the 15th through the 18th centuries, the Persian influence in the literature of the Caucasus continued. However, writers in the 17th century began to use secular themes and in the 19th century, due to the church's declining influence, literature became increasingly secular. After the Caucasus states were annexed by the Russian Empire, under the influence of European writers and the Russians, Romanticism showed its influence in the writers' works. Writers began to question the Russian presence and portrayed social themes.

Under the influence of the Enlightenment, writers translated works from the French philosophers. Romantic writers in the second half of the 19th century became acquainted with the Russian *Populist* (Narodnik) ideas, Realism was replaced by Romanticism and writers began to publish satirical novels and discuss literature, art, social and philosophical issues.

Under the Soviets, after the 1920s, those writers who did not use socialist themes in their works were persecuted by the Soviet authorities. Writers were not allowed to use nationalistic themes, and the Communist party implemented anti-Western and restrictionist sentiments in literature demanding only the promotion of Socialist Realism in literature. The artistic qualities declined due to the imposed norms of Socialist Realism and strict political monopoly. During World War II, literature became the instrument for war propaganda. Many writers used critical sentiments against Stalin and the post World War II politics. After the death of Stalin, during the de-Stalinization period, all the writers who suffered from the inhumane treatment of the state, had their reputations restored and their works were republished. As Soviet censorship eased, a new generation of writers emerged criticising the corruption of the Soviet administration.

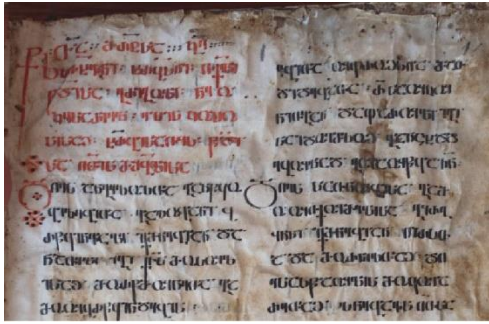
POST-CLASSICAL PERIOD

SOUTH CAUCASUS

GEORGIA: The earliest Georgian hagiographic literary text was *Martyrdom of St. Shushanik* (Shushanikis tsameba) written by Jacob Tsurtaveli from the 5th century. The text carried features of the pre-Christian writing tradition.

Translations: Georgian literature began to develop after the spread of Christianity. It was heavily influenced by Byzantine, Persian and Arab culture. After the conversion to Christianity, Georgian writers began to translate both religious and secular works from Greek, Arabic, Persian, Armenian and Syriac. Monasteries became major centers in the development of the early literary works and played an important role in the further development of the Georgian literary tradition. After the invention of the Georgian alphabet, the Gospels were among the first works translated into Georgian from ancient Armenian.

Hagiographic Literature: *The Life of Saint Nino* (a life of a Greek woman who ministered to the Georgians to convert them to Christianity) and the *Martyrdom of the Holy Queen Shushanik* are the earliest attested Georgian hagiographic literature from the 5th century.



In the 10th – 11th centuries, the Georgian chronicler Leonti Mroveli and a monk and theologian Eprem Mtsire translated numerous works of hagiographic literature into Georgian.

Homiletic Works: Homiletic-hagiographic works were collected in the *Mravaltavi* (Book of Multiple texts). Another homiletic work was the two sermons of *Saint Sophron of Jerusalem* translated by Eprem Mtsire in the 9th century.

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Chronicles: Two early works, *Moktsevai Kartlisai* and *Kartlis Tskhovreba* contain various historical sources.

The anonymous *Passion of Evstati of Mtskheta* is a document from the second half of the 6th century that explains Christian doctrine. In the 10th century, a series of stories titled *Georgia's Appeal* provided new information for the adoption of Christianity by claiming that the origins of Christianity in Georgia could be associated with a young native woman named Nino.

Biographical Works: In Georgia, the most popular genre of historical writing became the biography. The first original work was the *Life of St. Shushanik* written in the 5th century.

The works that originated in the monasteries in southwestern Georgia were about the career and personality of a religious leader, St. Gregory of Khandzta from the 9th century.

Hymnographical Works: There were many hymnographical works written towards the end of the 10th century. A comprehensive hymnographic collection belongs to Mikel Modrekili. King David IV Aghmashenebeli wrote *Hymns of Repentance* in 1120 depicting his humility and zeal.

Secular literature: The first secular literature was Mose Khoneli's *Amiran-Darejaniani* from the 12th century.

Odes: Iovane Shavteli's *Abdulmesia* and Grigol Chakhrukhadze's *Tamariani* were odes praising the Christian virtues of King David the Builder and Queen Tamar.

Epic Poems: *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* written by Shota Rustaveli in the 12th century is considered the best Georgian national poem of the Golden Age during Queen Tamar's reign. It was about the adventures of three heroes who defend their country and queen.

During the Mongol invasions in the 13th century, Georgian cultural life began to decline. Literary efforts in this period were limited to copying old manuscripts. Then, with the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, Georgia was separated from Christian Europe.

The 15th and the 18th centuries witnessed the continuation of the influence of Persian literature. For example, Serapion Sabashvili-Kedelauri's *Rostomiani* was a copy of the Persian epic the *Shahname*. King Archil's *Visramiani* was a direct translation of an old Persian *Vīs and Rāmīn* written by Fakhruddin As'ad Gurgani. However, this was also the period that marked the beginning of a period of revival in Georgian literature with King Archil's great contributions *The Lay of Archil* and *The Dialog between Teimuraz and Rustveli*.

In 1625 King Teimuraz I wrote his original poem *The Book and Passion of Queen Ketevan* about his mother's martyrdom, soon after her death.

ARMENIA: After Mesrop Mashtots created the Armenian alphabet in the 5th century, Armenian culture and literature began to flourish. Mashtots himself was one of the first Armenian poets. The *Sharakans* (chants) were considered first as poetry chanted during religious services by the Armenian monks.

Translations: The translation of the Holy Scriptures from Syriac into Armenian in the 5th century is considered the first written literature. Between the 5th and 13th centuries historical works from Greek like *Eusebius of Caesarea*, *Socrates*, *Platon*, *Aristotle* and the *Jewish War of Josephus* were translated into Armenian. With such translations, the national literary language was enriched.

Oral literature: The Armenian epic poem *Sassountsi Davit* from the 8th century passed from generation to generation through oral tradition. It depicted a hero and his long-lasting struggle against the Arab conquerors and liberation from them.

Spiritual literature: In 10th century, the Armenian monk, theologian and poet Krikor Naregatsi in his study titled *The Book of Lamentations* combined sacred images with his personal feelings, judgements and true confessions.

Poetry: In the 11th century, the rise of Armenian poetry was attributed to the works of the poet Krikor Naregatsi. Krikor authored hymns, chants, panegyrics and homilies. Nerses Shnorhali also made important contributions to the development of Armenian poetry. He wrote epic poems and songs in Armenian, and was the founder of the Cilician school of poetry.

The poet Nahapet Kuchak, an *ashough* (minstrel) who lived in the 16th century, was known for his *hairens* (quatrains with 15 syllables) depicted his homeland, exile, love and desires.

Fables: Vardan Aygektsi and Mkhitar Gosh were intellectuals famous for their numerous fables which reflected their real world. Aygektsi's fable collection, the *Book of the Fox* (Aghvesagirq) was first published in Amsterdam in 1668.

Prose: The fictional prose of Mkhitar Gosh acquired a distinctive character. His 190 parables reflect the 12th century socio-political situation of Armenia, which had achieved independence. The figurative heroes of the parables are diverse: celestial bodies, various species of flora, animals, and humans. They contain numerous domestic and historical conversations, and exhilarating stories reflecting everyday life in which human relationships are being created.

Verse: In the 13th and the 16th centuries, the dimension of verse increased. These works touched upon the themes of love, nature, social life, alienation and moral education. They express the hardships of the people and individuals, patriotic moods and touch on philosophical issues of social status, life, death, the soul, and the body.

In the poetry of phased opposition to the development of secular ideas, doctrinal trends are secondary. Even after the 14th century, there were still inventions in which, opposed to the principles of Christian doctrine, human preference is given to material aspirations. Anthems dedicated to the Apostles, Christians, national saints and shrines reflect more mundane than religious phenomena.

In the 15th century, Armenian poets like Mkrtych Naghash began to use more secular themes such as love, grief, nature, and his journeys. Another famous poet who wrote about love, compassion, and philosophy of life was Nahapet Kuchak. The poet Grigoris Akhtamartsi depicted the suffering of his people and the foreign invasion of his country.

Naghash Hovnatan was one of the best known representative of secular poetry in the 17th century. Hovnatan also wrote numerous satirical and romantic songs and odes.

AZERBAIJAN:

Caucasian Albanian written literature was attested in the form of epigraphic manuscripts dating back to the 5th century.

Poetry: In the 7th century, the Caucasian Albanian poet Devdek wrote an elegy on the death of Javanshir.

The anonymous epic poetry in the *Book of Dede Qorqud* that consists of twelve stories depicting the struggle of the Oghuz Turks with Pechenegs and Kipchaks for independence, was originally written in 11th century.

During the period of the Seljuks, with Nizami Ganjavi's *Treasure of Secrets* (the *Khamsa*), *Khosrov and Shirin*, *Leyli and Mejnun*, *Yeddi gezal* (Seven Beauties) and *Iskendername*, Azerbaijani literature reached its peak and the literature entered a Renaissance period.

Nasreddin Tusi, Maragali Ovhadi and Arif Ardabili followed the traditions of Nizami. Nasreddin Tusi, wrote a moral-didactic work called *Ahlaki-Nasiri*. Maragali Ovhadi's epic poems *Jami-Jem* and *Dehname* made an important contribution to Azerbaijan epic poetry. His *Fahhadnameh* was written under the influence of Nizami in 1369.

Izzeddin Hasanoglu wrote many poems in Azerbaijani and Persian, and he was well-known with his *divan* and *ghazals*.

Hurufism: In the 14th century a religious-political movement, a protest against radical religious dogmas called Hurufism existed in Azerbaijan. The founder of Hurufism, Fazlallah Naimi was a poet who wrote on the theories of Hurufism in his *Divan*, *Javidan-namah*, *Mahabbat-namah*, *Arsh-namah* and *Nawm-namah*. The other representative of Hurufism was the poet and thinker Imadeddin Nasimi who founded Turkic classical *arūd* poetry. Nasimi was also the first lyricist who wrote *ghazals* (philosophical poems) in Azerbaijani.

Imadaddin Nasimi was also one of the Hurufi mystical poets of the late 14th and early 15th centuries and he authored a *Divan* and *Ghazals*. The poets Fuzuli and Shah Ismail Khatai followed Nasimi and further developed his tradition.

In the 16th century, Shah Ismail Khatai wrote his *Divan*, *Dahnamah* (Ten Epistles) and didactic epic *Nesihatname* in Azerbaijani by using motifs from traditional Azerbaijani folk poetry.

The same century witnessed an epic book *Dede Qorqud* which consists of twelve stories reflecting the oral tradition of the Oghuz nomads.

The poet and thinker Mahammad Fuzuli played a very important role in the development of Azerbaijani literary language with his romance *Leyli and Mejnun* in the 16th century. Fuzuli's prose *Shikayetname* was another influential work.

The folk epics *Ashiq Garib*, *Abbas and Gulgaz*, *Asli and Kerem*, and *Koroghlu* were the folk poetries of the 17th century.

NORTH CAUCASUS

CHECHNYA: With the adoption of Islam, the Arabic alphabet became the first Chechen literary script towards the end of the 17th century and it was used as the literary, scientific and business language. Chechen literature flourished under the influence of translations of theological sources of Sufi belief, ethical treatises poetry, and love songs from Turkish, Persian and Arabic between the 17th and 18th centuries. The

Chechen population, residing in mountainous areas on the border of Georgia, used the Georgian alphabet between the 8th -19th centuries.

Teptars (Family Chronicles): A majority of *Teptars* were thoroughly revised in the 17th century, after the Chechens had adopted Islam and Arabic writing.

Illis (epic songs): The *Illies* continued their existence in the medieval period. Their composition was about the struggle for equality against the oppression of the local rulers.

Nart Sagas (folk epic): The Nakh legends included a group called the *Nart-Orxustxoi* and these legends described the Narts as aggressive brigands, who fought against popular heroes.

Questions:

1- What motivated medieval writers to compose histories and biographies?

Readings:

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- 2- Historical Dictionary of Georgia, The Scarecrow Press Inc., 2007.
- 3- Khachikyan, A., *History of Armenia*, Edit Print, Armenia, 2010.
- 4- Leeming, E.L., "Creating an Orthodox Past: Georgian Hagiography and the Construction of a Denominational Identity", *Medieval Worlds*, No. 10, 2019, pp. 61-71
- 5- <https://rustaveli.tripod.com/aboutme.html>
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EARLY MODERN PERIOD

SOUTH CAUCASUS

GEORGIA: By the 18th century, the Georgian literature revived with the publication of Shota Rustaveli's epic poem *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*. In this lyrical poem, the author depicted the adventures of three heroes who defended their country and queen.

At the beginning of the 18th century, the King Vakhtang VI made an important contribution to Georgia's literary life by establishing the first printing house. As a poet himself, he translated many poems from Persian and wrote his poetic text *Martirika*.

The King Vakhtang VI also established commissions to translate foreign treatises and founded *Rustvelology* (the study of Rustaveli's epic).

Sulkhan Saba Orbeliani: Orbeliani was the author of the first encyclopedic dictionary of the Georgian language, *Sitkvis kona* and he also wrote many didactic fables like *Sibrdzne Sitsruisa* and *Stsavlani*.

Mamuka Baratashvili: Baratashvili was well-known with his 63-verse poem called *Qeba mefisa bakarisa* and with his first poetic work *Chashniki anu leksis stsavlis tsigni* written in Georgian. He also began to use new poetic meters.

David Guramishvili: Guramishvili composed an autobiographical poetry, *Davitiani* and wrote poetry on the misfortunes of Georgia and his own life.

Timothy Gabashvili: Gabashvili was a travel writer who wrote his *Mimosvla* in 1759 in which he depicted his experiences throughout Caucasia and the Middle East.

Besarion Zakarias dze Gabashvili (Besiki): The Georgian poet Besiki wrote heroic odes like *On the Battle of Aspidza* and *The Battle of Rukhi* and love poems *I Entered a Garden of Melancholy*, *I Understood Your Accusations* and *The Blackbirds*. Besiki also used eastern poetic forms such as the *mukhambazi* and *baiati*.

ARMENIA: In the 18th century, the literary genre *lyricism* in Armenian literature was developed in three lines: religious patriotic poems which were aimed at educating people in Christian values and spirit, secular cantos which were written on satirical and social motives, and folk-gusan songs which consisted of folk, national-gusan and ashugh.

Troubadours (Ashugh)

Sayat Nova: One of the prominent Armenian ashughs of this century was Sayat-Nova. He performed his songs in Georgian, Turkish, and Armenian.

Naghsh Hovnatan: Hovnatan was also a poet and an ashugh like Nova. He founded the new Armenian minstrel school, following medieval Armenian lyric poetry.

AZERBAIJAN:

Molla Veli Vidadi: In his works, such as *Vafiq*, *Chokdandir*, *Aghlarsan* and *Musibatname*, Vidadi depicted historical events and feudal oppression, hopelessness and loneliness during the oppressive khanate period. Vidadi also wrote lyric poems. He was the master of *goshma* (Ashugh folk poetry).

Molla Penah Vaqif: The vizier of Karabakh khanate, Vaqif wrote poems. The main subject of Vaqif creativity was describing of love. After he was murdered on the order of Karabakh khan and his works were destroyed, later a number of his poems were collected and published in 1856 by Mirza Yusuf Nersesof.

NORTH CAUCASUS

CHECHNYA:

Illî: *Illî* continued to be one of the most important genres in Chechen literature depicting the heroic acts of young men to protect their community and their land. The *Illî* ends with the victory of the main character.

Chechen literature was also enriched during the Persian, Arab and the Ottoman conquests after the adoption of Arabic script and through the translations of Oriental poetry and love lyrics from Arabic into the Chechen language.

Questions:

1- How did the literature of outside cultures influence the local literatures of the Caucasus?

Readings:

- 1- Roudik, P.L., *Culture and Customs of the Caucasus*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009.
- 2- Mikaberidze, A., *Historical Dictionary of Georgia*, The Scarecrow Press. Inc., 2007.
- 3- <https://ostarmenia.com/en/literature-middleage-xvii-xviii/>
- 4- Jaimaukha, A., *Chechens A Handbook*, RoutledgeCurzon, 2005.
- 5- Ilyasov, L., *Diversity of the Chechen Culture*, From Historical Roots to the Present, UNESCO, 2009.

19TH CENTURY

SOUTH CAUCASUS

GEORGIA:

In the first half of the 19th century, after Georgia was annexed by the Russian Empire, Georgian literature fell under the influence of Romanticism. Poets, among them Alexander Chavchavadze, Grigol Orbeliani and Nikoloz Baratashvili, began to discuss Georgia's past and the Russian presence. Under the influence

of the Enlightenment, Chavchavadze began to make translations from the French philosophers. While his poems like *Gogcha*, *Vai droni*, *Droni*, *Isminet msmenno*, *Kavkasia* expressed his sorrow for Georgia's past, his poem *Siyvarulo dzalsa shensa* was considered one of the best representatives of romantic poems in Georgian literature. In his poem *Bedi Kartlisa* (Georgia's Fate), Baratashvili also gave voice to his deep emotions about the Russian occupation. Orbeliani's poems *Iaralis*, *Mukhambazi*, and *Sadghegrdzelo anu omis shemdeg ghame Ikhini Erevnis siakhloves* reflected his patriotism and humanity.

In the mid-19th century, Realism was replaced by Romanticism. Writers began to publish satirical novels which criticized and ridiculed Georgian bourgeois society. One writer, Giorgi Eristavi wrote the satirical comedies *Dava any tochka da zapetaia* (1840) and *Gakra* (1849) criticizing Georgian society. The dramatist Lavrenti Ardaziani wrote a novel, *Solomon Isakich Mejganuashvili*, which talked about the new middle class and discussed the problems between the bourgeois society and the nobles. Another realist writer, Daniel Chonkadze, in his novel *Suramis tsikhe*, took a critical look at the serfdom issue, the nobility, and the clergy.

Tergdaleulni Writers: The second half of the 19th century witnessed young writers known as *Tergdaleulni*, educated in St. Petersburg University, starting a political national movement in Georgia. They were the most progressive figures who played an important role in the national revival of Georgia and the Georgian language and literature. These writers were against Tsarist rule, and at the same time fighting with the older generation of writers, the so called *Mtkvardaleulni*, in their use of the medieval language in their publications. Inspired by European liberal reforms, they sought to liberate Georgia, to revive culture and to increase literacy by using the vernacular language in their publications so that they were accessible to the public. One of the most influential of these writers was *Ilya Chavchavadze*. He made a great contribution to Georgian realist literature with his satirical works *Sakhrchobelaze*, *Katsia-adamiani? Kako-qachaghi*, *Otaraant kvrivi* and *Mgzavis tserilebi* by portraying the moral decline of contemporary Georgian society comparing with the life of the common people. With Chavchavadze, the poet *Akaki Tsereteli* also took an active role in the development of national consciousness in Georgia. He was the founder of the Georgian Drama Society and wrote many poems like *Alexandra* (1860), *Simghera mkis dros*, *Glekhis aghsareba* (1863), *Tsitsinatela* (1869), *Gazapkhuli* (1881), *Amirani* (1883), *Chaghara* (1886) and *Satrfos*, *Gantiadi* (1892).

Georgian prose writer *Alexander Kazbegi* portrayed the struggle of the highlanders against Tsarist rule and their detailed oppressive life in his *Eliso* (1882), *Mamismkvleli* (1882), *Tsiko* (1883) and *Khevisberi Gocha* (1884).

Vazha Pshavela depicted the everyday life of the Georgian highlanders and the beauty of the mountainous landscapes in his epics and poems such as *Aluda Ketelauroi*, *Bakhtrioni*, *Gogotur and Apshina*, *Eteri and Mindia*.

The writer Egnate Ninoshvili wrote many short stories and novels which described the hard, oppressive life of Georgian peasants under Tsarist rule in Georgia as in his *Gogia Uishvili* (1890), *Lake Paliastomi* (1891), *Simona* (1892) and *Kristine* (1893). Ninoshvili was also one of the founders of *Mesame Dasi* (Third Generation), first Marxist organization established in 1892 in Tbilisi. Joseph Stalin joined in this organization in 1898.

ARMENIA: In the 19th century, due to the church's declining influence, literature became increasingly secular. Through translations, the Armenians became acquainted with Russian and German writers who portrayed social themes as in Aleksander Movsesian's (Shirvanzade)'s novel *Chaos* which portrayed the life of a large industrial city.

Between 1820 and 1860, Armenian writers like Proshian, Aghanian, Nazarian produced many literary works nationalistic in nature in Tiflis, Erivan, and Etchmiadzin.

Under the influence of Russian and European writers, Romanticism showed its influence in Eastern Armenian literature. Romantic writers in Eastern Armenian literature between 1860 and 1890 became

acquainted with the Russian *Populist* (Narodnik) ideas and formulated an Armenian identity by depicting the common Armenian people and their social life. Another writer who was under the influence of *Populism* (Narodnism) was Perch Proshian, who also portrayed the common people of an Armenian village.

The founder of modern Eastern Armenian literature was *Khachatur Abovian* who authored a great number of books for children. In his novel *Wounds of Armenia* (Verk Hayastani) published in 1858, he depicted the struggles against religious and ethnic oppression, events during the Russian-Persian wars and the unification of Eastern Armenia with Russia. In this novel, he did not use the literary language called *Grabar* (used in the Church), but a new literary language called *Ashkharabar* introduced by Mikael Nalbandian. Mikael Nalbandian was also the first Armenian poet who discussed political issues of that era in his works. In his poem *Liberty*, he raised the question of freedom.

AZERBAIJAN: At the beginning of the 19th century, with the incorporation of Azerbaijan into the Russian Empire, Azerbaijani literature gained a new aspect. Russian and pro-Western tendencies and realist-secular motives began to appear in the literature.

Under the influence of Russian and Western literatures, the writers Abbasgulu aga Bakikhanov, Mirza Shafi Vazeh and Ismayil bey Qutqashinli began to reflect humanistic ideas in their work. Qutqashinli wrote two books, *Safarnama* and *Rashid beg and Saadat khanum*. *Safarnama* included his travel memories in the Middle East. *Rashid beg and Saadat khanum* was a romantic story written in French and published in Warsaw.

Another 19th century Azerbaijani writer, Abbasgulu agha Bakikhanov was known with his *Riyadh al-Quds* (The Holy Garden) written in Azerbaijani. He wrote his book inspired by the religious influence of the Muslim communities in Quba. His *Golestan-e Eram* (The Blooming Flower Garden) was written in Persian and covered the history of the East Caucasus from Ancient Times to the early 19th century. Bakikhanov's first fiction work, *Ketab-e Asgariyyeh* (The Book of Asgar) written in Persian, was a love story of two young people and their tragic end.

The poet, dramaturg, literary critic and the first realist writer Mirza Fatali Akhundov published his first work *The Oriental Poem* on the death of the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin in 1837. Akhundov also wrote plays like *The Tale of Mollah Ibrahimkhalil the Alchemist* (1850), *The Tale of Monsieur Jordan the Botanist and the Celebrated Sorcerer, Dervish Mastali Shah* (1850), *The Tale of the Bear that Caught the Bandit* (1851), *The Adventures of the Vizier of the Khan of Lenkeran* (1851), *The Adventures of the Mean Knight or Haji Qara* (1852) and *The Tale of the Defense Lawyers* (1855). They were the first Western-style realist plays in Azerbaijan literature. He also wrote a short realistic historical novel called *The Deceived Stars*.

Gasim bey Zakir was considered one of the founders of satirical poetry and critical realism. In his works, Zakir criticized the arbitrary behavior of the tsarist officers, landlords and clergy. Zakir also wrote some poems in Persian.

Heyran Khanim was another poet of the 19th century who wrote lyrical poems such as ghazals (short poems composed of rhyming couplets - Bayt), rubais (verses of a poem composed of four lines) and gasidas (odes) in the Azerbaijani and Persian languages. Khurshudbanu Natavan and Fatma khanum Kamina were other women writers in the 19th century. Natavan led the *Majlis- Uns* (Society of Friends) in Shusha.

Beyt us-safa: Azerbaijani intellectuals established a *Literary Council* called *Beyt us-safa* (Comfort) in the middle of the 19th century at the home of the poet Mahammad Safa in Shamakhi to discuss literature, art and philosophical issues. The head of the Council was a poet and an enlightener, Seyid Azim Shirvani. Mollah Agha Bikhud, Aghababa Zuhuri, and Alakbar Gafil were among the members of the Council.

Fovjul-fusaha: Another literary Council called *Fovjul-fusaha* (Group of Orators) was established in Lankaran led by the poet Mirza Ismail Gasir. The other members of this Council were Molla Alakbar Ajiz, Huseyngulu Shuris and Mirza Isa Khayali.

The other literary societies were *Guba Gulistan Literary Gatherings*, *Ordubad Ajumeni-Suara* (The Assembly of Poets), *Shemakha Beytus-Safa* (The house of Healing), *Majmaus-Suara* (The Assembly of Poets), and *Majlis- Uns* (Society of Friends).

NORTH CAUCASUS:

CHECHNYA: In the 1870s, the Chechen writers Chakh Akhriev and Umalat Laudaev narrated travel accounts mostly focusing on social, political and economic issues.

After the incorporation of Chechnya into the Russian Empire, some writers began to use the Cyrillic alphabet. It was the Russian general Ivan Bartolomei who authored first Chechen primer in 1866 which composed of the translations of the Chechen proverbs, funny stories and heroic tales.

Questions:

- 1- In the 19th century, why was literature the primary means of social criticism and calls for societal reforms?
- 2- If the Russification was intended to suppress local cultures, why did literature in local languages develop so extensively in the 19th century? Does this indicate that the Russian policy was primarily aimed at administration?

Readings:

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- 2- <https://azerbaijan.az/en/related-information/93>
- 3- <https://ostarmenia.com/en/tag/literature/>
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20TH CENTURY

SOUTH CAUCASUS

GEORGIA:

In the early 20th century, the *Tsisperkantslebi group* was founded under the guidance of the poet Grigol Robakidze that played an important role in the development of the Georgian poetry and prose. The aim of this group was to combine the traditional Georgian culture with modern trends. They were under the influence of symbolism. Following the Bolshevik rule in Georgia, some of the members of the group emigrated to Europe like Grigol Robakidze who escaped to Germany. The authors works were banned in Georgia until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Later the poets Paolo Iashvili, Titsian Tabidze, Galaktion Tabidze, Nikolo Mitsishvili, Kolau Nadiradze and Valerian Gaprindashvili joined this group.

During the Stalinist purge in the 1930s, those writers who did not use socialist themes in their works were persecuted by the Soviet authorities for their "decadent" style of lyrics that carried both symbolism and mysticism as seen in the poems of Titsian Tabidze and Paolo Iashvili. Tabidze was sent to prison and he died there, and Iashvili was persecuted until he shot himself inside the building of the *Georgian Writers' Union* in July 1937. Another writer Galaktion Tabidze survived the purges, however, he committed suicide in 1959.

Regardless of strict censorship, the control on the content of the works and the strong emphasis on Socialist idealism, the Georgian writers never give up producing. One of these writers was Konstantine Gamsakhurdia. He wrote several historical novels *Dionisos ghimili*, *Mtvaris motatseba*, *Didostatis marjvena*, *Vazis kvaviloba* and *Davit Aghmashenebeli* and used a new style of phrasing and syntactic structure.

The other writers like Leo Kiacheli authored *Gvadi Bigva*, *Tavadis Kali Maya*, *Almasgir Kibulan* and *Khaki Adzba*. Anna Kalandadze wrote her short and personal poems in the 1940s. Grigol Abashidze wrote classical style poems combining the themes from past and present, historical symbolism and philosophy,

and authored historical novels like *Lasharela*, *Didi ghome* and *Tsotne dadiani anu kartvelta datsema da amaghleba*.

In the late 1950s, during the Khrushchev's Thaw period, the first secretary of Georgian Communist party, Vasili Mzhavanadze suppressed literary circles and censored the journals. The periodicals like *Literaturnaia Gruzia*, *Mnatobi*, and *Tsiskari* were put under control of party officials. In the 1960s and the early 1970s, the book publishing was directly controlled by the Party.

The poet Mukhran Machavariani was a poet of this oppressive period and he was the author of the poems *Poems* (1955), *The Red Sun and the Green Grass* (1958), *Silence Without You* (1958). He also translated many European writers' poems into Georgian.

The short story writers Giorgi Shatberashvili wrote his short stories like *Mkvdris mze* in 1959. Nodar Dumbadze published his first anthology of short stories *Sopleli bichi* in 1960.

With Eduard Shevardnadze's liberal tendencies, the government allocated more financial aid for the development of Georgian literature, cinema and theater. In the 1970s, there were number of literary journals published: *Kritika* (1972), *Saunje* (1974), and *Gantiadi* (1972).

The writer Chabua Amirejibi wrote his epic *Data Tutashkhia* in 1975 he was in prison in Siberia. It was a story of a tragic life of a Georgian criminal, Data Tutashkhia who lived in the Imperial Russian period. He also wrote *Gora Mborgali* in 1978 depicting his experiences in his whole life, but it was not published until 1995.

The writer Otar Chiladze wrote novels combining myth and history as in his *Gzaze erti katsi midioda* (1973), *Kovelman chmmena mpovnelman* (1976), and *Rkinis teatri* (1981). He also authored the novel *Avelum* (1995) that depicted the disastrous years of 1989-1991.

Rezo Mishveladze was known with his novelettes and short stories like *Mtsukhri* (1983), *Elda* (1987), *Ganachen* (1990), *Samotsdarva akhali novella* (1997), and *Ai kvekana* (1999).

ARMENIA: At the beginning of the 20th century, the development of lyrical poems dedicated to the writers like Avetik Isahakian who connected the national views with European thoughts, depicting the conflict between the society and the individuals and the tragic lives of the Armenian people.

Yeghishe Charents was another poet who combined the new and traditional ideas in his poetry as shown in his *Dantesque Legend* (1916), *Soma* (1918), *Charents-Name* (1922), *Uncle Lenin* (1924), *Country of Nairi* (1926), *Epical Sunrise* (1930) and *Book of the Way* (1934). He became a victim of the Stalinist repressions.

The Armenian writers mostly used heroic stories like struggle for the independence and unification of the country in their work. Among those writers, there were the poets Rafael Patkanian, Hovhaness Hovhannisyanyan, Vahan Teryan, the prose writers and the poets Avetik Isahakian, Ghazaros Aghayan, Perch Proshian, the playwright Gabriel Soundukian, the novelists Nar-Dos and Muratsan.

The poet and prose writer Hovhaness Tumanian wrote lyrics, fables and epic poems. He was the author of the poems *David of Sassoun* (1902), *The Capture of Fort Tmuk* (1902), *A Drop of Honey* (1909), *The End of Evil* (1908). Under the Communist system, which restricted the freedom of expression of the writers, Tumanian wrote his *The Shah and the Peddler* (1917).

During the minister of Public Education and Art Nikol Axbalyan of the First Republic of Armenia, a new political and cultural life began in 1918. Axbalyan formed an Armenian literary company, that held literary and cultural activities, also published books. However, when the First Republic ceased to exist as an independent state in 1921, the company's activities stopped.

During the Sovietization of Armenia, with the imposition of the official dogma of Socialist Realism, Armenians were subjected to restraints beyond their control, the writers were not allowed to use nationalistic themes, and the Communist party implemented anti-Western and restrictionist sentiments in literature demanding only promotion of Socialist Realism not only in literature but also in art. Armenian literature endured constant tension created by Politburo of the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee.

The writers who were not able to comply with party requirements were banned from publishing their works and they were even prosecuted. For instance, Aksel Bakunts was arrested due to his writing, a story of an old man who complained about land scarcity in Armenia.

Goskomizdat (The State Committee for Publishing) began to censor literature, banning any publication not conforming to official ideology. The writers like Azat Vshtuni showed his support to the new regime with his poem *Dictator* (1925) encouraging worker solidarity. Early Soviet Armenian literature depicted the Communist ideology and centralized statehood.

In the early 30s, there was a new futurist literary society called *Three's Group*, founded by Yeghishe Charents, Gevorg Abov and Azat Vshtuni who rejected the artistic legacy of the past, used new language, new styles and new methods. In 1934, the Armenian Writers' Union was formed.

Poetry, historical novels and patriotic ballads distanced the writers like Hovhannes Shiraz from the Soviet realities. In the late 1950s, many Armenian writers condemned the Stalin's rule and raised questions of the Soviet reality in their works published in the *Armenian Writers' Journal* and in the Armenian weekly *Literary Journal*.

In the late 60s, a new generation of Armenian writers like Paruyr Sevak, Gevorg Emin, Silva Kaputikyan and Hovhannes Shiraz emerged criticising the corruption of the Soviet administration.

As Soviet censorship eased, Modernist and Avantgarde writers like Artem Harutyunyan wrote poetries like *Land of signs* (1977) and *Letter to Noah and other poems* (1997) that did not fit Socialist Realism.

AZERBAIJAN: At the beginning of the 20th century, the Azeri literature was under the impact of the three revolutions: the *First Russian Revolution* (1905), the *Iranian Constitutional Revolution* (1906-1911), and the *Young Turk Revolution* (1908). The writers like Alakpar Sabir in Azerbaijan expressed their hopes of revolutionary awareness in their poetry. Sabir wrote satirical poems like *Hophop*, *Abunasr Şeybani* and advocated linguistic independence of Azerbaijani from the Turkish.

There were many magazines and periodicals published in Baku between 1905-1917. These periodicals published articles on the issue of purification of the language from the influence of the Ottoman Turkish spread through the movement of Pan-Turkism. The writer Gasanbek Melikov promoted cultural unification and the creation of a unified Turkic language for Turkic people in his articles that were published in *Hayat* newspaper in 1905. The proponent of Pan-Turkism was Ali bey Huseynzade who published his views in his magazine called *Fuyuzat* criticising the policies of the Tsarist government. Jalil Mammad Quluzade founded the satirical magazine, *Molla Nasraddin* which depicted the social and economic life and criticized the obsolete customs practiced in the Caucasus in the early 20th century.

The poet Muhammad Hadi was considered as the founder of Romanticism. He became a patriot for freedom under the influence of pan-Turkic tendencies and wrote poems *Neghmeysi-ehrarane*, *Dushizeyi-hurriyete*, *Huriyi-herriyete*, *Edvari-teceddud* and *Esari-inqilab* and published them in *Heyat*, *Fuyuzat* and *Burhani-Tereggi* journals.

During the Soviets, especially in the 1930s, the writers like Huseyn Javid, Salman Mumtaz, Qurban Musayev, Taqi Shahbazi, Ali Nazim, and Mikail Mushfiq who were the members of the Union of Writers of Azerbaijan became the victims of the Stalin's purges. The artistic qualities declined due to imposed norms of Socialist Realism and strict political monopoly. Among the writers who escaped Stalin's purges were Samad Vurgun, Jafar Jabbarli, and Ilyas Effendiyev.

During World War II, the literature became the instrument for war propaganda. Many writers and poets who were the members of the Union of Writers of Azerbaijan travelled to northern Iran and organized literary meetings between 1941-1946. Among the writers were the novelists Mammad Said Ordubadi and Mirza Ibrahimov, and the poets Suleiman Rustamov and Bakhtiar Vahabzade. However, Vahabzade also used critical sentiments against Stalin and the post World War II politics. He destroyed his early poetic works in 1952 due to his fear that they would be discovered by the authorities.

After the death of Stalin, during the de-Stalinization period, all the writers who suffered from the inhumane treatment of the state, have their reputations restored and their works were republished.

During the *Glasnost* period that aimed at reforming the outdated government and economic system, it brought positive changes in the cultural sphere in the sense that the contact with the outside world increased and the banned writers were rehabilitated. The victims were portrayed as "the innocent" in the organ of the Writer's Union of Azerbaijan *Ababiyyat va Incasanat*.

The literature was still the exclusive possession of the Party and the writers' works were under strict control and were trapped within the prescribed boundaries.

NORTH CAUCASUS

CHECHNYA: In the early 20th century, the verse writers like S.Gaisumov, S.Sugaipov and A.Tuchayev wrote in Arabic.

Literature developed in Chechnya the 1920s with the contributions of the writers like A. Dudaev, S. Sagaipov, M. Salmurzaev, M. Mamakaev, S. Baduev and A. Nazhaev. Ahmat Nazhayev collected his stories in *Songs and Stories* published in 1923. The stories of the writers like Abdi Dudayev, Shirvani Sagaipov, Mahmad Salmurzayev and Issa Eldarkhanov were published in the newspaper *Serlo* in 1925.

The poet, prose-writer and playwright Said Baduyev was considered as the founder of Chechen literature. In his works, he usually criticized the outdated customary laws, customs and traditions and their destructive impacts on people as in his short stories *Adats*, written in the 1920s. He also wrote the first Chechen novel, *Petimat* that depicted a woman who was fighting for her freedom.

In the 1930s, there were writers like Khalid Oshayev, Said-Bei Arsanov, Magomet Mamakayev and Shamsuddin Aiskhanov whose works portrayed the real life and the psychological effects of politics in Chechnya. Arsanov's novel *Two Generations*, published in 1931 depicting the peasants who joined the revolution. The poems *Gory Mountains* and *A Conversation with Mother* written by Magomet Mamakayev, *Guerrillas* written by Said Baduyev and *In the Chechen Mountains* written by Arbi Mamakayev all portrayed people hunted and downtrodden for centuries.

During Stalin's collectivization programme, Russian troops destroyed public and private library collections and thousands of books and their records confiscated and obliterated during the deportation of the Chechen people in 1944, only a small number of teptars were rescued.

From the late 1950s till the early 1980s, new generation writers along with the old ones made valuable contributions to the development of the Chechen literature. Said-Bei Arsanov's novel *How You Get to Know What Friendship Means* shed the light on conflicts and clashes with the Russian administration, human relations and personal experiences. The Chechen writer Khalid Oshayev's novel *The Fiery Years* portrayed the Revolution in the margins of documentary records.

The prose writer and poet Magomet Mamakayev wrote his narrative poem *Talking With Mother* (1934) provided an insight into his boyhood years. In his books *The Ice Has Broken* (1958) and *The Motherland's Road* (1960) he used the genres of travelogue and essay. His epic novels were devoted to the Civil War as in *The Myriad of the Revolution* (1963) and a noble hero as in *Zelimkhan* (1967).

Questions:

- 1- Why did the literature stay under the exclusive possession of the Party and the writers' works were under strict control in Azerbaijan even after the demise of the Soviet Union?
- 2- Regardless of strict censorship, the control on the content of the works and the strong emphasis on Socialist idealism, the writers in all the Caucasus states never give up producing. Does this show that the Soviets failed to create a genuine socialist society, but built a pseudo-socialism?

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