HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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# Northern Caucasus Essay

DOCUMENTARY PROSE

**Contents**



## 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.

Further Reading:

Faustus of Byzantium (Favstos Buzand), *Istoriia Armenii (1883) Favstosa Buzanda*. translation from Armenian into Russian and commentary by M.A. Ghevorghyan (Yerevan: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk Armanskoi SSR, 1953).

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Eberhard Sauer et al, *Dariali: The 'Caspian Gates' in the Caucasus from Antiquity to the Age of the Huns and the Middle Ages: The Joint Georgian-British Dariali Gorge Excavations and Surveys of 2013–2016* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2020).

Discussion Questions:

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

What role has epigraphy played in shaping literary culture?

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).

Further Reading:

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M. S. Gadjiev and A. Shikhsaidov, A. “The Darband-Nama on Harun Al-Rashid and a newly discovered Arabic inscription from A. H. 176,” *Manuscripta Orientalia* 8.2 (2002): 3-10.

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Discussion Question:

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

## 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.

<u>Reading</u>**:**

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G. M. R. Orazaev, "О Русских Переводах Дагестанских Исторических Сочинений "Дербенд-Наме" И "Дарбанд-Нама-Йи Джäдид" (Историографический Ракурс)," *Вестник Института Истории, Археологии и Этнографии* 2.50 (2017): 5-13.

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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?

19TH CENTURY : 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.

<u>Further Reading</u>:

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

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

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

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

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

Discussion Question:

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

20TH CENTURY : 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-haqai’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 *shariʿa* 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.

Further Reading:

Dzakho Gatuev, *Зелимхан, повесть* (Rostov-on-the-Don, 1929).

Magomed A. Mamakaev, *Chechenskii taip (rod) v period razlozheniia* (Groznyi: Knizhnoe izd-vo, 2009).

Амир Рамазанович Наврузов, “*Байан ал-хакаик* - журнал ученых арабистов Дагестана первой трети XX века,” *Исламоведение: научно-теоретический журнал. Всероссийкий научно-теоретический журнал* 3.9 (2011): 82–93.

Aslanbek Sheripov, *Stat'i i rechi: sbornik* (Grozny: Checheno-Ingushskoe izdatel'sko-poligraficheskoe ob"edinenie "Kniga", 1990).

Discussion Question:

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