HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Northern Caucasus Literatures

Study Guide

Instructor

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Key Authors Discussed (organized alphabetically by last name)

al-Durgili (d. 1935)
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Abusufyan Akaev (1872–1931)
Chakh Akhriev (1850-1916)
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Adil-Girey Ch'ashe (Kalambii / Qalembiy) (1840-1872)
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Online Resources

Website of the journal of the History, Archeology and Ethnography of the Caucasus (Daghestan): https://caucasushistory.ru/2618-6772/issue/archive

Digitising Dagestan's Manuscript Heritage: The Ghumuqi Project https://daghestan.hcommons.org/

Global Literary Theory: Caucasus Literatures Compared (5-year project to compare Arabic, Persian, and Turkic literary theory; occasional blogposts on Caucasus literatures) https://globallit.hcommons.org/

Publications of the History, Archeology and Ethnography of the Caucasus (Daghestan), freely available in PDF format: https://instituteofhistory.ru/library/publications

Introduction to the North Caucasus Literatures Study Guide

Geography

This study guide offers an overview of the literatures of the northern Caucasus from antiquity to the 20th century. "Northern Caucasus" refers to the cultures of the peoples who reside on the northern side of the Caucasus mountain range, located at the intersection of Europe and Asia. On the southern side of the mountain range are Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan (not treated in this guide, except insofar as they touch on the literatures of the northern Caucasus). "Northern Caucasus" or "north Caucasus" (without capitalization) refers to this region before its annexation by the Russian Empire imposed a formal division between north and south, by naming Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan collectively as Transcaucasian (*Zakavkazie*, literally meaning "the far side of the Caucasus"). The northern Caucasus shares in common with Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan intermixtures of Christian and Muslims traditions, and of Iranian, Turkic, and interwoven strands of other indigenous cultures. But the sharp division between a 'North Caucasus,' comprising Daghestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Circassia, and a 'South Caucasus,' comprising Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, is an artifact of colonial modernity. While the distinction between north and south roughly correlates to the geographic divisions imposed by the natural landscape, with the Caucasus mountain chain dividing the north from the south, it is important to recognize that the boundaries were more porous before modernity.

The modern rubric "North Caucasus" is a proper name, reflecting the division instituted in tsarist and subsequently Soviet times between the Soviet Socialist Republics of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, which were given greater freedom to develop their literary traditions apart from Russian and the smaller Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics, such as Dagestan, Chechnya-Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Abkhazia, which were required to operate more closely under the aegis of Russian rule. "Caucasus" is used here as an adjective, rather than "Caucasian," because the latter term has acquired the misleading denotation of white or European. In fact, the peoples of the Caucasus are not homogeneously white. In Russian literature and culture, peoples from the Caucasus are considered to have dark skin and hair, and they are referred to pejoratively as "black [*chyornii*]." Similarly, indigenous Caucasus peoples speak mostly non-Indo-European languages, and their origins are too diverse to be conflated with those of Europeans.

Languages

While the southern Caucasus is linguistically diverse, the northern Caucasus is even more so. Unique and highly sophisticated languages are spoken in some cases by villages nestled high in the mountains with only a few thousand inhabitants. The literatures discussed in this study guide can roughly be situated within six language groups. First, Daghestani languages, including Avar, Lak, Lezghi, Dargwa (Dargi), Andi, Tsez, Rutul, Udi, Tabasaran, and Kalmyk (which belongs to an Eastern branch of the Mongolian languages). Second, the Nakh languages, which include the closely related languages of Chechen, Ingush, and Batsbi (also known as Tsova-Tush). Third, Circassian languages, which include Kabardinian, Abkhaz, Adyghe, Ubykh, and Abaza. Fourth, the Turkic languages of the northern Caucasus, including Qumyq (Kumyk), which functioned as a lingua franca for many disparate Caucasus peoples, Azeri, Balkar, Nogai, and Karachai. A fifth group includes the Indo-Iranian languages of the Caucasus, such as Ossetian and Tat (also known as Juhuri), spoken by the mountain Jews of Daghestan. All in all, Daghestan is the most linguistically diverse region of the northern Caucasus (and one of the most diverse in the world), where over thirty distinct languages and concentrated into a territory roughly the size of the size of Scotland.

A final overarching rubric, which necessarily comprises a large proportion of attention here, is comprised of the global languages of empire. In chronological order of their impact on the Caucasus, they are Arabic, Persian, and Russian. While not indigenous to the Caucasus, these languages played a decisive role in the development of northern Caucasus literatures, and north Caucasus writers in turn significantly contributed to each of these literatures.

Holistic Approach

Rather than presenting this complex multilingual literary landscape in atomized fashion and dividing the literatures according to the linguistic groups with which they are associated, this study guide recognizes their overlapping nature. The holistic approach adopted here focuses on the connections among different literatures and cultures, in a way that best reflects the actual experiences of north Caucasus writers and readers. The presentation therefore organizes its subject matter by genre.

The texts and authors presented in this study guide are organized into five rubrics which roughly encompass the range of genres of literary production: poetry, three prose rubrics, and drama. Prose in turn is divided into three rubrics, bringing the overall number of rubrics to five: documentary, comprised of epigraphy, legal codices, and other aspects of material and political culture, fictional, comprised of legends and tales, as well as modern forms such as the novel, and life-writing, comprised of both autobiography and biography.

Temporal Framework

The discussion has also been organized into five temporal rubrics: antiquity, the post-classical (Islamic) period, early modernity, extending from the 16th to the 19th centuries of the common era, following the incorporation of the Caucasus into the Russian empire, which transpired from 1801 onwards, and literature produced under Soviet rule.

Antiquity

The centre of north Caucasus literary production in antiquity was Caucasian Albania, which extended from western Azerbaijan and southern Dagestan from the 2nd century BCE to the 8th century of the common era. Aghvank was the primary written language of Caucasian Albania. The creation of its alphabet, which resembles the Georgian, Ethiopian and Armenian scripts, is attributed to Mesrob Mashtots, who is also credited with creating the Armenian alphabet. Except in the form of epigraphy, extensive literary works in Albanian have not survived. The script as well as the language is still in the process of being deciphered. Although there is no extensive extant written literary corpus in the literatures of the northern Caucasus prior to Islamicization, there is a rich oral tradition which was given written form in later centuries. In addition, the northern Caucasus figures centrally into world literary history, well before its literatures acquired written form, as home of the Greek mythological Prometheus, and for its associations with Medea (the subject of Euripides' play) and Jason and the Argonauts.

Postclassical Period

The conversion of large areas of the northern Caucasus, particularly southern Daghestan, to Islam, transpired from the 7th century onwards, with the conquest of Derbent by Arab armies during the reign of during the reign of caliph Umar ibn Khattab (634– 644). The ancient city of Derbent, which had first been fortified by the Sasanian ruler Anushirvan, served as a base for Arabs soldiers tasked with extending the borders of Islam, and who in many cases settled permanently in the Caucasus. This religious shift marked the beginning of intensive literary activity in the region, which took place predominantly in Arabic and was concentrated on religious and didactic genres, such as Sufi biography. Epigraphy continued to be an important medium for literary expression, in Persian, Turkic, and indigenous languages, as well as Arabic.

Early Modern Period

Literary production in the early modern Caucasus was heavily impacted by waves of invasions from numerous imperial armies, including the Mongols, the Timurids, the Safavids, and the Afsharids. The latter was headed by the widely feared Nadir Shah. After many years of struggle and bloodshed, Nadir Shah's attempt to conquer the northern Caucasus failed, and his military defeats are the subject of numerous epic poems in north Caucasus indigenous languages. Early modernity was also a period of extensive contact between the north Caucasus and the wider Islamic world. Muslim scholars travelled to Yemen, Syria, and Mecca and brought back many manuscripts from their journeys. Through their travels and studies abroad, these scholars also furthered the circulation of the works of Daghestani authors. Above all, early modernity in the north Caucasus was a period that saw the first flourishing of the indigenous languages of the Caucasus, including Avar, Lak, and Dargwa, in the *ajami* Arabic script which had been adapted to better suit the phonetic features of northern Caucasus languages.

19th Century

The impact of Russian rule—and of Russian literature—in the Caucasus became discernable from the early decades of the 19th century. Georgia was annexed to the Russian empire in 1801. The North Caucasus was incorporated into the Russian empire in different stages. The conquest of Daghestan and Chechnya was considered complete when Imam Shamil surrendered to the army of Russian General Baryatinsky in 1859. Circassia was incorporated five years later, in 1864, when Russian troops defeated the Ubykh people, who were forced, like many other north Caucasus

peoples, to migrate to the Ottoman empire and were to become extinct in the following century. Indigenous North Caucasus intellectuals had begun to write significant works in Russian long before the regions formal annexation. Russian became the medium through which many developments in modern world literature were mediated to the Caucasus. During the middle of the 19th century, Russian also became the medium in which new alphabets were created for the languages of the northern Caucasus, including Qumyq (in 1848), Chechen (1880), and Lak (1890). Although these were significant developments, it is important to note that it was not the first time these languages acquired written form: they had been written in an adapted Arabic *ajami* script for many centuries already.

20th Century

The Soviet period, beginning with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, marked another radical break in the literatures of the Caucasus. This was the period in which literary production in Chechen, Avar, Adyghe, Abkhaz, Dargwa, Lak, Balkar, Karachai, and many other indigenous North Caucasus languages became widespread and institutionalized. The Soviet state funded extensive publishing projects in these languages, and literature was produced in the all the modern literary genres, including novels and short stories. At the same time, North Caucasus literatures were heavily impacted by purges of local writers and intellectuals during the Stalinist and later periods. Writing sympathetic to Islam, and to the region's Muslim past, was officially discouraged and sometimes forbidden. North Caucasus writers who did not embrace the atheist Soviet project, or who opposed what turned out to be the Russocentrism of Soviet policies, were executed. Arabic manuscripts had to be concealed from the state, sometimes in mosques. Although de jure recognition was granted to nearly all indigenous North Caucasus languages, in practice Russian remained dominant and literary production in languages other than Russian was systematically undervalued. Many of the greatest writers from this period were executed to exiled to GULAGs due to their criticisms of the Soviet state or heterodox opinions, and several peoples were forcibly deported to Central Asia towards the end of World War II.

Note on Further Readings: Every effort has been made to mention primary sources in English translation whenever these are available. In most cases, translations in English are not available. Important or groundbreaking works of scholarship on the works mentioned, their authors, or on topics relating to their literary production, have been referenced instead, particularly when these secondary materials have influenced the interpretations offered here. In cases wherein a specific edition of a work in a language other than English is particularly noteworthy, whether for its analysis or historical significance, this source has also been referenced. In the interest of accessibility, English language scholarship has been referenced whenever possible in lieu of scholarship in other language. Where there were as yet no reliable English language works that could be referenced, recommended readings have been provided in Russian, Georgian, Arabic, Persian, Turkish and other relevant languages.

Note on Transliteration: The people whose named is variously spelling as Kumukh, Kumykh, Qumuq are spelled Qumyq (قمۇق) as a compromise between the Arabic script spelling and the actual pronunciation (and avoiding the errors introduced by transliterating from Russian).

Discussion Questions:

How do different cultural and linguistic groups within the northern Caucasus relate to each other?

What differences are there between the way the northern Caucasus is perceived from the outside and how it is perceived by natives of the region?

SECTION ONE: POETRY

Northern Caucasus Poetry—Ancient Period

From the beginning of recorded history, the Caucasus has been situated at the crossroads of empires. The name itself is an exonym, applied by outsiders. Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Persians, and many other peoples have all represented the Caucasus in various ways: as the land where Prometheus was enchained, according to the ancient Greeks, where Noah's ark landed, according to the Book of Genesis (8:4), to which Jason and the Argonauts travelled, and where Medea murdered her children in revenge for his betrayal. Early literary sources on the northern Caucasus are mostly exogeneous: composed by outsiders and written in Greek, Latin, and other languages of antiquity. Yet there is also an indigenous and multilingual northern Caucasus literature of antiquity, explored throughout this study guide.

In the present context, antiquity refers to the period before Islamicization radically altered the Caucasus' literary landscape by introducing a new language of literary culture as well as a unifying religion. Prior to Islamicization, Christianity was widespread but it co-existed with other religious such as Zoroastrianism and pagan belief systems. Long before Islamicization, however, there is ample evidence of writing among northern Caucasus peoples, especially those who had converted to Christianity as a result of contacts with Christian Georgians to the south. While the best known ancient written cultures of the Caucasus are Georgian and Armenian, Chechen and Ingush inscriptions that used the Georgian script have been found on churches near the Georgian-Ingush border. An inscription in Georgian has also survived from Tkhaba-Yerdy Church in Ingushetia's Assin Gorge, which dates back to the 8th-9th century. Ingush communities formed part of the Christian Kingdom of Queen Tamar (1184-1213).

Epic Poetry

Poetry in the ancient northern Caucasus is comprised primarily of oral ballads and other folkloric genres. Among the oral epics of Caucasus peoples, the Nart sagas and the Chechen *illi* are the most significant. These sagas span the languages of the peoples of the northern Caucasus (Adyghes, Ossetians, Chechens, Balkars, Ingush) as well as certain peoples of Daghestan and Georgia. They exist both in the form of prose tales and epic songs in verse, as well as in hybrid prosimetric (combining prose and poetic) forms. In the latter case, as noted by David Hunt in his collection of these stories, "prose is used to move the action along" with "poetry (song) providing descriptions of scenes and of people's thoughts and feelings." The sagas have also been compared with Norse Vikings epics, which deal with historical and mythical subjects. Just as these tales served as the basis for modern iterations of the German *Nibelungenlied*, including Wagner's famous opera, so were the Nart sagas used and transformed by modern North Caucasus authors to revitalize their local literatures. The discussion here focuses on the Nart sagas as poetry, while a discussion of their prosaic dimensions and their narrative content is reserved for the section on prose fiction. However, the significant overlap in terms of theme, character, and plot between the poetic and prosaic aspects of the Nart sagas should not be forgotten.

Like other ancient verse epics, including Homer's *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the Nart sagas abound in similes. Nart sagas also share in common with other ancient epics a reliance on epithets, such as "Nart's evil genius" and "indomitable." Epithets are used to form similes, involving comparisons to iron or gold, such as "golden hair" and "golden sun." Color symbology is also significant, and the literary devices of parable and allegory are frequently used. Hyperbole is another literary device that permeates the sagas. Rhythms are innovative and variable, and a variety of techniques are used to bring balance to asymmetric stanzas. Mixed rhythm, in which the final syllable of a line recurs in the next line, also features in these works. Many of these rhythms are built on consonants patterns, since Caucasus languages abound in consonants.

One feature of the Nart sagas that makes them particularly relevant to the study of northern Caucasus literatures is that they span multiple languages and have been integrated into the oral and literary heritage of numerous Caucasus peoples. It is impossible to claim the Nart sagas as uniquely Vainakh (Chechen, Ingush), Circassian, or Ossetian, for example, since they are found in each of these cultures. Different heroes arise in each group's version of the Nart sagas but they share in common the same origin, identities, and often also names. Importantly, the Nart sagas also testify to the lifeworlds of peoples who are currently extinct, such as the Ubykh. The Ubykh's Nart sagas were recorded by French linguist Georges Dumézil during his visits to Turkey during the 1930s, where the Ubykh people had been exiled following the Russian conquest of the 1860s.

Another major corpus of texts that belong to the repertoire of ancient north Caucasus literatures is *illi* (plural *illesh*), ballads that are extant only in the Chechen and Ingush languages. Although *illesh* appear to be as ancient as the Nart Chechen, they are distinguished from the Nart sagas by virtue of their close relationship to historical events. sags. Among the most ancient of these ballads are the ones dedicated to Pkharmat, the Chechen-Ingush version of Prometheus, and the ones bearing the (modern) titles 'Regarding the Earth's Cataclysm' and 'How God Punished Mankind.' *Illesh* continued to be composed throughout the postclassical and modern Chechnya and Ingushetia; these will be discussed in the next sections.

Further Reading

R. S. Akhmatova, *Illi: geroiko-ėpicheskie pesni chechentsev i ingushei* (Groznyi: Checheno-ingushskoe knizhnoe izd-vo, 1979).

John Colarusso, *Nart Sagas from the Caucasus: Myths and Legends from the Circassians, Abazas, Abkhaz, and Ubykhs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Walter May, John Colarusso, and Tamirlan Salbiev, *Tales of the Narts: ancient myths and legends of the Ossetians* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016)

David Hunt, *Legends of the Caucasus* (London: Saqi Books, 2012).

Discussion Question:

What are the major genres of poetry in the ancient North Caucasus? How are they different and similar from each other?

Northern Caucasus Poetry—Postclassical Period (Islamic)

Alphabets

The composition of poetry in the postclassical northern Caucasus is inextricable from the region's Islamicization. As a result, much of this literature operated under the shadow of Arabic and was set to writing in the vernacular variation on Arabic script called *ajami*, a term derived from the Arabic root denoting "mute" (and later used to refer to Persian). *Ajami* scripts (which were also widely used in Islamic Africa) adapted the Arabic alphabet to the phonetic specificities of north Caucasus vernaculars, in order to produce vernacular literatures that paralleled and intersected with works produced in Arabic, Persian, and Turkic, often by the same writers. Although, as noted above, written culture in the northern Caucasus dates back to antiquity, it was in the postclassical period that the vernacular literatures of the northern Caucasus were first given written form, thanks to the development of *ajami* scripts and their adaptation to Caucasus vernaculars.

Islam

The northern Caucasus was Islamicized unevenly and in different stages, but the process well was underway by the Umayyad period (661–750). Since Islamicization was central to the development of postclassical literary culture in the northern Caucasus, it is not surprising that Daghestan, which was Islamicized before other parts of the northern Caucasus, became the center of north Caucasus literary production. Specifically, Derbent in southern Daghestan was an early center of Arabic literary culture, until Arabic culture began to spread elsewhere throughout Daghestan during the 12th century. Arab communities were established in the region of Derbent as early as the 7th century, concurrently with the Arab conquest of Iran. From the 13th century onward, the names of Daghestani Arabic writers begin to appear in other parts of Daghestan.

Social Structures

Further north in Daghestan in the 8th century, a group of Qumyqs named themselves the first Shamkhals, a title denoting ruler. The Shamkhals initially ruled from the town of Tarku to the Caspian Sea. Later, the Shamkhal capital was moved to Ghaziqumuq, a town inhabited by the Lak people (who were called *ghazi*, meaning "warrior," in recognition of their early conversion to Islam) as well as the Qumyq. Originally Christian and pagan, the people of Ghaziqumuq came under the influence of Islam in the 10th century. The Shamkhals were patrons of Arabic as well as indigenous literatures towards the end of the postclassical period. One interesting feature of their mode of governance is that they ruled by election rather than purely by descent, meaning that there would have been a forum for deliberation over who was the most qualified ruler. This method of governance was also practiced among the Chechens, who were governed by a council of elders called the *mexk-kxel*.

As the borders of the Islamic world expanded, Arab ruled-dynasties began to emerge across the northeastern Caucasus, in the Shirvan region which borders Daghestan and what is now Azerbaijan. The Arab ruler Haytham ibn Khalid broke with the Abbasid Caliphate in 861, thereby establishing the Mazyadid dynasty in Shirvan, which ruled as an Arab dynasty until the Kasranids initiated the Persianization of Shirvan in 1028, and the founding of the Shirvanshah dynasty, which presided over a renaissance of Persian poetry.

Although the early Arab rulers of Daghestan did not patronize literary languages in the vernacular, their reigns greatly contributed to the spread of Arabic and subsequently Persian across the northern Caucasus. As a result of Arab migrations, Islamicization, and the overall proximity of the Caucasus to the Arab and Persianate world, both Arabic and later Persian became literary *lingua francas* throughout the region, often co-existing with Turkic dialects that were used in everyday discourse. Poetry during this period tended to be religious and didactic in orientation, and concerned with mystical themes. Ali of Qumuq (d. 1448) was a Daghestani poet of this period who wrote in Arabic.

Epic Poetry

Chechen *illesh* were widely performed during the postclassical period. Ballads from this period documented conflicts between everyday people and their rulers, and their performance helped to consolidate communities facing foreign invasions. The performances were highly public events, and *illesh* were recited to the accompaniment of the *dechig pondar*, one of the national instruments of the Chechen people. According to an anecdote, while traveling through Chechnya, the Turco-Mongol conqueror Tamerlane, founder of the Timurid Empire in 1370 CE, once asked his soldiers whether they had managed to wrest the *dechig ponder* from the Chechens they had conquered. On receiving a negative answer, Tamerlane concluded: "We defeated them, but we did not subdue them."

Further Reading:

Willem Floor, “Who were the Shamkhal and the Usmi?” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 160.2 (2010): 341-381.

Rebecca Ruth Gould “Why Daghestan is Good to Think: Moshe Gammer, Daghestan, and Global Islamic History,” *Written Culture in Daghestan*, ed. Moshe Gammer (Helsinki: Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, 2015), 17-40.

Vladimir Minorsky, *A history of Sharvan and Derbent in the 10th-11th centuries* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1958).

M. S. Saidov, “The Daghestan Arabic literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,” *Papers Presented by the USSR Delegation, XXV Congress of Orientalists* (Moscow: Oriental Literature Publishing House, 1960), 1-13.

Discussion Question:

What impact did Islamicization exert on poetry in the postclassical northern Caucasus?

Northern Caucasus Poetry in the Early Modern Period

Poetry and War

The poetry composed during the early modern period is dominated by the invasions of Qajar and other empires. In particular Nadir Shah's invasion of Daghestan, which was most intensive during the years 1741-1743, served as a subject for epic poetry in vernacular languages. The invasions during these years represented the culmination of over a decade of skirmishes between Nadir Shah's troops, which included Tatars and Uzbeks who fought on his side alongside Iranians, and the Daghestani people. Although Nadir Shah captured numerous fortresses and outposts in the Caucasus during his campaigns, he was ultimately defeated by Lezghi warriors. Epic poems about the defeat of Nadir Shah's army were composed in Avar and Lak. The Avar epic poem tells of a battle that is not recorded in any of the standard Persian historiographic sources for Nadir Shah's campaigns in the Caucasus. Just as local historical sources and epigraphic inscriptions tell a story of the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid and his family's relationship to the Caucasus that differs from that available in better known historical sources (as discussed in the next section), so does local Avar-language poetry and prose report in detail the battle between Nadir Shah and the Avars of Andalal in 1841 that sealed the fate of Nadir Shah's attempts at conquests. This epic poem records in verse a speech by Muhammad Nutsal IV (1730-1774), who is celebrated for defeating Nadir Shah even though he was still a young boy at the time of this battle. As the poem records:

> Nutsal Khunzakh was the head of the army.
> He wears a coat of chain mail.
> Nutsal ordered the army to stop for instruction.
> If the enemy takes Andalal, he said,
> we'll never wash away the shameful stain.
> If he reaches [the towns of] Chokh or Sogratl,
> He'll be in Khunzakh tomorrow.
> Young men, repent!
> Anyone who dies today [in this battle]
> will become a martyr.
> Anyone who remains alive [after fighting in this battle]
> will be glorified forever!

Muhammad Nutsal later came to be known for his role in bringing Chechnya within the fold of the Avar Khanate over which he ruled. Lak epic poetry strikes a similar note. One poem is dedicated to the Lak Mortaza ʿAli (Murtazali), son of Ghaziqumuq ruler Surkhai Khan I, who was also instrumental in stopping Nadir Shah's conquest of the northern Caucasus.

Because they were located to the northwest of Daghestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia were not as profoundly affected by Nadir Shah's invasions as was Daghestan. But Chechen-Ingush epic poems (*illi*) tell of other historical battles, in which brave young men, such as Adin Surkho and Aldaman Gheza resist foreign invaders. Aldaman Gheza, whose father was killed by enemies when he was a nine-year-old boy, is particularly celebrated in Chechen poetry for the alliances he formed with other Caucasus peoples during the 17th century, including powerful local rulers in Dagestan.

Poetry and Language Study

Alongside oral epics that circulated among performers often without the attribution of specific authorship, individual authors began to appear in Daghestani literary culture in the early modern period. This was also a period marked by a shift away from Arabic as the exclusive language of learning and an increasing engagement with Persian and Turkic, as well as the transformation of the indigenous languages of Daghestan into literary vernaculars. Among the early modern Daghestani authors who played an instrumental role in these transformations, arguably none is more important than Dibir-kadi (1742-1817), an Avar linguist, poet, and intellectual who famously compiled Daghestan's first Persian-Turkic dictionary, Collection of Two Languages (*Jami al-lughatayn*). The dictionary, which included four languages—Arabic, Persian, Turkic, and Avar—was compiled at the request of the Avar ruler Umma-khan in order to prepare translators to serve the khan using their knowledge of the Persian and Turkic languages.

Born just a year after the Nadir Shah's defeat at Andalal, in Khunzakh. the same Avar town from which Muhammad Nutsal IV who defeated the Nadir Shah was originally from, Dibir-kadi is not known primarily for his poetry. However, his Persian-Turkic dictionary, as well as his Arabic-language

textbook for the study of Persian, greatly facilitated the accessibility of Persian poetry within the northern Caucasus, since it includes extensive citations from major Persian poets such as Hafez of Shiraz, Masʿud Saʿd Salman of Lahore, in order to illustrate the meanings of Persian words. In the preface to his dictionary Dibir-kadi recognized the pre-eminence of Arabic as a learned language within this triad, but emphasized the delicacy, subtlety, and beauty of Persian.

Poetry in the Vernacular

Dibir-kadi belonged to a period that has been referred to by scholars as part of Daghestan's literary renaissance. Classical Arabic poetry was much in vogue at the time. In particular the poetry of Abu Tammam and his anthology of early Arabic poems, *Hamasa*, inspired numerous imitators. During the same period that Dibir Qadi was occupied with making Persian, Turkic, and Arabic literary heritage accessible to his fellow Avars, Daghestani poets such as Abu Bakr al-Aymaki (b. 1711) and Hassan al-Kudali were occupied with integrating their knowledge of Arabic, Persian, and Turkic with their native Avar. Abu Bakr al-Aymaki's composition entitled *Turks*, which consisted of thirteen Avar poems in the *ajami* script on topics such as belief in Allah, the appearance of heaven and hell, and what acts were condemned and which approved by Islam, was composed in the middle of the 18th century. Literature in Avar using the Arabic *ajami* script is attested as early as the fifteenth century, but Avar poetry flourished in particular during this period. The poetry of al-Aymaki and Hassan al-Kudali in the *ajami* script mark a new stage in Daghestan's vernacular literary traditions. Al-Aymaki in turn inspired a lengthy commentary by the Daghestani scholar-poet Sa'id al-Harakani, which compared al-Aymaki's poetry collection *Turks* with his philosophical ode, composed in classical Arabic with an end rhyme on the letter m (*qasida al-mimiyya*).

Further Reading:

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N. V. Kapieva, *Pesni narodov Dagestana* (Leningrad, 1970).

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Discussion Question:

How did scholars and critics from the northern Caucasus promote the study of poetry during the early modern period?

Northern Caucasus Poetry in the Russian Empire

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.

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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?

Northern Caucasus Poetry: Soviet Period

The 20th century witnessed the waning years of tsarist rule, which were among the most productive in literary terms, and the beginning of a new, Soviet period, which inaugurated a radical shift in the modes, languages, and genres of literary production. This shift however did not entail the cessation of writing in Arabic or in vernacular languages that use the Arabic *ajami* script. Daghestani Arabist Saidov regards 1905 as a turning point, which "opened a new period in the Arabian-language literature in Daghestan." According to Saidov, this period was marked by a deeper and more extensive acquaintance with the Arabic-language writings of Muslims throughout the Russian empire, such as in Tatarstan, as well as with modern Muslim writers, such as Rashid Rida and Muhammad Abduh in Egypt.

Alphabets and Scripts

Soviet poetry in the Caucasus, like all branches of literary production, was overwhelmingly shaped by the Soviet experience as well as by government-driven ideologies that limited the scope of what could and could not be written. Soviet sources often stress that many of the literatures of the Caucasus only acquired written form following their incorporation into the Soviet Union; this prevalent assumption is in most case wrong. The narrative that identifies the Soviet period with a wholesale turn to literary production in Russian ignores the substantial literature written in Arabic (*ajami*) script throughout this century.

Alongside the cultural shifts necessitated by the Bolshevik Revolution, the dominant script for vernacular literatures shifted dramatically over the course of a few decades. Until 1928, Avar was written in the Arabic *ajami* script and occasionally in the Cyrillic alphabet created for it by P.K. Uslar in 1861. At that point, the Soviet state decided that Avar, like many languages of the Caucasus and Central Asia, should be written in the Latin script. This phase only lasted for a decade, however, at which point, in 1938, Soviet leaders decided to shift the alphabet again, to Cyrillic. The same complex story could be told for nearly all the languages of the North Caucasus.

Soviet Multilingualism

Major Avar poets include Zagid Gadjievich Gajiev (1898-1971), who was also a translator and dramatist, bilingual (Russian-Avar) poet Faza Gamzatovna Alieva (1932-2016), whose husband Musa Abdulaevich Magomedov (1926-1997), was also a well-known poet, Mahmud from Kabab-Rosso (c. 1870—1919), and Gamzat Tsadasa (1877-1951), the father of Rasul Gamzatov (1923-2003), who was regarded as Daghestan's national poet for much of his professional life. Other outstanding Soviet-era poets of the northern Caucasus include in Chechen, Magomet Mamakaev (1910–1973) and Raisa Akhmatova (1928-1992) and Hasan Israilov (1910-1944), leader of the Chechen resistance against the Soviet Union from 1940-1944, Effendi Kapiev (1909-1944) in Lak, Suleiman Stalsky (1869-1937) in Lezghi, and Yakov Khozijev (1916 –1938) in Ossetian. The Ossetian author and journalist Dzakho Gatuev played an important role in cultivating North Caucasus poetry through his anthology *The Poetry of Caucasus Mountaineers* (*Poeziia gortsev Kavkaza*, 1934). These authors developed new idioms and ways of writing within their respective literatures while also remaining attentive to the literary traditions within which they worked.

Whereas Bakikhanov may be seen as the paradigmatic multilingual author of the 19th century Caucasus, Hasan al-Alqadari (1834-1910) can be regarded as the paradigmatic multilingual author Caucasus in the 19th century. Like his predecessor, al-Alqadari worked in three languages: Azeri, Arabic, Persian. Whereas the polymath Abbas Qoli Aqa Bakikhanov (discussed below) wrote his masterpiece, *Heavenly Garden*, in Persian, al-Alqadari wrote masterpieces in both Azeri Turkic and Arabic. Al-Alqadari's Turkic masterpiece is, *Vestiges of Daghestan*, is a priceless historical source that also includes the author's poetic compositions. For the purposes of understanding his contribution to the poetry of the Northern Caucasus, al-Alqadari's *Poetry of the Thankful One* (*Diwan al-Mamnun*) is the key text. It was composed in Arabic and published in Temir Khan Shura in 1912 by the well-known publishing house of Mohammad Mirza Mavraev, which contributed greatly to the growth and development of Daghestani literary culture in indigenous Daghestani languages in the *ajami* Arabic script as well as in Arabic.

The outstanding poet of Chechen literary modernity is Magomet Mamakaev (1910-1973). Born in the Chechen village Achkoi-Martan to a peasant family, Mamakaev was educated at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East. Among his major poems are and the epic poem "Bloody mountains" (1928), "Conversation with mother" (1934), and "Morning over Argun" (1958). Before Mamakaev began transforming Chechen literature, Abkhaz poet and playwright Samson Kuagu-ipa Chanba (1886–1937) was making his mark on Abkhaz literature. Chanba's book-length

poem, *Daughter of the Mountains*, appeared in 1919; his work as a playwright is discussed elsewhere in this study guide. Mention should also be made of Abuzar Aidamirov (1929–2005), who, although primarily a novelist, composed in verse the Chechen national anthem.

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M. S. Saidov, “The Daghestan Arabic literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,” *Papers Presented by the USSR Delegation, XXV Congress of Orientalists* (Moscow: Oriental Literature Publishing House, 1960), 1-13, esp. p. 12 (cited above).

Discussion Question:

How did the Soviet state respond to writing in native languages?

DOCUMENTARY PROSE

Northern Caucasus Documentary Prose—Ancient Period

The Caucasus has an abundance of written monuments dating back to antiquity. Often these took the form of inscriptions on physical monuments, which were etched onto buildings, tombstones, and other monuments through the medium of epigraphy. The inscriptions are by and large political in nature, often commemorating the death of a famous or revered person, who is often a ruler or warrior. However, many inscriptions are anonymous and do not reference any specific individual by name. Masons and other builders marked their work and use inscriptional techniques to organize their labor.

Derbent

Although inscriptions have been found in many parts of the northern Caucasus, there is one specific location in which much of the most ancient literary culture was concentrated. In Russian and many Turkic languages this city is called Derbent, and in Persian is called Darband; it came to be known as Bab al-Abwab (the gate of gates) in Arabic sources, following the Arab conquest of the 8th century. Given the city's overwhelming significance for subsequent development of literary culture across the Caucasus, most of this article will be concerned with mapping out Derbent's early history.

The first settlements in the area around Derbent date back to the 4th millennium BCE (during the Bronze Age). The first recorded reference to Derbent—under the name "Caspian Gates"—occurs in the writings of the ancient Greek geographer Hecateus of Miletus in the 6th century BCE. The Greek historian Herodotus also referred to Caspian as a sea bounded by the Caucasus in his *Histories* (5th century BCE). The Caspian Gates were located on the Silk Road, and, like the Caucasus generally, it served as a civilizational and mercantile crossroads. The city itself was founded in 438 CE, with the construction by the Sassanians of a fortress, consisting of a citadel called Naryn Qala, which was connected to the Caspian Sea by double stone walls which blocked a narrow passage, three kilometers long, between the sea and the Caucasus mountains, so as to fence off the city from the water and to protect the borders of the Sassanian state. In scale and scope, these towering walls merit comparison with the Great Wall of China, the Wall of Alexander the Great, and Hadrian's Wall in Britain. They are by and large intact to this day, and are designated a UNESCO World Heritage site.

At the time of its founding, the fortress of Derbent was the northernmost edge of the Sasanian empire. The Sasanian shah Anushirvan (531-579) is believed to have done the most to give Derbent the infrastructure by which it is best known today. According to Arabic chroniclers such as al-Baladhuri, Anushirvan, wished to fortify his domains and protect his empire from nomadic invasions. So he offered the Khaqan (King) of the Turks of Khazaria, at that time the empire that bordered Sasanian domains, "peace, friendship, and co-existence," and asked him to give his daughter, Istami-Khan, to him in marriage as proof of their compact. The Khaqan was delighted by the opportunity to align with the throne of the ruler of the vast Iranian empire. He sent his daughter to marry the shah, and agreed to put aside their rivalry in the interest of peace. Anushirvan used this peaceful interregnum to erect a wall made of iron stretching from the Caspian Sea to the mountain. As soon as the construction was complete, however, Anushirvan returned his new wife to her deceived father.

A few centuries later, the 10th century Armenian chronicler Movses Dasxuranci would recount in colorful detail the construction of Derbent's "wondrous walls" for the sake of which "the Persian kings exhausted our country, recruiting architects and collecting building materials with a view of constructing a great edifice stretching between the Caucasus Mountains and the Great Eastern Sea" (p. 83). Similarly to Herodotus' account of the construction of the Egyptian pyramids, such narratives shine a light on the unacknowledged labor that made these monuments possible. Although the precise names and identities of the builders are unknown, archeological scholarship has revealed a great deal about the mason marks that are visible on many of Derbent's fortifications. These marks, some of which have the apotropaic function of protecting the builder and the building he has constructed, include religious signs such as crosses, which were also inscribed by Iranian Christians on buildings constructed in Sassanian Iran. The fact that the city of Derbent served as the residence of heads of the Christian church of Albania, the Catholicoi, until 552 CE meant that there was a sizable Christian population at the time of the construction of Anushirvan's wall.

Persian Influence

There are more Zoroastrian than Christian symbols among the mason marks left by the builders of Derbent's fortifications, which can be explained by the fact that Zoroastrianism was the official religion of the Sasanian state. For example, the sign showing three discs which has been found on the defense walls of Derbent has been interpreted as a visual representation of the divine

triad of the Zoroastrian faith: Ahuramazda, Anahita, and Mithra. Some mason's marks found on the walls of Derbent have also been found in ancient Iranian archeological sites such as Taq-i Bustan and Persepolis. Many of the signs found in Derbent have also been located in Azerbaijan on monumental architectural constructions dating to the 6th-7th centuries.

Another set of signs that have been found on the walls and fortifications of Derbent resemble letters of various alphabets: including Caucasian Albanian, Armenian, Georgian, Middle Persian, Greek alphabets, and various Syrian scripts. The presence of signs resembling the Syrian script is particularly suggestive, given the close ties between the Caucasian Albanian empire and Syrian Christians monks who preached Nestorian Christianity throughout that empire. Also of interest is the abundance of signs resembling Middle Persian scripts. Amid these Middle Persian signs, the names of three architects have been preserved: Adurgushnaps, Rashn, and Moshi. The first two of these names, which appear repeatedly on the Derbent walls, are Iranian in origin. Their placement and recurrence suggests that the names belong to high-ranking supervisors rather than to everyday laborers.

Overall, the general profile of the mason's marks on the walls and fortifications of Derbent proves the accuracy of Dasxuranci's claim: the majority of the manual laborers who constructed Derbent were natives of the region, from the empire of Caucasian Albania, and they used this script when making inscriptions on their buildings they constructed, even when these buildings were commissioned by a Sassanian king. Further, the organization of the mason's marking on different buildings and fortifications suggests the complexity of the ancient social structures in this region. Archeologists have documented divisions of labor among stone-cutters, porters who transported the building materials to the construction site, makers of lime mortar, as well as architects. In their chronicles, ancient Armenian historians such as Favstos of Byzantium, Movses Dasxuranci, and Ghevond Vartabed described how professional stone-cutters and layers contributed to the construction of cities and palaces in the region of Derbent, to the repair of Derbent's defensive walls, and to the erection of churches.

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Discussion Questions:

What role has Derbent played in the literary history of the northern Caucasus?

What role has epigraphy played in shaping literary culture?

Northern Caucasus Documentary Prose—Postclassical Period (Islamic)

Epigraphy

Although the Islamicization of the Caucasus dramatically transformed its literary culture, there were continuities with the pre-Islamic past as well. The epigraphic tradition, for example, continued, and indeed proliferated, once the Arabic script became the standard alphabet throughout the region. Written in verse as well as prose, epigraphy has been found in Arabic, Persian, and Turkic and indigenous languages of the Caucasus on mosques, funerary tombstones, and monuments of various kinds. In the early Islamic period, pre-Islamic Sassanian and other non-Muslim inscriptions were often overlaid by the new Arabic inscriptions. For example, on the walls of Derbent one can find signs cut into stone blocks depicting arches, which bear similarities with Parthian signs of ancient Iran, co-existing in proximity to inscriptions of the word Allah in the Kufi Arabic script (one of the most ancient Arabic scripts, often used for Quranic citations).

Harun al-Rashid

Among the earliest attested Arabic inscriptions in the Caucasus is a recently discovered inscription which sheds light on the activities of the Abbasid ruler Harun al-Rashid (786-809) in the region. Harun al-Rashid, whose epithet means "the just," is best known for establishing the legendary library Bayt al-Hikma in Baghdad and for turning the city into a center of learning, culture, and trade. With regard to his state-building activities and patronage of culture, he is seen as a worthy successor to the Sasanian king Anushirvan. The inscription was discovered in the Muslim cemetery of the village Qala Kejer, through which the Derbent wall ran, on a rectangular slab originally belonging to the Derbent fortification, which was reused as a gravestone, and is dated 792/3 (176 according to the Islamic calendar). The discovery took place in 2001 during an archeological expedition organized by the Institute of History, Archeology, and Ethnography of the Daghestan Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences and Daghestan State University and headed by Daghestani scholar Murtazali Gadzhiev. According to Gadzhiev and Shikhsaidov (see "further reading"), this is the oldest dated official Arabic inscription in the Caucasus.

Harun al-Rashid is referenced in this newly discovered inscription, in a lineage that links him with Anushirvan (Kisra in Arabic), who is said to have built the wall, and (figuratively) to have commanded "servant of God Harun, commander of the faithful (*amir al-mu'minin*), on the appointment of al-Amin al-Muhammad, son of the commander of the faithful, as heir to the throne of the Muslims." The inscription clearly refers to Harun al-Rashid's appointment of his eldest son al-Amin as his successor. The claim corresponds with the historical record: al-Amin was indeed named successor to Harun al-Rashid in the year 792/3 (176). He became caliph immediately following his father's death in 809 but only ruled for four years. He was deposed in 813, amid a civil war with his half-brother al-Ma'mun.

The content of the inscription is significant, not only for what it says about Harun al-Rashid and his family, but for what it says about their relationship to the Caucasus. Arab historians writing outside the Caucasus, such as al-Tabari, al-Ya'qubi, and al-Baladhuri, do not make any mention of Harun al-Rashid visiting Derbent. Yet multiple early modern and 19th-century Caucasus authors, including Derbent resident Alexander Kasimovich Kazembek (Mirza Kazem Bek, discussed in the next article) report that Harun al-Rashid's son lies buried in a stone vault across from the Kyrhlar-kapu ("Gate of Forty Martyrs"), near the Derbent wall. Daghestani histiorian Muhammad Awwabi al-Aqtashi (discussed in the next article) offers a variant on the Caucasus narrative pertaining to Harun al-Rashid; he claims that the Abbasid caliph travelled all the way to Derbent to enhance the quality of life in the city, where he built mills, granaries, and mosques, and planted gardens. In the 19th century, Hasan al-Alqadari (discussed in the section on documentary prose in the Russian empire) reported in his *Vestiges of Daghestan* that, according to local tradition, Harun al-Rashid himself travelled to Derbent with his wife Zubayda, and that two of his sons died in the city of Derbent. The newly discovered inscription strengths the plausibility of these local narratives, particularly as they pertain to Harun al-Rashid's son al-Amin.

Local Historical Chronicles

Although pre-Islamic written culture did exist in the northern Caucasus, the spread of Islamic learning led to a new approach to written culture. Scholars travelled to Daghestan from across the Arab world, including especially Syria, and Daghestani scholars travelled throughout the Islamic world, to as far away as Yemen. As a result of these exchanges, the early Islamic period in the northern Caucasus is rich in historical chronicles translations, commentaries, and other paratextual materials, including legal documents and codices. Arguably the most important of these works is the

Darband-nama of Shaikh Abu Yaʿqub Yusuf Babi Lakzi Darbandi (d. before 1089), and historian of the Aghlabid dynasty that ruled Derbent (Darband) during the 11th century. He was a scholar of Lezgi origin who studied in Baghdad under Shafiʿi jurisprudents, including the Abu-l-Muzaffar al-Samani (d. 1096), grandfather of Abu Sad, author of the renowned *Kitab al-ansab* (Book of Genealogies).

Another famous scholar is Mammus ibn al-Hasan al-Lakzi (104-1100), author of the historical chronicle *History of Derbent and Shirvan* (*Tarikh Bab al-abwab wa-Shirvan*), which until recently was considered anonymous. Mammus al-Lakzi's student Abu Bakr Muhammad al-Darbandi (1027-1110) went on to compose the extensive Sufi encyclopedic dictionary called the *Basilica of Verities and Garden of Delicacies* (*Rayhan al-haqa'iq va bustan al-daqa'iq*) in Arabic. This is the first comprehensive such work of this kind in the Caucasus, and it provides invaluable insight into the religious traditions and lives of Daghestani peoples. Al-Darbandi was also responsible for codifying Caucasus Sufism through a synthesis of local indigenous law (*ʿadat*) with Sufi teachings and Islamic theology.

Indigenous Law

As far as the written heritage of the northern Caucasus goes, the most important such corpus is arguably the *ʿadat* (indigenous or customary law) codices which bring the multiple sources of indigenous law into conversation with Islamic legal norms. Indeed, the word *ʿadat* itself is Arabic, and derived from *ʿada*, meaning habit or custom. While *ʿadat* long preceded the arrival of Islam in the Caucasus, these indigenous laws were first codified by Muslim rulers, working within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence. Any effort to oppose *ʿadat* to ***shariʿa*** (Islamic law) should be mindful of their co-evolution and historical co-existence, as well as of the ways in which *ʿadat* was first given codified form in the Islamic period. *ʿAdat* codices exemplify the common strands of culture that run throughout Caucasus culture, since nearly all the peoples of the northern Caucasus have a version of *ʿadat*, which is variously denominated as ***k'onaxalla*** (among Chechens) *namus* (among some Daghestanis), *apsuara* (among the Abkhaz), and *adyghe khabze* (among Circassians).

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Discussion Question:

How do Daghestani and non-Daghestani historical chronicles differ on Harun al-Rashid's relationship to the Caucasus?

Northern Caucasus Documentary Prose in the Early Modern Period

Treatise on Djinns

In the domain of prose as much as of poetry, literary production took place overwhelmingly in Arabic-script literatures. In the domain of prose, most short analytical writing fell under the heading of *risala*, an Arabic term that can be translated as "treatise," "essay," or "epistle" depending on the context and content. Most narrative literature pertained to historical writing (*tarikh*) in one way or another. The writing of *risala*s flourished throughout the post-classical and early modern period. One example from seventeenth-century Daghestan is the *Treatise on Djinns* (*Risala al-Jinn*) by Muhammad b. Umar al-Daghestani, from the village of Irib. This unpublished work, of which only four copies in the world have been identified, is held in the Saidov fund of the Institute of History, Archeology, and Ethnography of the Daghestan Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences. It was copied by the 20th century Daghestani scholar Ali al-Ghumuqi (Ali Kaiaev), who is discussed below in the section on life-writing during the Soviet period; this copy formed part of the library that al-Ghumuqi kept secret during the Soviet period and which was only revealed to the world after the end of the Soviet Union. In another surviving manuscript, the treatise bears a longer title: "This is a story about an amazing incident that once happened to the jinn in the Daghestan village of Irib in 1076 (1665 CE)." The work is remarkable in many respects, not least for its memorable combination of a theological debate, a tragic story of unreciprocated love, and a historical rendering of a specific incident in the Irib, which the author records in the spirit of documented fact.

Narrating the theological debate between the famed Daghestani scholar Talhat Qadi, a group of djinns whom he calls "Christian," and their king, the *Treatise on Djinns* bears the traces of the highly syncretic milieu in which Daghestanis operated long after the conversion of most of the region to Islam. The first part of the text unfolds in the form of a dialogue between the scholar (identified as the historical Talhat midway through the exchange) and the *djinns*. In this part as well as towards end, when the action has concluded, the dialogue reads like a play, albeit one composed in a literary tradition that was unfamiliar with the conventions of modern drama. After the first part of the theological exchange is complete, the story turns to the resolution of the core problem that brought them into contact: the daughter of the king of the djinns is in love with a Daghestani Muslim youth and wants to marry him. The djinns torment the poor youth in the hopes of compelling him to agree to the marriage. But he is his parents' only son, and will not abandon them.

The conflict is resolved when the king himself appears and engages in extended negotiations with Talhat near the village mosque. The narrative then returns to the dialogic mode of theological debate. Talhat asks the djinns probing questions, such as "Why do you harm us, when we have done nothing to harm you?" and "Who is your prophet?" He also asks the djinn about their daily rituals, such as "On what days do you fast?" The result is a lively text that also sheds light on the worldview of Daghestani Muslims from this period. In an intriguing metaphysical aside, we are told that Talhat "could neither hear nor see the djinns due to the wall that stands between *djinns* and humans." Talhat's conversation is mediated by a designated intermediary between the humans and the spirit world, who is also a scholar. The exchange between Talhat and the djinns suggests a worldview that, while it rejects certain theologies and favors other ones, also recognizes in the religious practices of the djinn—who are figured as both Christian and Sabean—a shared idiom for worshipping God. The world view implied by this exchange is quite unlike the stereotyped representation of Islam as a religion that condemns all that is foreign to it. Instead, we find here a syncretic view of religion, in which conflicting religious practices blend easily with everyday life, and underwrite robust and open intellectual inquiry.

A further interesting point in this text is the representation of the *djinns'* religion. The djinns refer to their God as Allah and they fast and pray just as Muslims do, albeit on different days. That the conflict between the Daghestanis and the *djinns* is not really about religion is further underscores by the plot: the djinns are attacking the Daghestani youth because the daughter of their king wants marry him, not due to any doctrinal differences. At the same time, the details of the *djinns'* religion are a central aspect of the narrative and ethnographic interest of the story. In the course of their dialogue, Talhat accuses the *djinns* not only of being "from the cursed society of the Christians," but of belonging to the branch "referred to as the Sabeans." Such syncretism is reflective of Daghestan's links to the Christian cultures of Georgia as well as pre-Islamic Chechnya and Ingushetia. Talhat's conflation of Christianity and Sabeanism may seem erroneous to some schools of thought. However, the Shafiʿi school of Islamic jurisprudence that Daghestanis followed held that Christianity and Sabeanism resembled each other. Further, Orientalists such as V. V. Bartold have contended that the Sabeans were not originally a unified group. These links make the association between Christianity and Sabeanism in this 16th century treatise more plausible.

Finally, it is worth nothing the ways in which *Treatise on Djinns* locates a narrative of events that typically are relegated to the sphere of the miraculous within a precisely delineated historical time. The text is clearly dated, both with regard the timeline for the events it narrates (4 February 1665-6, in the month of Ramadan) and the time of its composition (1667-8). The author further stipulates that everything which he has recorded was conveyed to him directly by the intermediary "including the words of the teacher of the *djinns* and their king." The author's insistence on the historical veracity of his narrative adds a further empirical dimension to the uncanny events narrated in his text. In sum, the as-yet-unpublished *Treatise on Djinns* is a masterpiece of early modern Daghestani literary and religious culture that suggests a strong degree of tolerance for—and curiosity about—the non-Muslim peoples who resided in Christian-dominant regions bordering Daghestan, such as Georgia and Tushetia (mentioned in the text as the place of exile for the daughter of the king of the *djinns*), home to the Batsbi people who speak a language closely related to Chechen and Ingush.

Local Historical Chronicles

Alongside the *risala* genre, historical chronicles proliferated during the early modern period, as did commentaries of various kinds, often composed in the margins of other treatises and often written in vernacular languages using *ajami* script, dictionaries between Arabic the various languages of Daghestan, and legal documents. The best-known historical work from this period, which is extant in multiple Caucasus languages, is the Turkic *Darband-nama*, composed during the 17th century by Muhammad Awwabi al-Aqtashi, from the Qumyq village of Endirei in Daghestan's Khasavyurt District. Among the most detailed and complete histories of Daghestan's most ancient city, Awwabi's work is a revision and updating of the earlier *Darband-nama* of Yusuf al-Lakzi, mentioned above.

The translation of Avabi's *Darband-nama* into English, completed by the Azeri-Iranian Orientalist Alexander Kasimovich Kazembek (also known as Mirza Kazem Bek/Beg) in 1831 is a literary achievement in its own right, and is probably the first major work of Orientalist scholarship about the Caucasus written in English by a native of the Caucasus. Kazembek was a native of Darband who learned English from his debates with Scottish Presbyterian missionaries residing in that city and went on to become one of Darband's foremost scholars and Dean of the Oriental Faculty of St. Petersburg University. Describing this work as "the narrative of the protracted sufferings of the people of Derbend and of the whole country" of Daghestan, Kazembek dedicated his translation to the Grand Duke Constantine, the second son of Emperor Nikolai I. With this work, he introduced in many respects for the first time the rich literary legacies of the Caucasus to English.

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Discussion Questions:

How did early modern Daghestani authors represent the spirit world in everyday life?
What role did local history play in literary production?

Northern Caucasus Documentary Prose in the Russian Empire

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 *risala*s 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 onto 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. Nognov 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, sostavlennaia 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" (1971), 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.

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Discussion Question:

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

Northern Caucasus Documentary Prose: Soviet Era

New Journals

The 20th century saw the continued development of literary production in many literary genres and media across the Caucasus, including in historiography, literary criticism, and various shorter forms of essayistic writing. As in the preceding century, many prominent 20th century northern Caucasus poets were also critics, and their writings helped to create a sense of a literary tradition in their respective literatures. Early Soviet magazines such as the monthly *Revolution and the Mountaineer* (*Gorets i revolutsiia*), which was published from 1928 to the 1930s in Rostov-on-the-Don, provided a venue for such writings. The multilingual *Daghestan collection* (*Dagestanskii sbornik* = *Recueil du Daghestan*, 1927) was another journal that brought together voices from across the literatures of the North Caucasus to craft a new Daghestani literature suited for revolutionary politics.

As in the preceding century, Arabic continued to be the main language of literary production for Daghestan writers several decades into the 20th century. Among the most vivid expressions of the vitality of Arabic in serial publications was the journal *Elucidation of Truth* (*Bayan al-ḥaqai'q*), which was published in twelve issues from 1925 to 1928. It circulated to between a thousand and a thousand and a half subscribers and the editor-in-chief was the same Abusufyan Akaev, who had co-founded the Mavraev publishing house (his biography is disused in the preceding article). The journal's stated aim was to "explain the merits of Islam, reveal the truth, cleansing the *shari'a* of negative innovations and conjectures, and enlighten the minds of scientists and students." In short, *Elucidation of Truth* was a reformist project, part of the same movement that encompassed the activities of ʿAli al-Ghumuqi (1878–1943) and Abu Sufian al-Ghazanishi (1872-1931), who studied at al-Azhar, the renowned university of Islamic learning in Cairo, and used what they learned while abroad to develop a modernist Islam for Daghestani Muslims. Like these reformists, who regularly contributed to the journal, *Elucidation of Truth* was concerned with much more than religion as such: among the topics covered in the pages of the journal were education, Sufism, literature (especially poetry), geography, and recent developments in the sciences. Alongside regular contributions from Daghestanis, *Elucidation of Truth* also published the contemporary writings of Muslims reformists around the world, including Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida.

Social Criticism

20th century North Caucasus literature was dominated by journalists who made their living as writers of fictional as well as nonfictional prose. Among the most important of these figures was the Ossetian writer Dzakho Gatuev (1892-1938), who wrote a series of journalist articles based on his travels throughout the northern Caucasus, and the Chechen writer Ibragim-Bek Sarakaev (1883—1934), who published widely on the traditions and folklore of the Chechen people. Born in Vedeno, in the historical heart of Chechen resistance to Russian rule, Sarakaev wrote a number of works documenting the sociological conditions under which his fellow Chechens lived, such as *On the Slums of the Chechen Republic* (*Po trushchobam Chechni*, 1913). He also wrote historical works such as *The Chechen Republic and Capture of Shamil* (*Chechnia i plenie Shamilia,* 1914). Sarakaev served in the government of the Mountaineer Republic that formed immediately after the collapse of Russian imperial rule in the Caucasus, on December 21, 1917. He died a natural death at the age of fifty-one.

Ethnography

The Chechen author Magomet Mamakaev, who has been mentioned elsewhere in this study guide as the preeminent 20th century poet and fiction writer, is also the author of the important scholarly nonfiction study in Russian: *The Chechen clan (taip) in the period of its development* (*Chechenskii taip (rod) v period razlozheniia*, 1962). This was among the first works on the traditional Chechen social structure to deploy modern methods of scholarship, and it represents an advance over the work of Laudaev (mentioned in the previous article).

Polemic

Another area in which nonfiction prose flourished was in the domain of polemic, such as those authored by Aslanbek Sheripov (1897-1919), many of whose writings originated as political speeches. Decades after his death, these speeches were collected into a book in Russian (1961) and subsequently translated into Chechen (1977). Like his brother Mairbek, Aslanbek was an influential political activist. While Mairbek was to mobilize Chechens against the Soviet regime during the 1941-1942 uprising, however, Aslanbek made his name as a pro-Soviet revolutionary. Magomed

Mamakaev wrote a novel with him as its hero, entitled *Murid of the Revolution* (*Miurid revolutsii*, 1963).

Alongside the revolutionaries who were glorified by the state, North Caucasus writers celebrated local heroes, such as Imam Shamil and the noble bandit Zelimkhan Gushmazukaev (d. 1914), who dedicated their lives to fighting Russian colonial rule. These symbols of local resistance became the protagonists for numerous novels and poems, as well as films, in Chechen, Russian, and Daghestan languages. Many of these narratives merged with fiction, but many also remained grounds in history, and are best regarded as examples of journalistic prose. One such example is Ossetian writer Dzakho Gatuev's Russian-language work Zelimkhan, a tale (*Zelimkhan, povest*, 1929). Framed as a "tale," this work has a strong documentary dimension that gives it the qualities of nonfiction, and Gatuev's journalistic sensibility is amply in evidence throughout this work. Although in Russian, Gatuev exhibits his linguistic virtuosity by incorporating non-Russian lexicons from the languages of the Caucasus, as well as Arabic citations from the Quran.

Scripts and Alphabets

Meanwhile, in nearby Ingushetia, the Ingush writer and polymath Zaurbek Kurazovich Malsagov (1894-1935) was ambitiously laying the foundation for a new Ingush alphabet using the Latin script. Malsagov was also founder of the newspaper *Serdalo*, which was published in Ingush using his Latin alphabet. Published from 1923 to the present with a break from 1944-1957 following the deportation of the Ingush to Central Asia, *Serdalo* is currently the main newspaper for the Republic of Ingushetia, and is published in both Ingush and Russian.

Meanwhile in Abkhazia, the writers Dmitry Gulia and Konstantin Machavariani set to work developing a new alphabet for the Abkhaz language using the Roman script. Gulia and Machavariani consulted two earlier Abkhaz alphabets, by Uslar and Bartholomei, respectively, which were based on the Cyrillic script. Yet, in keeping with the spirit of the age, which had witnessed the end of Russian imperial rule and the beginnings of a cosmopolitan early Soviet ethos, they were determined to create a script for their language using the Roman script.

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Discussion Question:

What role did serial publications play in the circulation of new ideas across the North Caucasus?

FICTION, LEGENDS, MYTHS

Northern Caucasus Fiction, Legends, Myths—Ancient Period

Greek Perspectives

For the Caucasus in antiquity, the space of fiction was filled by legends and myths. Strabo, Herodotus, and Plutarch all testified to the rich folkloric traditions of the northern Caucasus, but these only began to be formally and systematically transcribed during the mid-19th and 20th centuries. Even when these traditions and belief systems pertain by and large to the domain of oral culture and were not immediately expressed as written texts, they were foundational for subsequent literary works across the centuries. Hence it is necessary to be attentive to the ancient myths and belief systems of the Caucasus in order to understand and appreciate its modern literature.

Indigenous Gods

Although Islam took root early throughout much of the Caucasus, the pantheons of pre-Islamic and pre-Christian pagan traditions heavily shaped the extant folklore and legends. Among the Chechens and Ingush, it was believed that life was created by the appearance of a giant white bird. Water and plants were believed to have evolved from the excrement of this bird. In the Chechen pantheon, Deela is the supreme god, comparable to the Greek Zeus, and the Sun and Moon are half-brothers. Erd and Tusholi are the gods of agriculture, fertility, and harvest. Far from being mere relics of antiquity, these deities often figure into modern 20th century literature, including in particular the fiction of Idris Bazorkin (see the final article in this section).

Daghestan's pagan pantheons developed in response to the mountaineers' immediate geography. Daghestanis worshipped sacred mountains, caves, groves, trees, stones, and rivers. In southern Daghestan and northern Azerbaijan, shrines (calls *pir*s) were dedicated to local saints. Unsurprisingly, in areas where Islam had penetrated deeply, pagan demonology intermingled with Islamic beliefs. The spirit world (of *djinns* and others) included creatures who were small in size, with the heels of their feet turned forward, who could become people, animals, monsters, or become invisible. As evidence of the influence of Persian traditions on Daghestani folk beliefs, there is a dragon-like creature named Azhdeha (Persian for dragon), with multiple heads that projects fire from its mouth. Azhdeha resides near springs, and demands human sacrifices, mostly young women whom it eats alive, in exchange for access to water. Tabasarani demons are particularly multifaceted, and many of them specialize in tormenting women in labor, impersonating diseases, and haunting cemetery grounds.

A Pan-Caucasus Cosmology

Scholars past and present have considered whether it is possible to situate the legends of the northern Caucasus (and of the Caucasus generally) within a single cosmology. Abkahz scholar Viacheslav Chirikba has suggested that if there is such a thing as a pan-Caucasus pagan belief system, it would include the following features, many of which can be found in other belief systems as well : 1) the world is separated into three horizontal realms (celestial, inhabited by gods; middle, inhabited by humans; lower, inhabited by demons); 2) a tree connects these three worlds to each other; 3) a supreme god is assisted by other gods; 4) certain groves, trees, woods, and mountains are deemed sacred; 5) the moon is a male god and the Sun is a female god; 6) a dragon (Azhdeha) or demon causes eclipses by eating the sun and moon; 7) a mermaid seduces lonely travellers; 8) there is a forest man and a forest woman; 9) a sacred animal, usually a cow or bull, is sacrificed to the gods; 10) there is an incubus (a house-dwelling creature which has only one or no nostrils and which smothers sleepers during the night by closing their nostrils); 12) snakes act as spirits, protecting the home; 13) there are vampires; 14) a hero is born from a rock or stone (this motif recurs in Bazorkin's novel *From the Darkness of Ages*, described below); 14) a hero whose biography resembles that of the Greek Prometheus is punished by the gods and chained within a cave or on a rock, high in the mountains.

Prometheus

This last-mentioned feature is widely attested under different names, each of which have been the subject of poems and stories in their respective traditions. In Chechen, the Prometheus-like figure is called Pxarmat; in Georgian, Amirani; in Lak, Amir; and in Ossetian, Amran. (Prometheus also appears much later, as a pivotal figure in inspiring modern literary movements, such as the young writers association in 1970s Chechnya, which called itself "Prometheus," as well as in Dzakho Gatuev's versified *Amran, An Ossetian Epic*, published in 1932) Chirikba also posits the following

gods as elements of a pan-Caucasus system: a thunder god, a hunting god, a god of cattle and procreation, a god of rain who is summoned using a doll that resembles a human, a god of blacksmiths, and a god or goddess of harvest and agriculture.

Although many Nart sagas are recorded in verse, there are also many extant stories are also in prose, and concern historical events, such as wars between the Circassians and invading Goths, and the invasion of Attila and the Huns during the 5th century. Yet another historical invading people discussed in the Circassian Nart sagas are the Avars, not to be confused with the Avars of Daghestan.

Impact of Modernity

Our access to legends of the ancient north Caucasus is necessarily refracted through the lens of modernity. Our most detailed sources on ancient Caucasus legends were transcribed by people who operated within frameworks that were quite different from the frameworks within which these legends originated. These include colonial officials working in the service of the Russian tsar, such as the linguist P.K. Uslar, and local ethnographers such as Bashir Dalgat, who pioneered the documentation of their traditions according to the standards of modern scholarship. In the latter group should also be included the members the Institute of History, Archeology, and Ethnography of the Daghestan Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IIAE), created in 1924 by Ali Alibekovich Takho-Godi, and many similar institutions across the republics of the North Caucasus, who have uncovered numerous new sources on the literatures of the North Caucasus during the past several decades.

Further Reading:

Nart Sagas, ed. Naira Bepieva and Nino Popiashvili (Tbilisi, 2020).

Viacheslav A. Chirikba, “Between Christianity and Islam: Heathen Heritage in the Caucasus. In: Studies on Iran and The Caucasus,” *Studies on Iran and The Caucasus: In Honour of Garnik Asatrian*, eds. Uwe Bläsing, Victoria Arakelova, and Matthias Weinreich (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 145–191.

Ruslan Seferbekov, “On the Demonology of the Tabasaranians: Typology and Description,” *Iran & the Caucasus* 5 (2001): 139-148.

Discussion Question:

What features do the pagan belief systems and folkloric traditions of the northern Caucasus share in common?

Northern Caucasus Fiction, Legends, Myths—Postclassical Period (Islamic)

Abu Muslim

The legends pertaining to Abu Muslim, who is regarded by Daghestanis and other peoples of the northern Caucasus as the most important spreader of Islam, is among the most widely circulating cycles of legends from the Islamic period. References to Abu Muslim permeate local historiographic sources as well as epigraphic inscriptions across the northern Caucasus. Across the Caucasus, many sacred sites of pilgrimages and shrines are named in Abu Muslim's honor and in honor of his associates. Abu Muslim is however more of a legendary than a historical figure. Although there is an historical Abu Muslim from Khorasan who helped the Abbasids seize power in the middle of the eight century, yet who never actually visited the Caucasus, the Abu Muslim whose life and work are the stuff of legends in the northern Caucasus has a rather different profile. In the northern Caucasus, Abu Muslim came to embody the figure of the heroic preacher of Islam, and is a confluence of Arabic, Turkic, and Persian, and local legends that has circulated throughout the Caucasus from the medieval period onwards.

The earliest extant written record pertaining to the Abu Muslim of the Caucasus is an anonymous and untitled Arabic-language historical chronicle, which was discovered and published in the Arabic original and in French translation by the orientalist N. Khanikoff. This chronicle tells of a certain Shaykh Abu Muslim, who was born in Damascus as a *sayyid*, meaning that he was descended from the Prophet Mohammad. He became an orphan in early childhood, when his father was martyred in a battle against the Umayyad Caliph Marwan II. When Abu Muslim became an adult, he gathered together an army of fifty thousand people and killed Marwan. After leading a number of invasions throughout the Near East as well as Central Asia, and according to some Daghestani sources, India, Abu Muslim embarked on a seven-year war for the propagation of Islam in the Caucasus. First, he conquered Shirvan, then Derbent and the mountainous regions of Daghestan. Finally, he conquered Circassian lands.

After the peoples of the north Caucasus converted to Islam, Abu Muslim built mosques throughout the region, including in Derbent, and especially in the difficult to access mountainous regions of Daghestan: Akty, Qala-Qureysh, Ghaziqumuq, Qubachi, and Khunzakh. He appointed other *sayyids* (descendants of the Prophet) as heads of these regional centers. These leaders in turn founded a number of powerful and significant dynasties within Daghestan, including the shamkhal of Ghaziqumuq, the *utsmi* of Qaitagh, and the *mausum* and *qadi* of Tabasaran. After he had Islamicized the Caucasus, Abu Muslim returned to Syria, where he died in 739. Although the primary source of information on Abu Muslim's biography is the untitled Arabic historical chronicle discovered by Khanikoff, Abu Muslim's Syrian origins are also affirmed in local epigraphy, including inscriptions on the mosques of Ghaziqumuq, Akty, and Richa, as Vladimir Bobrovnikov has shown. Arabic sources outside Daghestan refer to this Abu Muslim as Maslama bin Abdul Melik.

This however is just one among many versions of Abu Muslim's biography. Other versions, which are more commonly encountered in local histories such as the Avar-language *History of Daghestan* by Muhammad Rafi, describe Abu Muslim as a local hero and propagator of Islam. He was a descendent of one of the five shaykhs of Qureysh who had travelled to the Caucasus from Syria and settled there a few decades earlier. This Abu Muslim lived in the village of Khunzakh in mountainous Daghestan, and his grave in Khunzakh is a site of continuous and ongoing pilgrimage.

Many of the aforementioned legends pertaining to a Muslim saint contain admixtures of pagan and pre-Islamic belief systems, as well as of Christianity. The syncretism of the Sufism that was widespread through the northern Caucasus, particularly in Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Daghestan, facilitated an extraordinary cross-pollination of Muslim, Christian, and pagan traditions that shaped the ways in which figures such as Abu Muslim were remembered in local cultural memory.

Further Reading:

V.O. Bobrovnikov "Абу Муслим в культурной памяти мусульман Дагестана," *Ислам в современном мире* 15.3 (2019): 81-110. Available at: https://islamjournal.idmedina.ru/jour/article/view/732/449

Khanikoff. "Mémoire sur les inscriptions musulmanes du Caucase," *Journal asiatique* (1862): 82-155.

Discussion Question:

How did history and myth relate to each other in legends that developed in the early Islamic period?

Northern Caucasus Fiction, Legends, Myths in the Early Modern Period

Epic Fiction

Epic songs narrating the exploits of brave Daghestani warriors in battle that were discussed in the article on early modern poetry had a counterpart in oral legends, which later when recorded in writing took the form of prose. As with epic poems, their dominant themes are the struggles of Daghestani peoples with foreign invaders. Notwithstanding their aesthetic orientation, these legends often have strong historical content. This means that the boundaries between fact and fiction, or fiction and documentary prose which have been adopted for the purposes of this study guide, are necessarily porous.

Historical Fiction

Also as with epic poetry, historical figures abound in such legends. These legends are set in the towns of Qumyq, Turchidag, Khunzakh, Qubachi, Sogratl, Chokh, Megeb, and Obokh. They feature Mutazali, son of Surkhai-Khan I, who helped to defend Daghestan from the invasion of Nadir Shah, and Shakhman, a Daghestani who is remembered for his traitorous dealings with Nadir Shah. After three years of being educated in Persia, Shakhman returned to Daghestan as part of the Nadir Shah's retinue of. He led many campaigns against the Daghestanis who were resisting the Persian conquest, and local legends remember him as an enemy. After Nadir Shah's defeat at the battle of Andalal in 1741, Daghestanis began to seek out Shakhman in order to punish him for treachery. Eventually, Shakhman decided to surrender and hand himself over to the Daghestanis who planne to kill him. According to legend, his final words were: "Muslims! I swore to take my revenge on you and found many ways of doing this. Now my life is reaching a close. I arrived here in order to die by your hands."

Another legend tells of a mountaineer named Antkilish (who names means "six fingered"). Antkilish is remembered alongside other Daghestanis who foiled the efforts to Nadir Shah to conquer the Caucasus. He is also believed to have been a friend of the noble bandit named Khochbar, from the town of Gidatl'. Antkilish assisted Khochbar in his efforts to protect Daghestani people. Antkilish's advice and counsel turned out to be crucial in Daghestanis' battles with invading armies. For example, on one occasion, Antkilish saw that the mountaineers were clearly outnumbered by an army that was trying to besiege them. So he advised that, rather than openly resisting the army, they should gather their ashes into bags and scatter the contents of these bags to the wind as soon as they came under attack. When the enemy began attacking, the mountaineers immediately opened their bags. Seeing the air become hazy, the invading army assumed that all the Daghestanis' ammunitions had been exhausted, and they moved to the next village. Thus was that village spared further destruction.

Soon after Daghestanis conquered Nadir Shah, they had to face ever-increasing encroachment from Russia. Yet whereas Daghestan was the frontline in the wars with invading Persian armies from the south, Chechnya became the frontline for invading armies from the north. The borderland regions of Chechnya and Ingushetia were particularly affected by the growth of Cossack settlements, which were first set up by Russia in the early modern period. Although Cossacks and Chechens shared some qualities in common, and borrowed each other's styles of dress and certain aspects of their ways of life, they were aligned with different political regimes, and for this reason often came into conflict. Chechen literature from this period reflects the increasingly tense relationship with the Cossacks who had settled along their borders.

<u>Further Readings</u>:

Thomas M. Barrett, "Lines of Uncertainty: The Frontiers of the North Caucasus," *Slavic Review* 54.3 (1995): 578-601.

Владимир Бобровников, "Насилие и Власть в Исторической Памяти Мусульманского Пограничья (К Новой Интерпретации Песни о Хочбаре)," *Ab Imperio* 1 (2003): 177-208.

U. B. Dalgat, *Fol'klor i literatura narodov Dagestana* (Moscow: Izd. vostochnoi literatury, 1962). Pages 116-117 for the legend of Shahmakh.

A. A. Akhlakov, *Geroiko-istoricheskie pesni avartsev* (Makhachkala: Dagestanskii filial Akademii nauk SSSR, In-t istorii, iazyka, i literatury im. G. Tsadasy, 1968), 163–179.

<u>Discussion Questions:</u>

What role did historical events play in shaping cultural memory in the northern Caucasus?

How did poetry shape the way in which historical events were memorialized?

Northern Caucasus Fiction in the Russian Empire

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 characterizies 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, Daghestanis 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?

Northern Caucasus Fiction After the Revolution

Major Novels

The 20th century witnessed innovation in North Caucasus literatures in many domains, but the innovations in the domain of the novel were truly without precedent. Novels were not written by north Caucasus authors until the 20th century. When writers did start working in this genre, they were conscious of doing something that had never been done before in their respective languages. Three outstanding novels are worth mentioning at the outset: Magomet Mamakaev's *Zelamkha* (1968, Russian translation 1981), named after the famous *abrek* Zelimkhan Gushmazukaev, Bagrat Shinkuba's *The Last of the Departed* (1974. Trans. 1986), first written in Abkhaz and later translated into Russian, Idris Bazorkin *From the Darkness of Ages* (1968), first written in Ingush and later translated into Russian. The latter is a remarkable bildungsroman of the life and time of Kaloi—not coincidentally named after a mythical Nart who is born from a rock (see the above article on Legends in the Ancient Literature of the Northern Caucasus)—who is born in the tsarist era and witnesses the radical changes that swept through Ingushetia during the 19th century. By setting his story in the pre-Soviet period, Bazorkin was able to deal with a number of themes that would have been more difficult to write about had the story been set in the Soviet period, including sexual temptation, unconsummated desire, the tension between love and marriage, and the unjust expectations that parents project onto their children. Dzakho Gatuev's documentary realistic narrative *Zelimkhan* (1929), could also be included in this context, although there is a case to be made for reading this "documentary tale" as an example of documentary prose, as discussed above.

Chechen Fiction

To this list should be added Abuzar Aidamirov's Chechen-language trilogy: *Long Nights, A Lightning in Mountains,* and *A Tempest*, the first volume of which was published in Chechen in 1972, with a Russian translation appearing in 1996 and an Arabic translation appearing in 1998. These novels achieved great popularity among everyday Chechen readers and are regarded as the first major sequence of historical novels in the Chechen language. They were however preceded by an even lengthier sequence of historical novels: the Chechen-language *Years of Fire* (*Alun Sherash*, published in four volumes from 1957-1964), by Khalid Oshaev (1898-1977). Oshaev was also a short story writer, whose works include "The Death of the Vendetta," as well as a number of works about Chechen folklore, as well as plays. Aidamirov is also the author of the national anthem of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, as Chechnya was called following its temporary succession from Russia (1991-2000). Aidamirov's first short story was published in 1957, which was also the year when the Soviet state rehabilitated the Chechen and Ingush people from the accusations of betrayal that has been leveled against them by Stalin's regime and due to which they had been collectively deported to Central Asia.

Circassian Fiction

In the northwest Caucasus, which by and large was spared the trauma of forced deportation, Tembot Kerashev (1902-1988) picked up on where his predecessor Kalambii had left off: with the theme of the noble bandit (*abrek*), which was the subject of his novella "Abrek" (1957, Russian translation 1959). While "Abrek" was first composed in Circassian, other fiction, such as *The Daughter of the Shapsugs* (1951), was originally composed by Kerashev in Russian.

Russian Fiction

As in the tsarist era, Russian authors during the Soviet period continued to be obsessed and inspired by the peoples of the North Caucasus and to engage with their literary outputs. Among the works of Russian authors set in the North Caucasus which deal with the Chechen deportation are Semyon Lipkin's *Dekada* (1983, French translation in 1990) and Anatoly Pristavkin's (*Nochevala Tuchka Zolotaia*, 1981), made into a film in 1989. Alongside these Russian authors whose fiction drew inspiration from the Caucasus, some North Caucasus writers, such as Fazil Iskander (1929-2016) of Abkhazia, choose to write exclusively in Russian, and thereby reached a wider audience.

Further Reading:

Idris Bazorkin, "Evening Prayers," trans. Rebecca Ruth Gould in *The Russia Reader: Culture, History, Politics*, eds. Bruce Grant and Adele Barker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 293-302.

Idris Bazorkin, "Light of the Ancestors," trans. Rebecca Ruth Gould *Washington Square* 27 (2010): 152-167.

Steffi Chotiwari-Jünger, *Die Literaturen der Völker Kaukasiens. Neue Übersetzungen und deutschsprachige Bibliographie* (Wiesbaden: Reichert-Verlag, 2003).

Rebecca Ruth Gould, "Enchanting Literary Modernity: Idris Bazorkin's Postcolonial Soviet Pastoral," *Modern Language Review* 15(2): 405-428.

Rebecca Ruth Gould. *Writers and Rebels: The Literature of Insurgency in the Caucasus* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016).

Semyon Lipkin, *L'histoire d'Alim Safarov, écrivain russe du Caucase* (La Tour-d'Aigues: Editions de l'Aube, 2008). French translation of *Dekada*.

Bagrat Shinkuba, *The Last of the Departed,* translated by Paula Garb (Moscow: Raduga Publishers, 1974).

Discussion Question:

What are the key novels written by North Caucasus writers during the Soviet period? What makes these works significant?

LIFE-WRITING (INCLUDING TRAVEL WRITING)

Northern Caucasus Life-Writing in the Early Modern Period

During the early modern period, many European travelers to the northern Caucasus and the Islamic world provided detailed and nuanced accounts of local culture and ways of life based on what they witnessed on their journeys. Key early modern travellers to the Caucasus include the German scholar and geographer Adam Olearius (1599-1671), Jean Chardin (1643-1713), a French merchant who later became the English ambassador to Holland, and the Ottoman polymath Evliya Çelebi (1611-1684). Adam Olearius' Persian travels are widely known; his journey through the Caucasus—especially his notes on Derbent (in southern Daghestan)—on the way to Moscow are also worth noting.

Germany

Olearius was employed secretary to an embassy sent by the small German state of Schleswig-Holstein for the purpose of developing an overland route for trade with Persia. He was entrusted with the task of gathering information about the regions he travelled to and recorded what he saw and learned in a volume, *Much-coveted description of the new oriental journey, facilitated by the Holstein legation to the Persian King* (*Offt begehrte Beschreibung der newen orientalischen Rejse, so durch Gelegenheit einer Holsteinischen Legation an d. König in Persien geschehen*, first edition 1647) that included seventy copper engravings, focusing on scenes of daily life and cityscapes, sketched by himself. Well-versed in the local languages of the regions through which he traveled, Olearius also translated Sa'di's *Rose Garden* (*Gulistan*) from Persian into Latin and prepared a Latin-Persian-Turkish-Arabic-Hebrew dictionary.

Greece

Contemporaneously with Olearius, the Greek traveler and mapmaker Vasileios Vatatzes (b. 1694), who was based in Moscow, travelled to Persia and the Caucasus and spent time in Derbent on his way back to Moscow. He also visited Shirvan and Shemakhi, traditional centers of Persianate culture located in present day Azerbaijan near the Daghestani-Azeri border. Vatatzes's poetic account of his travels, called *Periegetikon*, consists of two thousand verses. Based on the example of the 2nd century CE author Dionysius the Traveler, *Periegetikon* is considered to be an outstanding example of first-person narrative in Greek geographical literature.

Ottoman Empire

With his *Seyâhatnâme* (Book of Travel, 1640s), Çelebi became one of the earliest travellers to transcribe the language of the regions of the northern Caucasus he visited, including Abkhaz, Ubykh, and Mingrelian. Çelebi journeyed through the entire North Caucasus twice, from 1641-1642 and from 1666-1667. His transcriptions of the Ubykh language are the only known transcriptions by a non-linguist. Along with languages, Çelebi took a deep interest in the cultural history, folklore, and geography of the Caucasus and his *Seyâhatnâme* is regarded as a classic of Ottoman literature. Another early modern traveller who made a significant contribution to early understandings of the languages of the Caucasus is Latvian-born German, Johannes Anton Güldenstädt (1745-1781).

Other Europeans

Most early modern travellers to the Caucasus passed most of their time in Tbilisi and did not venture north across the Caucasus mountains, to Daghestan, Chechnya, or Circassian lands. Two exceptions include Jacques François Gamba (1763-1833), who served as Consul in Tbilisi from 1821 to 1824. Alongside his knowledge of Georgian and travels to mountainous Georgian areas, Gamba travelled to Circassia and Abkhazia. Finally, Jacques Victor Edouard Taitbout de Marigny (1793-1853) travelled along the Black Sea coast in Circassian lands from 1813 to 1818. He became the Netherland's Consul for the Black Sea region in 1821. The German Orientalist Heinrich Julius Klaproth (1783-1835), best known today as a specialist of East Asian languages, pursued a similar trajectory, publishing his travelogue *Reise in den Kaukasus und Georgien in den Jahren 1807 und 1808* (Halle, 1812–1814; French translation, 1823), recording his travels throughout the Caucasus during this same time period.

While early travellers to the Caucasus were often driven by commercial motives, later travellers journeyed to these regions for political reasons, out of simple curiosity, or in pursuit of knowledge about the region for its own sake, or for adventure. The German writer Friedrich Bodenstedt (1819-1892) combined several of these motives in his travel writings. Bodenstadt was a

German author who in 1841 was employed as tutor in the family of Prince Gallitzin in Moscow. It was through this connection that he gained his knowledge of Russian, as well as an appointment as head of a Russian school in Tbilisi, when the city was called Tiflis and was capital of the Tiflis Governorate of the Russian empire. In 1849, Bodenstadt wrote what was at that time arguably the definitive account of Imam Shamil and his resistance to the Russian conquest: *People of the Caucuses and their Struggle Against the Russians* (*Die Völker des Kaukasus und ihre Freiheitskämpfe gegen die Russen*, 1849). Bodenstadt followed the pattern of the Russian Romantics Pushkin and Lermontov in writing a book-length poem in the Romantic tradition glorifying the mountaineers' struggle against the tsar's army, called *Ada the Lezgi* (*Ada die Lesghierin. Ein Gedicht,* 1853).

French

Europe's most famous writers journeyed to the Caucasus, including Frenchman Alexandre Dumas, best known for his adventure tales such as *The Three Musketeers* (1844). Dumas' *Journey to the Caucasus* (*Voyage* au Caucase, 1859) traces the author's journey, to Tiflis via Baku, Shemakhi, and Kizlyar, site of a fortress on the Daghestani-Chechen border built by the army of the tsar.

British

The Scottish traveler and diplomat David Urquhart (1805-1877) took a particular interest in the Circassians and their struggle for freedom during his travels there in the 1830s. So powerfully moved was he by the Circassian cause that he designed a flag for a united Circassia and tried to persuade the British government that was funding his journey to wage war on Russia following its seizure of a ship containing a cargo of salt that was intended for trade along the Circassian coast. Two other British travelers followed in Urquhart's footsteps soon after, and at his prompting: J. A. Longworth, correspondent for *The Times* in London, and the merchant James Stanislaus Bell. These three authors collectively offered the first extended explorations of the social and political institutions of Circassia in their journalistic writings for a British readership.

Further Reading:

Evliya Çelebi, *Travels in Iran & The Caucasus in 1647 & 1654*. Trans. Hasan Javadi and Willem M. Floor (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2010).

George Hewitt, "Western travellers to the Caucasus," in Jennifer Speake, ed. *The Literature of Travel and Exploration*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2003), 199-202.

Paul Manning, "Just like England: On the Liberal Institutions of the Circassians," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51.3 (2009): 590–618.

Discussion Question:

How did European and other non-local perceptions of the northern Caucasus change over time? What factors contributed to these transformations?

Northern Caucasus Life-Writing in the Russian Empire

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.

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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: Khudozhestvennie 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?

Northern Caucasus Life-Writing in the Soviet and post-Soviet Period

Repression of Arabic

The persistence of Arabic and Arabic-script writing well into the Soviet period in the case of Daghestan meant that the 20th century witnessed significant continuities with earlier life-writing traditions. Ali al-Ghumuqi (Ali Kaiaev)'s *Biographies of the Scholars of Daghestan* (*Terâcim-i ulemâ-yı Dagıstan*) is a case in point; composed during the Soviet era, the work provides an overview of Daghestani scholarly activity for nearly a millennium, from the scholars of Derbent during the 11th century to the scholars of the 19th century. Al-Ghumuqi also produced an incomplete biographical dictionary in Arabic which he was working on during the 1930s, arguably the most repressive decade of the Soviet period, when writing in Arabic was actively discouraged. Many of the most important autobiographical and biographical writings of North Caucasus peoples during the 20th century could not be published during their authors' lifetimes. Many also remain unpublished to this day. One important autobiography which has not been published to date is Abu Sofyan Akaev's Arabic-language autobiography, which is held in the Institute of Manuscripts of Azerbaijan's Academy of Sciences, along with several other of Akaev's as-yet-unpublished manuscripts.

As with 19th century literary production, the most common genre where autobiographical writing is found is within biographical literature, known alternatively as *tabaqat* in Arabic and *tazkira* in Persian. Just as Bakikhanov's *Heavenly Garden* incorporated autobiographical materials at the end of the work, so does Hasan al-Alqadari's *Vestiges of Daghestan* incorporate a personal account of the author's trials and tribulations at the end of a work that is mostly devoted to recounting the history of Daghestan. The biographical tradition in Arabic persisted in Daghestan well into the 20th century. One of the last known major works, that is a direct continuation of al-Alqadari's work in Azeri and Bakikhanov's work in Persian, is Nadhir al-Durgili's *Stroll through the Minds in the Generations of Daghestani Scholars* (*Nuzhat al-adhhan fī tarajim ʿulamaʾ Daghistan*).

Chechen Life-Writing

In Chechnya, life-writing took a quite different turn from its path in Daghestan, linguistically, thematically, and in terms of genre. Memoirs figured prominently in the literary output of Chechens, perhaps as a result of the persecutions they experienced and the need for documenting in detail these repressions and human rights violations. Abdurahman Avtorkhanov (1908-1997) was a Chechen historian and intellectual whose autobiography, simply titled *Memoirs* (*Memuary*, 1983), was composed in Russian like many of the works of life-writing by Chechens, and published after the author had been living in Germany for many years. Avtorkhanov's work is valuable for its insights into the inner workings of Soviet power, as well as for his account of the experiences of Chechens under Soviet rule.

The first part of Avtorkhanov's book, which precedes the autobiography proper, is entitled "From the biography of my people" and consists of two parts: an account of the Caucasus War of the 19th century, including the imamate of Imam Shamil, and "Caucasus banditry," including the story of the noble bandit (*abrek*) Zelimkhan. This prefatory material reveals the close intertwinement between the authorial self and collective consciousness in Chechen life-writing. Avtorkhanov then proceeds to interweave his own story into the background of historical events: escaping from home, his school years, his years in Moscow, the beginnings of Soviet rule, a memoir of the Soviet revolutionary Bukharin, whom he calls a "utopian," and Stalin, whom he calls a "realist," his publications in the Soviet newspaper *Pravda*, reflections on Marxism, his personal encounter with an *abrek*, his arrest in

1937 under the charge that he had become “an enemy of the people,” and his fortuitously timed migration from Grozny to Berlin in 1943, immediately after his release from prison.

Had Avtorkhanov remained in Grozny instead of leaving the Soviet Union forever, he would have been deported to Central Asia along with the rest of his fellow Chechens. Avtorkhanov was arrested by the Gestapo after crossing enemy lines, and adopted Germany as his home country. It was in Germany that Avtorkhanov completed his PhD and became a professor of Russian history, writing many significant works on Soviet politics and history over the course of his long career. In 1951, Avtorkhanov co-founded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty with US funding. He died in Munich a year after the end of the First Chechen War in 1996.

Forced Deportations of the 1940s

The trauma of the forced deportations of the 1940s that affected seven North Caucasus peoples—Chechens, Ingush, Kalmyks, Balkars, Karachays, Meskhetian Turks, and the Crimean Tatars—became a focus of many autobiographies and memoirs composed by North Caucasus peoples during the second half of the 20th century. One of the most remarkable of these works is the memoir *Life in an Instant and in Conflict* (*Zhizn' vo mgle i bor'be*, 1996), subtitled, “On the tragedy of the repressed peoples,” by the Chechen linguist Yunus Desheriev. Desheriev memorably tells the tragic story of the fate of the Chechen people during the second half of the 20th century, both as a social phenomenon and through his own personal experience. He describes the secret life he led in Moscow, where he concealed his Chechen identity in order to avoid deportation to Central Asia. Notwithstanding all the difficulties he faced, Desheriev continued his studies in Moscow after the deportation of his people. He managed to “pass” as Russian, and kept a low profile so that his Chechen identity would not be brought to the attention of the authorities. Had that happened, he would likely have faced deportation and even execution. During these difficult days, Desheriev managed to complete his studies and embark on a scholarly career, specializing in linguistics, and becoming the foremost scholar of the Chechen language at a time when the language itself was either repressed or discouraged by Soviet policy.

Desheriev was exceptional in many respects: he is one of the very few Chechens who managed to evade the genocidal actions of the Soviet regime, and avoid deportation, even though he was not permitted to live a normal life. Yet his story reveals a common theme, shared by millions of deported peoples. As Desheriev documents in his book, from 1944-1953, the regime tried to eradicate every trace of the Chechen people from their homeland. Chechens were only permitted to return to their homeland in 1953, when Khrushchev declared them “rehabilitated,” although without issuing an apology for their forced displacement and the dispossession of their homes. The path to recovery was far from complete, however, and Desheriev chronicles the legacy of Soviet policy as well. His work is at once a moving example of Chechen life-writing and a work of critical analysis, composed by one of the most renowned Chechen scholars of the 20th century. Reading this work in the aftermath of the post-Soviet Chechen wars—one of which had ended the year the book was published, while the second war would begin three years later, in 1999—adds yet another layer, reminding the reader that Desheriev’s chronicle of the persecution of his people attests to a pattern that recurs throughout modern Chechen history.

Post-Soviet Wars

The breakup of the Soviet Union led to violence in many regions of the former Soviet Union. But nowhere was the violence more intense, Russian attacks more brutal, or the causalities as high, as in Chechnya, a region that under the Soviet Union comprised the largest part of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. The First Chechen War began as a campaign for independence from the newly formed Russian Federation in 1994 and ended with Chechen defeat in 1996. A Second Chechen War dragged on for ten years, from 1999-2009, after Chechnya was declared an independent state for the second time. As with any war in which international powers are implicated, journalists from around the world flocked to the scenes of war crimes and bombings, producing their own memoirs, documentaries, and extensive photojournalism.

While the books produced by these journalists sold well in western markets, the writings of Chechens who suffered most from the war were by and large ignored. One Chechen literary masterpiece that gained some attention in Europe is *Scratches on shards* (*Tsarapiny na oskolkakh*, 2002), translated into French as *To Survive in Chechnya* (*Survivre en Tchétchénie*, 2006) by Chechen writer Sultan Saidalievich Iashurkaev (1942-2018), who published this work under the pseudonym Yunus Sheshil. Iashurkaev was born and educated in the Chechen town of Kharachoi, which is also the birthplace of the famed *abrek* Zelimkhan, who became a symbol of Chechen anticolonial resistance, and a protagonist of North Caucasus fiction, during the 20th century.

Iashurkaev received his university degree from the Chechen-Ingush Pedagogical Institute (which had become a state university by the time he graduated in 1974). He began his writing career as a poet and participated in Prometei, the organization of young Chechen writers founded in 1975, and named after Prometheus, the mythical stealer of fire from Zeus. After receiving his university degree, Iashurkaev moved to Moscow to study law at Moscow State University. He then taught law and subsequently became an investigator for the Supreme Council of the Chechen-Ingush Republic. All this time, Iashurkaev was busy writing stories and novellas in Chechen and Russian. It was not until the publication of *Scratches on shards*, however, in the middle of the Second Chechen War, that Iashurkaev became known to the broader Russian reading public. Iashurkaev began drafting these memoirs, which are written in an experimental mode, in the form of a diary, and bear the subtitle "essay chronicle," in 1995. An excerpt from the memoirs appeared in the prominent Russian literary *Friendship of Peoples* (*Drezhba Narodov*) in 2010. Chechen memoirs of the war were also written in the languages of the growing Chechen diaspora, including English. One such example is Khassan Baiev's *The Oath: A Surgeon Under Fire* (2003).

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Discussion Question:

How did the post-Soviet wars impact the production of life writing in the North Caucasus, especially Chechnya?

DRAMA & THE PERFORMING ARTS

Northern Caucasus Drama in the Russian Empire

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 *duuuadæstænon 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 Koroev (1890-1924) was another important pre-revolutionary Ossetian playwright. Born in the village of Ermen, Koroev moved while still a child to the city of Alagir, where he finished school. After a period of study in Vladikavkaz, Koroev completed his training as an accountant in Tiflis. Koroev'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, Koroev 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 Vladikavaz 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:

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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).

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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?

Northern Caucasus Drama in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Periods

Of the major genres and media discussed in this study guide, drama was among the last to develop in the North Caucasus. For most of the history of North Caucasus literature, drama in the modern sense of the term—involving indoor theatres, professional actors, and rehearsals—is a 20th century invention, although precedents for this art, such as the polemical debate in the 17th century Daghestani *Treatise on Djinn*, have been discussed in the previous articles for this study guide.

Chechen Drama

Aslanbek Sheripov's brother Nazarbek Sheripov (1883-1920), who published under the Chechen name Nazar-Bek Gatten-Kalinsky, was Chechnya's first playwright and director, Nazarbek Sheripov played a leading role in the formation of Chechen dramaturgy. Beginning in 1905, he directed his own troupe of actors in the performance of the first Chechen-language plays. In 1912, he produced and directed his two best-known plays: *The Bear* and *At a Party* (*Синкъерамехь*). Both works are concerned with Chechnya's premodern past.

During the late 1920s and early 1920s Said Baduev (1904-1943), often regarded as the founder of modern Chechen literature, composed a number of plays that were to prove influential on Chechen dramaturgy. The most famous of these is *Not Every Mullah has a Bayram* (1930). Other significant plays by Baduev include *Red Fortress*, on World War II, *The Marriage of Tsaeba*, about speculators, *Golden Lake*, and *Political Department*.

Comic theatre is also an important genre in north Caucasus dramaturgy. In this domain, among the Chechens, Abdul Khamid Khamidovich Khamidov reigns supreme. Khamidov began his literary career as a translator of the classics of Russian and foreign theater into Chechen, including Molière's *The Bourgeois Gentleman* (1939) and Shakespeare's *Othello* (1940). During World War II, Khamidov was employed by the Chechen-Ingush State Drama Theater as actor and director. In 1943, he was awarded the title of Honored Artist of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR.

Like all Chechen and Ingush residing in the Checheno-Ingush Republic, Khamidov was deported to Central Asia in 1944. He first ended up in the Jambul Region of Kazakhstan, where he became the artistic director of the Palace of Culture of the sugar factory where he worked. He moved soon after to Kyrgyzstan, where he worked as a literary consultant and journalist on theatrical topics. In 1957, he returned with the rest of the Chechen and Ingush people to Chechnya, where he reestablished the Chechen-Ingush State Song and Dance Ensemble. He served as chairman of the Writers' Union of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR from 1959-1961.

Khamidov's best known play is *The Fall of Bozh-Ali* (1965), a comedy about the failed attempts of the protagonist Bozh-Ali to find a bride. The premiere of this play is widely regarded as among the most successful ever in the history of Chechen dramaturgy, and has subsequently been staged at the Chechen State Drama Theater on a yearly basis. The Fall of Bozh-Ali has been translated into many languages of the Caucasus, including the Daghestani languages Kumyk and Lak, Ossetian, Kabardian, and world literatures such as Turkish and Arabic. It has also been staged around the world, including in Bashkortostan (Tatarstan), Turkey, Jordan, and Syria.

In war-torn Chechnya, theatres were bombed and literary production in the realm of drama came to a halt. Chechen plays composed before the war include Arbi Usmanov's "The Mystery of the Cave" and Musa Akhmadov "The Adventures of Chervig." As throughout the North Caucasus, European and Russian classics such as Gogol, Schiller, Moliere were regularly performed.

Abkhaz Drama

Samson Kuagu-ipa Chanba (1886–1937)'s *Amkhadzyr* (1920), is the first play written in the Abkhaz language. In 1937 Chanba was arrested and subsequently shot during the Stalinist purge that affected so many of the best writers of the Caucasus. Later, Denis Kirshalovich Chachkhalia's drama *The Lonely Alder's Ford* appeared on the Abkhaz stage.

On the Global Stage

By the end of the 20th century, with many north Caucasus writers and playwrights living abroad and in the diaspora, North Caucasus drama acquired an international profile. In 2000, the three-act operatic musical *The Resurrection of Satanay* by Jordanian Circassian playwright M. I. Quandour was performed at the Kabardino-Balkarian State Musical Theatre. The musical was based on the poem "Satanay" by the composer's wife, Lyuba Balagova. The poem rehearses the entire history of the Circassian people, chronicling their migrations over the course of the previous two centuries. Mythic in scope as well as historical in orientation, the poem includes such figures as

Waschhemaxwe from the Nart sagas. This we come full circle, with contemporary North Caucasus drama giving new life to its rich oral traditions from times past.

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Discussion Questions:

How did North Caucasus from the Soviet period and after shape their indigenous traditions to modern dramatic practice?