

A Review of Selected Books on the Russian Colonisation of Caucasus

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Блиев, Марк, Владимир Дегоев. *Кавказская война*. [The Caucasian War]. Москва: Росет, 1994. – 592 с.

(Bliev, Mark, Vladimir Degoev. *Kavkazskaya Voyna*. Moskva: Roset, 1994. – 592 p.)

The book is a fundamental research about the origins of the Caucasian War and the resistance of the North Caucasian people to the Russian empire in XIX century. After the collapse of the USSR, it represents the first serious attempt to overcome the ideologization in the communist historiography and to open a modern discussion about the North Caucasian nations and the Russian imperial rule over them, leaving off the frame of the “class struggle” model.

The monograph, written by Mark Bliev and Vladimir Degoev, who themselves are from Caucasian origin, contains an exceptional stratigraphic analysis of the social and economic development of the North Caucasian societies from XVIII to the first half of XIX c. It comes out of the frame of the traditional for the Soviet period understanding that the economic system of North Caucasian nations depended only on the axiom nature-climate. It concerns the role of agriculture and stock-breeding in the relations between the communities, their social structure and

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political organization and internal migration. The authors present the appearance and evolution of leaders in the different societies and their role for the socio-political transformations. The Blied and Degoev argue that the so called "raid system" was a natural part of these transformations and one of the factors for the Caucasian War.

As the research traces back the origin of the Caucasian War, the authors accepted it as a "large-scale socio-political phenomenon". They bind its appearance to main factors such as the internal socio-political changes of the North Caucasian societies and the Russian military-political system that the Russian empire tried to establish in the beginning of 20`s of XIX century. The Caucasian War had a deep impact on both confronting sides, whose key historical figures were examined in-depth as their actions contributed to concrete developments in the relation tsarism-mountaineers.

Additionally, the book contains separate part devoted to the appearance of the muridism - "the ideology of the Caucasian War" as the authors consider it. They display its origin and characteristics, which were related not only to the resistance of Russian but solving social issues in the North Caucasian societies. The role of the first imams and then of Shamil in the strengthening of muridism is presented in details. M. Blied and V. Degoev pay special attention to the military-administrative structure of the Shamil`s Imamate, its social and political development. They further the historical narrative after the capture of the imam and examin the question of so called "muhadzirstvo" - "the dramatic final of the Caucasian War".

Гапуров, Шахрудин, Дукуваха Абдурахманов, Абдулкахир Израйилов. Дагестан в Кавказской политике России в первой четверти XIX в. [Dagestan in Caucasian politics of Russia in the first quarter of XIX c.]. Нальчик: ГП КРБ "Республиканский полиграфкомбинат им. Революции 1905 г.", 2008. – 488 с. ISBN: 978-5-88195-953-1

(Garpurov, Sh. A., Dukuvaha Abdurahmanov, Abdulkahir Izrayilov. Dagestan v Kavkazskoy politike Rossii v pervoy

chetverti XIX v. Nal`chik: GP KRB "Respublikansiy poligrafkombinat im. Revolyutsii 1905 g., 2008. – 488 p.)

The research presents the role of Dagestan in the Russian Caucasian policy at the end of XVIII – first half of XIX century. The narrative begins with the socio-economic situation in Dagestan in the beginning of XIX century, followed by the main stages of development of Russian imperial policy toward this region. The factors that had impact on the Russian-Dagestan rapprochement and the appearance of mutual interests are explained also regarding the relations between the nations in the Caucasian region and territorial changes.

The authors put a clear line between the period when the Russian empire used mainly political and economic methods to annex Dagestan gradually and the one, when an open confrontation started, which escalated in a military conflict. The last is marked by the beginning of the rule of Gen. Aleksey Yermolov – commander-in-chief of the Georgian (Caucasian) Corps and administer of the civil corps of the Caucasus and the Astrakhan *guberniya* between 1816-1827. His politics toward Dagestan and Chechnya as well as his plans for conquering Caucasus were among the main reasons, according to the authors, for the beginning of an anti-colonial movement among the Dagestani khans.

Additionally, there is a separate part in the book that presents the nascence of muridism. It traces the stages of spread of the new ideology among the Dagestani population, which was considered as a result of resistance not only to the Russian aggression but also to local landlords. During the first stage the muridism advocated for social equality and rights, while the following further developments of the ideology brought to the appearance of slogans for social and national liberation. The authors examines also Gen. Yermolov`s tactics to limit the spread of muridism and his interference in internal affairs of Dagestan.

Дегоев, Владимир. Кавказ и великие державы (1829–1864). Политика, война, дипломатия. [Caucasus and the

Great Powers (1829–1864). Politics, War, Diplomacy.]. Москва: Рубежи XXI, 2009. – 560 с. ISBN: 978-5-347-00023-4

(Degoev, Vladimir. Kavkaz i velikie derzhavy (1829-1864). Politika, vojna, diplomatiya. Moskva: Rubezhi XXI., 2009. – 560 p.)

The monograph is based on a huge foreign and Russian documentary sources, part of which still unexplored by other researchers, aiming to examine the international confrontation in the Caucasian region during the period of the Caucasian War in XIX century, which, as the author argues, originates from the English-Russian imperial rivalry in the East, called “the great game”.

Presenting in a broad context the historical processes in the development of international relations in Caucasus, the author pays attention to important details and primary facts, which facilitates the understanding of the topic. He accepts that while examining serious collisions between countries, it is impossible not to present the characteristics of the personages that were their generator and were involved directly in them. The portraits of those people are “depicted” in a vivid and artistic-biographical manner, which makes the book attractive not only for researchers, but also for the general public.

The monograph is separated in three parts. The first one analyses the period of the 30`s and 40`s of XIX century. It examines the Caucasian question during the peace negotiations in Edirne in 1829; the new Eastern strategy of Great Britain; the accident with the “Vixen ship” in 1837 and the diplomatic game to overcome a military confrontation; the British political and trade interests especially concerning Circassia; and the Caucasus in the plans of the Polish emigrant groups.

The second part presents the place and importance of Caucasus during the Crimean War (1853-1856). It explores the reasons for the break out of the war, the military actions as a consequence of the concrete interests of the allies against the Russian empire and their wish to use Caucasus as a tool for

reaching not only geostrategic advantage but also political supremacy. The diplomatic moves and intrigues lift the curtain of the international rivalry on the congress of Paris in 1856.

The last part of the book, which covers the period from 1856 to 1864, considers the change of the Russian foreign policy and the place of Caucasus in it. Even though the main line in the narrative goes through British-Russian confrontation, the author displays the Austrian interests, which aimed to keep Russia away from Europe for a long time, using its weak point – Caucasus, while implementing Austrian plans on the Balkans. This part ends with the capture of imam Shamil and the subsequent actions of the Circassians, who continued to resist to Russian conquest even by diplomatic steps in Istanbul and London.

Ибрагимова, Зарема. Чеченский народ в Российской империи: адаптационный период. [Chechen Nation in the Russian Empire: Adaptation Period]. Москва: ПРОБЕЛ-2000, 2006. – 756 с. ISBN: 5-98604-071-6

(Ibragimova, Zarema. Chechenskiy narod v Rossiyskoy imperii: adaptatsionnyi period. Moskva: PROBEL-2000, 2006. – 756 p.)

The monograph is an impressing research about the history of Russian national politics toward the Chechen nation in the period of XIX century. It presents the system of imperial administration that controls regions in the periphery of the Russian empire, methods and forms of rule, the system of civil and military power, used for the governing of the Chechen nation in specific and North Caucasus in general. The characteristic of the tsarist politics is shown through the prism of political, economic, social, cultural and religious measures for integration as it follows the main strive of the Russian empire – to unite all subjects of the emperor in a “single whole”, keeping them under permanent state control.

The author encounters five points, explaining the importance especially of North Caucasus for Russia among

which is its geostrategic position, its natural resources and possibility to offer “a range for testing ideas and principles of federalism”. This importance didn't change in the centuries and Russia led a lot of battles to keep it within its territories.

In addition to the main line of investigation, the book provides information about the history and traditions of the Chechen nation, their religious beliefs, medicine and science. Their revolts against the Russian empire and the forced emigration process at the end of the Caucasian War in the Ottoman Empire are also among the chapters of the book as the author analyses in-depth the reasons and interrelations for their realization.

A serious problem, examined by Z. Ibragimova was the situation with the Chechen nation, who fighting against the empire for many years and being outside its structure and control, after the end of the Caucasian War had to adapt in the unitary Russian economic, social and political system. The problems that appeared in this period concerned also the characteristics of Russian authority.

The monograph contains rich scientific apparatus, based on Russian archival documents, books and articles.

Кавказ и Российская империя: проекты, идеи, иллюзии и реальность. Начало XIX - начало XX вв. [Caucasus and the Russian Empire: Projects, Ideas, Illusions and Reality. Beginning of XIX - Beginning of XX c.]. Санкт-Петербург: Издательство журнала „Звезда“, 2005. - 720 с. // Сост. Яков Гордин, Владимир Лапин, Галина Лисицына, Борис Миловидов

ISBN: 5-94214-077-4

(Kavkaz i Rossiyskaya imperiya: proekty, idei, illyuzii i realnost`. Nachalo XIX - nachalo XX vv. Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatel'stvo zhurnala "Zvezda", 2005 - 720 p. // Sost. Yakov Gordin, Vladimir Lapin, Galina Lisitsyna, Boris Milovidov)

A significant number of official and unofficial Russian documents are gathered in this collection, revealing the quest for most effective, rational and mutually acceptable approach to incorporate the Caucasian region in the Russian empire within the frame of almost a century – from the beginning of XIX until the beginning of XX century. Many statesmen, military and public figures were involved in this quest as their various experiences – from the definitely negative to the fruitful ones – are united in the collection.

The sources are classified in three parts as every part starts with introduction by the authors, who make a review of the respective historical processes and background as well as the main figures in them. The first part of documentary collection presents the military plans for the Russian conquest of Caucasus. They were described in official statements, reports, recommendations, prescriptions and projects of mainly Russian generals, who occupied a senior state position in the imperial government or in the local governance of the Caucasian region. Additionally, memoirs, comments to correspondence, memos of the Nicholas I can be found.

The second part comprises of documents that contribute to the formation of a profound perception about the internal governance of the region. Here among the prescriptions and memos of key figures in the rule of Caucasian territories, and registers of local senior institutions, the reader can find opinions of archbishops for the religious affairs in the region and especially about the restoration of Christianity in North Caucasus. The financial matters and establishment of new institutions were also presented in the documents.

The third part concerns the problem about the mutual peaceful coexistence of Russians and Caucasians (especially the mountaineers) in the Russian empire, the integration of the last in the general imperial structure. The process was long and complicated due to the different approaches of the responsible for the ruling these lands Russian generals, whose opinion and knowledge about local population made them willing to use one

or another measure. The published materials present several views about the rapprochement of Russian and Caucasian nations.

The collection of sources provides opportunity to the reader to evaluate the sophisticated relations between imperial Russia and Caucasus, to ruminate about its consequences and result in order to acquire valuable lessons of history.

**King, Charles. *The Ghost of Freedom. A History of the Caucasus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. – 314 p.
ISBN 978-0-19-517775-6**

The book, written more as an intriguing storytelling, presents an insightful analysis of the history of the Caucasian region, spanning the period from the beginning of the Russian imperial expansion up to the rise of the new courtiers after their the Soviet Union`s collapse. By using primary and secondary sources of key importance for a research, concerning Caucasus, the author provides information that evinces the region as a peculiar “borderland, a frontier where different peoples, empires, and social systems came into contact”. Charles King reveals this peculiarity reviewing in the beginning the diverse national and language universe of North and South Caucasus, the state of political relations before the Russian advance. Depicting the Russian conquest of the region, the author presents also the change of politics and approaches, the establishment of local Russian administration, including curious historical moments from this initial period. The system of political formations as kingdoms and khanates in South Caucasus as well as tribal societies and social structures in North Caucasus give additional notion to the reader about the complex reality that Russia had to cope with.

Special attention the author pays to the resistance of the North Caucasian people, the appearance of the muridism and the transformation of both Russian and Caucasian techniques in the armed conflict. The roles of three imams - Ghazi Muhammad, Hamzat Bek and Shamil, as well as figures of Gen. Aleksey

Yermolov and knyaz Mihail Vorontsov, display the approaches and view of both confronting sides.

Of great significance is the fact that the author presents how the image of the “highlander” was invented by the Russian poets and writers, who were coeval of the Caucasian War and experienced Caucasus in one or another way.

Approaching the end of XIX and beginning for XX century, the narrative goes through the social, economic and cultural change in the Caucasian societies, the way they were influenced by the modern political ideologies, the inter-ethnic conflicts that became a starting point for future confrontations. The broke out of the First World War and the post war period were the time when all Caucasian nations tried to achieve independence and put the base for a separate state-building, struggling at the same time to defend private interests in the complicated and dynamic the international conjuncture.

The author describes the socio-economic development of the Caucasian nations during the Soviet Era and the political changes as a prelude to the inter-ethnic conflicts that broke out with the collapse of the Soviet Union. He sheds a light on the origins of modern disputes, including the war in Chechnya, conflicts in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, and debates over oil from the Caspian Sea and its impact on world markets. The modern European and international interests in the region are also disputed.

Breyfogle, Nicholas. *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005. – 347 p. ISBN: 978-0-8014-7746-1

The Nicholas Breyfogles`s book presents very interesting aspect of the Russian colonization of South Caucasus, namely the sectarian colonization in XIX century. It began with the decree of Nicholas I in 1830 that ordered all religious sectarians (Dukhobors, Molokans, Subotniks) to be relocated to new conquered lands in Transcaucasia as a forcible exile or voluntary

resettlement. As the main aim of the emperor was to cleanse the Russian Orthodoxy from pernicious sects, soon he and his representatives, who governed the region, realized the benefits of having Slavic population in South Caucasus, which could influence on local population in correspondence to imperial political course.

The author focuses on the life of the sectarian peasants in Transcaucasia, their interaction with local population and administration, their road to adaptation in the new environment. He explores a wide variety of archival sources, including a large collection of previously unexamined letters, memoirs, and other documents produced by the sectarians that give a possibility to the reader to have an insight into the experiences of colonization and religious life.

The book ends its narrative with the dramatic events of the Dukhobor pacifist rebellion at the end of XIX century and the migration of thousands of Molokans and Dukhobors to North America in the early twentieth century, after the Russian state sought to replace the sectarians with Orthodox settlers.

Lang, David. *The Last Years of Georgian Monarchy 1658-1821*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1957. – 333 p.

The monograph is a serious research about political history of Georgia that also examines in-depth the social, economic, and cultural history of the kingdom in the dynamic period between 1658 and 1821. Published in 1957, it is still a leading work for researchers and readers, interested in Georgian and Transcaucasian history, by providing complete information and thorough analysis on the topic.

The author divides the period being studied into three distinct phases: the period of the Mukhranian dynasty (1658-1723), the period of Turko-Persian rule (1723-1747), and the period in which Russian domination occurred (1747-1832), arguing the inability of the Georgian monarchy to exert control on broad territorial span, which led to more autonomy for the

landlords and losses of territories to the main powers in the Caucasian region – Ottoman empire, Persia and Russian empire.

The book presents the efforts of Georgian rulers such as Erekle II and Giorgi XI to reunite the Georgian kingdom, which implicated them in constant struggles against invaders, and in internecine feuds between the different kingdoms and principalities. This totally exhausted the sources of the state formations in Eastern and Western Georgia, caused economic decline and general impoverishment, the situation of which imperial powers took advantage of.

The advance of the Russian empire on Caucasus and Russian interests of the geostrategic position of Georgia made it a serious rival of the Ottoman empire and Persia for political influence and later for territorial distribution. Tracing the beginning of close relations between Russia and Georgia, the author also examines the birth of close sentiments between the two nations, finding expression in mixed marriages in the noble society, opening of Georgian churches in Russia and formation of Georgian communities in big imperial cities. Meanwhile the author reveals the Russian imperial course for “liquidation of the Georgian monarchy” both in its Western and Eastern part until those territories became part of the empire.

The book is based on archival materials, drawing from Georgian, Russian, Turkish, Persian, and European sources. David Lang also provides a list of sources from Soviet collections that were not available to Western historians until the Gorbachev era. The appendix includes chronological tables of the monarchs of the various Georgian kingdoms, as well as a list of the catholicos-patriarchs of the Georgian Orthodox Church.

Mostashari, Firouzeh. *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and the Islam in the Caucasus*. London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006 – 224 p. ISBN: 1850437718

This book examines the history of nowadays territories of Republic of Azerbaijan under Russian imperial rule and the

measures of the Russian Caucasian administrators to integrate the region into the empire. The monograph based on Azerbaijani and Russian archives aims to contribute to the debate for the nature of the Russian colonialism and to pose the question whether Caucasus was a colony of the Russian empire or not.

The author compares the Russian expansion in Caucasus to that of the American West, describing the colonial relations with the term “contiguous colonialism”.

Firouzeh Mostashari presents the history of the conquest of Transcaucasia as well as the establishment of the Russian colonial administration. The social, political and economic development and the local response to Russian governance of the territories of Azerbaijan are traced, showing the failure to assimilate the Azerbaijani elite to the imperial one. Thus, the “religious frontier” between Christians and Muslims was not only a geographical and political paradigm but also a social expression of the relations between colonisers and the colonised.

The reforms in the Russian Empire that started after 1861, the intensification of Russification in the last quarter of XIX century display the influence of the life-changing reality that provoked the Azerbaijani resistance to the Russian imperial politics. Part of this resistance was definitely the Azerbaijani elite and intelligentsia, which the author pays special attention to and to the development of the nation-building process in the years of revolutions and First World War.

Цветкова, Цветелина. *Руската колонизация на Кавказ (1785-1864)*. [The Russian Colonisation of Caucasus (1785-1864)]. София: Парадигма, 2019. – 570 с. ISBN: 978-954-326-383-7

(Tsvetkova, Tsvetelina. *Ruskata kolonizatsiya na Kavkaz (1785-1864)*. Sofia: Paradigma, 2019. – 570 p.)

The monograph examines the Russian colonization of Caucasus as a combination of military and peaceful methods, aimed at establishing final control and obedience of the

Caucasian peoples, their gradual integration into the Russian political, administrative and socio-economic system until the Caucasian territories become an integral part of the Russian Empire. The book presents the key events that outline the beginning and the end of the purposeful Russian policy towards the Caucasian peoples. Methods and models of colonization are defined in relation to the characteristics of Russian political, socio-economic and military activities in the regions of the North and South Caucasus. The specific Russian policies and institutions in the concrete regions are presented as well as the stages of their development and their role in targeted colonization.

The book represents the first comprehensive scientific analysis of the Russian colonization of the Caucasus in view of its characterization, methods used and respective periodization of processes. It displays comprehensive methods and models, by using for scientific base unexamined and not-in-circulation sources, and at the same time reaches new conclusions using already-known documents. The approach to the topic is chronological and thematic, which was required by the subject of the study in order to present more profound and concrete examples of the methods of Russian colonization of the Caucasus.

The historical narrative starts with the establishment of the Caucasian Viceroyalty in 1785 - the first regional institution, established in the Russian empire that was result of conceptualization and focusing of the Russian policy in the Caucasus. The end is marked by the end of the Caucasian War in 1864 and the consolidation of the Russian control over the Caucasian region.