

Studies on South East Europe

Dominik Gutmeyr

Borderlands Orientalism or How the Savage Lost his Nobility

The Russian Perception of the Caucasus between 1817 and 1878



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NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION, TRANSLATION, AND DATING

When writing about a region so complex in its ethnic and linguistic diversity, finding an adequate way to accommodate the many languages in a consistent system of transliteration is no easy task. Furthermore, the extraordinary richness of the languages in the North Caucasus in particular went hand in hand with the fact that they did not have a written form until the late 19th century, or even into the 20th century, which meant that the region and most importantly its inhabitants were for many centuries exclusively described in foreign languages. Speakers of almost a dozen of these foreign languages, including Arabic, Armenian, Georgian, Greek, Latin, Persian, Russian, (Ottoman) Turkish, and later also English, French, and German, described the Caucasus, all of whom additionally had other ideas of how to transliterate alphabets they did not use themselves. Taking the example of the capital city of today's Kabardino-Balkar Republic in southern Russia, one could refer to Nalchik, Naltschik, Naltchik, or Nal'čik, before even trying to Romanize the Northwest Caucasian language of Kabardian in that case. The latter is a language that knows 47 consonants and two sonants and still stands in the shadow of the famous (and extinct) Ubykh, which boasted an impressive 84 consonants. Romanizing these phonetic refinements unknown to a speaker of a European language inevitably leads to a myriad of apostrophes and accents above and below every letter, as they differ from language to language.

Therefore, it is hardly possible to come up with a solution to the immanent question of how to spell names and places related to that area, if it weren't for the acceptance of Russian as the region's *lingua franca*. Except for a handful of already well-established forms in English (e.g. Moscow, St. Petersburg, Yerevan), the spelling of all names and terms in the present study therefore follows a Romanization from the Russian as set out by the ISO 9 transliteration standard. No political dimension is thereby intended, only heightened reading fluency and pragmatics—and may the alert reader condone one or other inconsistency. In references and direct quotes, the original spelling is, however, preserved, occasionally leading to alternating versions of the same name. Furthermore, I have decided to properly integrate all names and terms coming from the Georgian into the English orthography, with the obvious consequence that Georgian names and terms are spelled with capital letters despite the “Mkhedruli” being a unicameral script.

Some terms closely connected to the history of the Caucasus region are just as problematic as the attempt to address its linguistic diversity. It starts with the

term “Caucasian,” which I have opted not to use, for thanks to the German anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840), it is used as a racial category, which is why I prefer to consistently use “Caucasus” as an adjective as well, as in “Caucasus War,” “Caucasus peoples,” and “Russo-Caucasus relations.” Also, I have decided to use “South Caucasus” rather than “Transcaucasus” [*Zakavkaz'e*] as the latter implies a distinctly Russian vantage point. Another disputed term comes with the translation of *vostok* from Russian. Since Orientalism usually no longer refers to Oriental studies anymore, I have opted not to use terms such as “Orientalist” for academics preoccupied with “the study of the East/Orient,” which may give the impression of being derived from Said’s concept, but to translate the Russian *vostokovedenie* and *vostokoved* with “Orientology” and “Orientologist” respectively. *Vostok* in Russian refers to both “east” and the “Orient,” which is why the use of the term “Orient” does not refer to the Saidian Orient but has to be understood in its distinctly Russian context.

Furthermore, all translations from the German and Russian are mine unless otherwise indicated. Dates given either follow the Gregorian calendar or additionally refer to the Julian calendar, as the latter was in use in Russia until 1918.

INTRODUCTION

It was clearly a Chechen-style assassination, the proceedings prove it. [...] As it usually happens in the case of Chechen assassinations, there was a tender for two or three groups. They came to Moscow and those, who succeeded first, got the money. Because Chechens never take much time to prepare themselves for a crime, they were quickly captured (Sokolov 2015: 15).

Just before midnight on 27 February 2015, Boris E. Nemcov, one of Russia's most prominent opposition politicians, was assassinated as he was crossing the Bol'šoj Moskvoreckij Bridge in the immediate vicinity of the Kremlin and Red Square. Immediately, speculation on the background of the murder filled the front pages of newspapers all over the world. However, what struck me most about this speculation was that it did not take long for voices claiming that Nemcov must have been shot by a Chechen to become rather prominent, and this happened not due to the alleged killer's possible political ties to Ramzan A. Kadyrov, the head of the Chechen Republic, but because of the way Nemcov was killed: he was shot in the back several times, which was clearly deemed to have been "a Chechen-style assassination." The latter are the words of Sergej Sokolov, a journalist and deputy editor of *Novaja gazeta*, in an interview with Mateusz Dobrek for the news magazine *New Eastern Europe* a few weeks after the assassination.

Such an accusation and essentialization of Chechens as a uniquely violent people was not an isolated case. In Russian culture and Russian language, stereotypes about the peoples of the North Caucasus are firmly established. Although the Caucasus region is one of the world's most heterogeneous in terms of ethnic groups and languages, its inhabitants are often referred to in a very generalizing way, as "Čěrnje" ['Blacks'] for instance, while the North Caucasus is perceived as an eternal powder keg: a crisis region not quite ready to be fully pacified. This perception and these attributions never seem to get outdated, neither in Russia—thinking of the Chechen Wars of the 1990s and 2000s or Nemcov's assassination—nor in other parts of the world, to which this genuine North Caucasus violence is allegedly exported and where the same narratives are assumed, seemingly finding confirmation in tragedies like the Boston Marathon bombing of 2013, conducted by the ethnic Chechen-Avar brothers Džochar and Tamerlan Carnaev.

Still, on what basis can one argue that the devious nature of Nemcov's assassination would be typical of an entire ethnic group? And how does such an im-

age come to be? The Chechen Wars certainly contributed to such an image, and Eva-Maria Auch (2006: 30) stresses that already during the First Chechen War, clichés of “evil Chechens,” “criminal zones,” and “dens of thieves” came to life again and politicians and the media could draw on similar images from the 19th century. Has this always been the case, and what specific images are being evoked, and when were they created? With the tendency of growing nationalism in the Russian Federation, primarily on the backs of peoples from the Caucasus and Central Asia (Coene 2010: 167; Michaleva 2012: 179), it makes sense to take a step back and look for the origins of such recurring images in order to better understand the complex relations between Russia and its southern frontier throughout history and today. While it is not the ambition of this study to collect and evaluate modern stereotypes in the reciprocal perception of Russians and the people referred to by their Caucasus origin, it will be made clear that stereotypical descriptions of “Caucasus mountaineers” had been well established already in the 19th century Russian Empire. While these stereotypes were certainly subject to alterations in emerging sociopolitical frameworks, the pre-national stereotypes show significant parallels to modern attributions and illustrate how imperial discourses did its fair share to ensure Russia’s political annexation of the Caucasus did not go hand in hand with the successful integration of these new citizens into a Russian common space but rather reinforced their position as the “Other.”

When writing about the concept of the “Other” defining the self-affirmation of one’s identity, one cannot avoid referring to Edward W. Said (1935–2003) and his seminal study of cultural representations leading to the 1978 classic of post-colonial cultural history *Orientalism*. This US-American literary theorist of Palestinian origin has thoroughly influenced the humanities with his analytical model on inaccurate representations, or what is understood as Orientalism today. Said (2003: 1–2) argued that it was predominantly the British and French who have had a long tradition in Orientalist representations, or what has been a way of dealing with the Orient based on the special place the Orient has had in European Western experience. “The Orient,” according to Said, “is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilization and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other.” Despite the Orient actually being an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture, Said asserted that it helped Europe, or the West in general, to define itself as its counterpoint.

Orientalism is the expression and representation of that integral part, not only culturally but also ideologically, i.e. discursively, including the support of institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, colonial bureaucracies, and colonial styles. Said furthermore stressed that he understood Orientalism as several phenomena, all of them interdependent. The first of them would have the widest acceptance as it describes an academic designation and refers to any scholar teaching, writing about, or researching the Orient. Certainly of more importance and consequence is Said's understanding of Orientalism as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident.'" He went on to say that many writers, which include poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, accepted a binary distinction between the East and the West as the starting point of their respective works (Ibid.: 2–3).

The two components of academic discourse and the more or less imaginative connotation of Orientalism would find themselves in constant interaction, and since the late 18th century, there was considerable traffic between them. At this point, Said added a third meaning to his model, and argued that Orientalism is "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." As a "sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient," it would make the idea of Orientalism as solely a veridic discourse about the Orient obsolete. Subsequently, without examining the discourse of Orientalism, "one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient, politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, or imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period." According to Said, the position Orientalism eventually assumed was so authoritative that no one dealing with the Orient in whatever way could actually do so without colliding with "the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism." By these limitations, a persistent image of the Orient was created, which allowed European culture to gain strength and identity by treating the Orient as a surrogate and underground self against which it would have been able to set itself off (Ibid.: 3–6).

The Orient centered in Said's model was thereby not an inert fact of nature. Just like the opposing Occident, he argued, the Orient would not simply be *there*, but rather be an idea that by its history, tradition of thought, imagery, as well as vocabulary would have given it both reality and presence in and for the West. He did not imply that the Orient would be only an idea without any corresponding reality but emphasized that Orientalism would be exactly that discourse despite or beyond any correspondence with a "real Orient" (Ibid.: 4–5).

Said's concept of Orientalism has proven highly controversial and almost four decades of reception have yielded both considerable criticism and adaptations to Said's Orientalism. The many critics of Said have demonstrated his factual errors and inaccuracies, accused him of neglecting the reciprocity of imperial hegemony and countered that his "Orient" would certainly not have been solely objectified had it not also exerted a strong influence on Said's "Occident" (among many, cf. Ahmad 2008; Irwin 2006; Lewis 1993; MacKenzie 1995; Varisco 2007). Another major point of criticism is that in *Orientalism*, Said tended to present an equally homogenous image of the "West" which at last would not help to overcome the constructed dichotomy between Orient and Occident but rather establish it. The "West" was thereby able to invent itself as the universal subject of history and eventually assert its cultural domination and superiority by laying out a concept of "one true story of human history" (Yeğenoğlu 1998: 95–96).

Said's *Orientalism*, however, inspired many scholars to reflect on the question of knowledge and power in other historical contexts, which led to several related concepts which also helped to include the European "East." "Nesting Orientalisms" (Bakić-Hayden 1995) or "Frontier Orientalism" (Gingrich 1999) are examples for how the field was broadened with theoretical approaches influenced by Said. Maybe the most renowned evolution of Said's concept was elaborated by the Bulgarian-American historian Maria N. Todorova, who applied the notion of Orientalism to the Balkans. In her influential 1997 work *Imagining the Balkans*, she argued that by the beginning of the 20th century, the term "Balkanization" became a new but very persistent disparagement in Europe. It was not only that the Balkans were understood as the "Other" of Europe, but also that its inhabitants did not adhere to the behavioral standards deemed normative by and for the West that understood itself as "the civilized world." The latter were seriously upset with the Balkans at the time of the Balkan Wars (1912–1913), when news of atrocities committed in this allegedly peripheral region of Europe dominated newspaper headlines. Thus, "Balkanization" not only became synonymous for the sub-division of large and viable political units but also for a reversion to the tribal, backward, primitive, and barbarian—an image that the Balkans would never discard, and which was reinforced during the war in Yugoslavia in the 1990s (Todorova 1997: 3–5).

Furthermore, Todorova understood Balkanism not merely as a subspecies of Orientalism (Ibid.: 8–17). First of all, the Balkans have a concrete historical existence while the Orient as laid out by Said is geographically intangible. This concrete historical existence was linked to the Ottoman Empire for centuries and it was only in the 19th century that the Balkan peoples began to emancipate

themselves from the Ottoman legacy by initiating Europeanization, thereby implying an obvious difference from Europe. The concreteness of the Balkans would also be a reason why they were not suited for the Orient's role as a romanticized escape from civilization. This escapist fancy about the Orient collided with the unimaginative concreteness of a predominantly poor and negative perception of the Balkans devoid of any exoticism. Also, and unlike Orientalism, which predominantly resorts to metaphors of its object of study as female, Balkanism became a singularly male discourse. Hence, the "Oriental Beauty" of the harem was substituted with the image of patriarchal dominance in the Balkans. This was, however, vehemently opposed by the art historian Martina Balleva (2016: 110), who wrote that there is no conception of "male Balkans" and that the visual Balkanism in fact shows that its imagery is predominantly "female" just as in Said's Orientalism. Lastly, Todorova stressed the Balkans' function as a bridge or a crossroads. While Orientalism presented West and East as incompatible but completed antipodes, the Balkans stood right in between as a bridge between East and West, between Europe and Asia. This transitional status, though, also meant that labels such as semi-developed, semi-civilized, and semi-oriental were applied to the Balkans. The consequence of these differences is that while Orientalism is a discourse about an imputed opposition, Balkanism referred to a discourse about an imputed ambiguity (Ibid.). What however remains the common denominator between the two concepts is that both describe the implication of the relationship between knowledge and authority, circling around the question of who is in a position to create and define an image of a constitutive "Other."

Another recurring point of criticism of Said's Orientalism is its focus on only two actors. According to Said (2003: 1–4), Orientalism is predominantly, although not exclusively, a British and French cultural enterprise, while he accords the Germans, Russians, Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, and Swiss a lesser tradition in it in comparison to the former. Many scholars have proven Said wrong in this point and have elaborated non-British and non-French concepts of Orientalism. The British-American historian and orientologist Bernard Lewis (1993: 108–109), for instance, criticized Said's omission of Germans from his Orientalism by saying that this "makes as much sense as would a history or theory of European music or philosophy with the same omission." The German literary theorist Andrea Polaschegg (2004) then elaborated on the German contribution to Orientalism in her work *Der andere Orientalismus* [The other Orientalism] and in recent years, the question of a Russian Orientalism has also been raised by several scholars, most prominently by the Dutch-Canadian historian David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye (2010) in his programmatically

entitled work *Russian Orientalism*, which carries the sub-title *Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration*.

On the other hand, in *Inventing Eastern Europe*, the American historian Larry Wolff has convincingly shown that the division of Europe into an East and a West is a project of philosophical and geographical synthesis carried out by men and women of the Enlightenment (Wolff 1994: 356). This relatively late development superseded the then dominant conception of Europe being divided along a North-South axis. Russia was included in this idea of Eastern Europe, which meant that it was subjected to the very same process of intellectual mastery and was identified and described by the same dichotomy of East and West, of civilization and barbarism, of Europe and Asia (Ibid.: 15).

What is Russia's role in Orientalism then? Is it simply the pole opposite to the West's enlightened self-perception? Is it the active creator of Orientalizing images itself, and where is Russia's East, i.e., where is Russia's Orient? Can one understand this Orient synonymously with the Asia in Schimmelpenninck van der Oye's subtitle? And then again, where is Asia?

The question of Russia's relationship with Asia had occupied contemporaries of imperial Russia's expansion already with Fëdor M. Dostoevskij famously asking: "What does Asia mean to us?" Scholars have repeatedly picked up that question and tried to position Russia between Europe and Asia, between West and East. While Said's notion of Orientalism has dominated scholarship about Western attitudes towards an East that is Asia, this does not mean that similar questions were not discussed before 1978. For instance, in 1972, the American historian Wayne S. Vucinich (1913–2005) issued the anthology *Russia and Asia. Essays on the Influence of Russia on the Asian Peoples*, in which the contributing scholars already—a few years before Said's *Orientalism* was published—set their focus on Russian endeavors to describe the non-Russian peoples in their empire. Along the way, they even went a step ahead of Said, as the different papers did not portray the Russian-Asian encounter as a one-way street but highlighted the mutual interplay between imperial power and colonized periphery (Jobst 2013: 190).

For the Russian case, the question of a distinct Russian tradition of Orientalism as set out by Said has been neglected for a long time, despite the consensus that the Russian perception of Asia had always been a very complex and ambivalent matter. This is especially true for Russia itself, where the book and its implications remain relatively understudied (Babič/Bobrovnikov 2007: 317–20; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2014). In 2000, the journal *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* was the venue for what until then had

been the most heated debate on how to understand Russia's role in Orientalism. The discussion was sparked by an earlier article by American historian Nathaniel Knight in *Slavic Review*. In his article, Knight examined the career of Vasilij V. Grigor'ev (1816–1881), then one of the Russian Empire's most renowned specialists on Central Asian and the Near Eastern history and languages, who left St. Petersburg in 1851 in order to accept an administrative position in Orenburg, not far from today's Russo-Kazakh border. Using the example of Grigor'ev, Knight sought to disprove the validity of Said's model for Russia, as he thought it "should be applied with caution, if at all, to the Russian context" (Knight 2000a: 97–99). According to Knight, the Russian case would leave room for idiosyncrasy, as a scholar's interests and views would have been able to collide with those of official authorities and its "objective interests." Adeb Khalid, also a historian, replied to Knight's example by elaborating on the career of the Orientologist Nikolaj P. Ostroumov (1846–1930), who he thought would be a fitting example to counter Knight's arguments and support the case for a Russian Orientalism. Ostroumov took up the post of director of schools in the Russian Empire's newest province of Turkestan in 1877, and unlike Grigor'ev, he used the authority of his Orientologist knowledge to serve Russian state interests (Khalid 2000: 691). The example of Ostroumov would therefore support Said's suggested connection between knowledge and power within an imperial project, meaning that it would be valid for the Russian case as well. Knight was quick to respond that by using the example of Grigor'ev he did not intend to deny that Russian Orientologists did occasionally contribute to imperial rule, but that one should not assume this collaboration would have always been the case (Knight 2000b: 701–02). At last, Maria Todorova commented on the debate between Knight and Khalid and asked: "Does Orientalism have a Russian soul?" She stressed that the questions looming behind the debate between Knight and Khalid could actually constitute the search for an answer as to how unique Russia actually is and how applicable general historical categories and models are to the Russian case (Todorova 2000: 717).

What remained of this debate was not the question which cases of scholarly careers support Said's model of Orientalism in Russia and which oppose it, but the questions of how knowledge is created, used, and whom it serves to assert authority. Even if one considers Said's Orientalism only partially relevant for Russia's case, the question of the relationship between knowledge and power in imperial Russia remains. And as imperial Russia's expansion expanded the state's borders to encompass many peoples and nations the Russians could study, the question of the character of the conquest is also a pressing one and deserves attention.

In comparison to other empires such as the British, French, or Spanish, the Russian Empire, with its continental character, required a different conception of imagining the national territory, as the core and the periphery did not happen to be divided by clear geographical landmarks as was the case with the Western European empires and their respective overseas colonies. Still, according to Alexei Miller (2008: 175–76), in the course of the 19th century the vision for a mental mapping of Russia as such an empire and nation had developed a relatively clear idea of which of the empire’s regions would belong to the Russian nation and which would not. Such regions located at the imperial peripheries were partly, as in the case of the Volga region or the Western province, incorporated into the Russian national space, whereas others, including the Caucasus, were left out and rather relegated to the realm of demographic conquest and thereby conceptualized as colonial domains (Ibid.). Furthermore, the question of whether the Russian Empire’s conquered borderlands should be considered colonies or provinces has made some scholars reflect on Russian imperialism (Breyfogle 2005; Mostashari 2006). Alexander Etkind (2011) addressed this question the most convincingly and suggested that Russia’s conquest of its borderlands be considered “internal colonization” in his monograph of the same title. The term is not unknown to the description of other contexts of inequalities between regions within an empire or state and is applied to Russia, for he argued that while Russia was both for Europeans and its own imperial elite the Orient (albeit not in a Saidian meaning), a “space of internal colonization extended throughout Russia” (Etkind 2011: 65). Through the concept of internal colonization, the Russian Empire was both colonizer and colonized, hence able to build an identity based precisely on the balancing act between those two poles. A question that thus follows is that if Russian Orientalism was indeed an attempt to position itself between West and East, between Europe and Asia, how exactly did the southern borderlands, the Caucasus region, assume such a dominant role within this process? This question will remain in focus throughout the present study.

Said’s *Orientalism* as well as all ensuing concepts and adaptations were informed by an understanding of discourse as described by the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984), most prominently in his 1969 book *The Archeology of Knowledge* [*L’archéologie du savoir*], which defines discourse as a way of speaking and, in terms of power, deciding on who may speak where, how, and about what. Commenting on his own understanding and use of “discourse,” Foucault wrote: “I believe that I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an

individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements [...]” (Foucault 2002: 90). The French philosopher’s understanding of discourse was assumed by a group of linguists around Norman Fairclough and Paul Chilton of Britain, Teun van Dijk of the Netherlands, and Ruth Wodak of Austria. Based on what has become known as “Critical Linguistics” in the 1970s, developed predominantly at the University of East Anglia, they came together at the beginning of the 1990s and elaborated a theoretical approach that sought to investigate the ideological potential of discourses and critically comment on them: critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Spitzmüller/Warnke 2011: 100–101).

CDA is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse with manifold roots in rhetoric, text linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, socio-philosophy, cognitive science, literary studies and sociolinguistics, as well as applied linguistics and pragmatics (Meyer/Wodak 2009: 1). In CDA, use of language (but also other semiotic forms such as visual images) is understood as discourse but in a social-theoretically informed way, i.e. as a form of social practice (Fairclough 1995: 131). This implies that language use is not only a mode of action but also an always socially and historically situated mode of action. In a dialectical relationship with its social context, language use is both socially shaped but also socially shaping, or *constitutive* (Ibid.). Thus, it follows that scholars working in CDA stress that they are not interested in investigating any linguistic unit *per se* but in studying the social phenomena behind the utterance in question (Meyer/Wodak 2009: 2–3). The object of study thereby does not have to be connected to a particular kind and quality of social or political event, for any social phenomenon is suitable for investigation in the tradition of CDA. There are a number of principles which characterize the paradigm or school of CDA, of which two stand out: First of all, all approaches are necessarily problem-oriented, hence interdisciplinary and eclectic. The second characteristic is the inherent interest to de-mystify ideologies and power through the conducted investigation of any semiotic data (Ibid.). The focus on any CDA therefore rests on the relationship between discourse and power, i.e. the reflection of power structures in language and the latter’s role in constituting or undermining them (Spitzmüller/Warnke 2011: 97–100).

For Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, this means that “language is not powerful on its own—it is a means to gain and maintain power by the use ‘powerful’ people make of it” (Reisigl/Wodak 2009: 88). Since CDA should not be understood as a particular method within the field of discourse analysis but includes a variety of different approaches, the two linguists furthermore developed their own concept called the “discourse-historical approach (DHA).” Conceptualized

as strongly intertextual and interdiscursive, the DHA implies a “quasi-kaleidoscopic move towards the research object” and allows for emphasis and explanation of discursive changes (Ibid.: 119–20). The DHA’s distinctiveness stems from its level of research interest and a methodical orientation which includes a strong interest in the construction of identities and unjustified discriminations. Another key feature is its focus on the respective discursive formation’s historical dimension (Wodak 2015: 276).

The image of the “Caucasus mountaineers” will thereby be examined on the basis of a semantic analysis of their portrayal in Russian sources. Poetry, ethnographic studies, descriptions of the actions at the frontlines in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, as well as coverage of the war in Russian newspapers will all be contextualized and examined for Russian reports on the Caucasus region’s native population. The methods of the “discourse-historical approach” are well-suited for the intention of finding the constitutive power of Russian Caucasus images. Several categories relevant to the discourse in question, such as the semantics of key terms and metaphors as well as argumentation *topoi*, will be the focus of the present study. Thus, five questions stand in the center of the analysis and will be applied to the source material. They will eventually be descriptively and critically analyzed and elucidated:

1. Which groups and possibly persons are named and referred to linguistically? (Nomination strategies)
2. What characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to these social actors? (Attribution strategies)
3. What arguments are employed in the discourse in question?
4. From what perspective are these nominations, attributions and arguments expressed?
5. Are the respective utterances articulated overtly? Are they intensified or mitigated? (Reisigl/Wodak 2009: 93)

With the help of these five questions, it is then possible to elaborate five types of discursive strategies. A strategy refers to more or less intentional plans of (discursive) practices eventually aimed at a particular social, political, psychological, or linguistic goal. These five types include nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization or framing, and intensification or mitigation strategies (Ibid.: 94).

These strategies as set forth by the DHA are promising in the intention to approach the 19th century Russian portrayal of the populations in their newly conquered territories. The time frame for the present study is a short 19th centu-

ry, from 1817 until 1878. The end of the Napoleonic Wars allowed the Russian Empire to amass its forces in its southern borderlands and launch an attack on the Caucasus, where it not only had to face the resistance of the region's native population but also deal with the interests of the Ottoman and Persian Empires. What would become known as the Caucasus War began in 1817 and did not end until the bloody expulsion of the population in the Northwestern Caucasus in 1864. The present study will, however, not end with the conclusion of the Caucasus War but with the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. This war not only brought the suppression of uprisings in Chechnya and Dagestan as well as an end to Ottoman claims to the region, for it also serves as an ideal vehicle for a potential othering process of the Russian Empire's new subjects. The Russo-Ottoman War was framed as a confrontation between Russian-led Christianity and Ottoman Islam, which obviously put the majority of the now Russian Caucasus population in the odd position of not finding themselves on the same side as their new colonial overlords within the propagated dominant imperial narrative. The following questions will endeavor to capture the image of the Russian Caucasus:

1. Is it possible to speak of a homogenous Russian image of the Caucasus and its population at all times or to which developments and alterations is this image subjected? Did the applied strategies lead to an image of differentiation or generalization?
2. How did the ongoing Russian conquest of the Caucasus correlate with the perception of the region's native population?
3. Which characteristics, qualities, and features stood in the center of presentation of the Caucasus and its population as the "Other" to the Russian Empire? Which particular alterity was thereby employed to construct a Russian identity?
4. What role did the religious affiliation of different ethnic groups play in the Russian perception of the Caucasus? Were Christians, Muslims, or other religious groups subjected to different strategies as set forth by the DHA?
5. Based on a thorough analysis of the Russian image of the Caucasus, what role did the Caucasus actually play within the imperial Russian state and within imperial Russian society? Does it make sense to consider Russia's authority over and representation of the Caucasus within a distinct discourse—within Caucasianism?

These questions will serve as the basis for an analysis of a rich set of sources that spans from poetry through (pre-)scientific studies and military documents

to Russian press coverage of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, including both written and visual accounts of the region. The Russian involvement in its southern borderlands caused the Caucasus region to become a primary point of discussion in all societal spheres. Therefore, the portrayal of the Caucasus is hereby not confined to one particular generic corpus, but rather includes the works of the four most-renowned Russian writers of the 19th century who frequently addressed the region, namely Aleksandr S. Puškin, Aleksandr A. Bestužev-Marlinskij, Fëdor M. Dostoevskij, and Lev N. Tolstoj. The most important writings and letters of key figures in the developing field of Russian ethnography are then examined in light of the same questions. Furthermore, the Russian army is supposed to be another mirror of the Russian perception of the region and its population. Thus, a variety of published and unpublished documents by Russian military men, exclusively written throughout the campaigns of 1877–1878, will provide insight into these matters. Lastly, another vital set of sources pertains to coverage of the Russo-Ottoman War by the Russian press. Throughout all of these generic texts, a special focus is accorded to the visualization of the Caucasus.

It is this broad spectrum of questions and materials that make the present study the first of its kind in the endeavor to capture Russia's perception of the Caucasus and its population. A short article by the German historian Uwe Halbach from 1991 is the closest approximation to the endeavor to understand Russia's perception of the Caucasus not based solely on the literary excellence of Aleksandr S. Puškin and others. Halbach included ethnographers in the picture and contrasted the pro-war mood at the end of the Caucasus War as well as the poetic idealization of the Caucasus with certain critical voices portraying the Caucasus population not only as enemies but also as victims. This certainly merits further examination.

Other studies of the Russian image of the Caucasus have been confined to a particular field of research in terms of both methods and materials, a criticism that the Russian historian Alexander Etkind (2007: 619) articulated in respect to Susan Layton's work *Russian Literature and Empire. Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy*. According to Etkind, the American literary scholar's monograph would be confined solely to literary scholarship despite having multidisciplinary pretensions. Susan Layton's Caucasus *œuvre* nevertheless stands out in what proved itself to be the most productive of all fields researching the Russian image of the Caucasus. In 1986, she published a paper titled "The Creation of an Imaginative Caucasian Geography" in the journal *Slavic Review* and with this paper, she not only laid the foundation for her seminal work on Russian Caucasus literature published eight years later, but also opened the doors to

many scholars to address Russia's "poetic Caucasus." Three decades later, her insights into the process whereby Russian poets of the 19th century began to make the Caucasus an integral part of Russian culture still has to be considered the seminal work on all related questions. The genre has produced many more monographs and articles, of which Katya Hokanson's *Writing at Russia's Border* (2008) and Harsha Ram's *The Imperial Sublime. A Russian Poetics of Empire* (2003) stand out. The Indian scholar Kalpana Sahni connected the imperial conquest of two different regions in her 1997 monograph *Crucifying the Orient. Russian Orientalism and the Colonization of Caucasus and Central Asia*, and she did not limit herself to the 19th century, for she forged a bridge between imperial Russia and the Soviet Union. Many more scholars have had their say in different aspects of the Russian literary Caucasus, of which the contributions by Dagmar Burkhart (2012), Monica Greenleaf (1994), Ian Helfant (1997), Verena Krüger (2008), and Paula A. Michaels (2004) deserve mention.

The discussions on the validity of Said's *Orientalism* for the Russian case have encouraged many scholars to publish volumes that were supposed to collectively address the question of where one might localize a "Russian Orient." Three anthologies stand out, of which the first was edited by Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini and published in 1997 with the programmatic title *Russia's Orient. Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700–1917*. This multi-faceted volume included, among others, another contribution by Susan Layton on the literary Caucasus, but also a paper by the Canadian historian Austin Lee Jersild, which magnificently draws the attention to the Russian problem of bringing together the concept of citizenship and the integration of the Caucasus peoples. The already cited debate between Nathaniel Knight and Adeeb Khalid then represents the heightened interest in the application of Said's concept to the Russian case. Their papers as well as the comment by Maria Todorova from 2000 were reprinted in the volume *Orientalism and Empire in Russia* six years later. Edited by Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, and Alexander Martin, the volume includes a total of 16 papers which all address different aspects and understandings of a "Russian Orient" but, if at all, address the Caucasus and its population only as a side note. The third programmatic contribution to the search of a "Russian Orient" is the German-language *Der Osten des Ostens. Orientalismen in slavischen Kulturen und Literaturen* [The East of the East. Orientalisms in Slavic Cultures and Languages], edited and published by Wolfgang Stephan Kissel in 2012. Once again, the contributions which consider the Caucasus as Russia's Orient (Burkhart 2012; Michaleva 2012) are however confined to literary scholarship. The standout discussion by Schimmelpenninck van der Oye on *Russian Orientalism* (2010) is no exception to that rule, for

despite the historian's endeavors to examine Russian attitudes to Asia during the imperial era by including an analysis of both Orientalology and culture, the role of the Caucasus in this discourse is again limited to the works of poets like Puškin, Lermontov, or Tolstoj.

Interestingly, the important question of how Russian Orientalology contributed to the imperial project made scholars such as Knight and Khalid argue over the validity of *Orientalism* for Russia but did not lead to many studies elaborating on the relationship between Russian science and politics. Until recently, the accepted argument was that Russian scholars would have regarded science as "placeless" and independent of any political context (Solomon 2008). Vera Tolz opposed this view in her monograph *Russia's Own Orient. The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods*, published in 2011, which focuses on perceptions of the "East" between 1880 and 1920. She argued that the analyzed scholars understood quite well the relevance of the political, social, and cultural backdrop to the knowledge they were producing (Tolz 2011: 19–20). However, Caucasiology [*Kavkazovedenie*] is a side note to her study and she also did not refer to the scientific endeavors which directly accompanied the Russian conquest of the Caucasus. While Marcus Köhler's (2012) *Russische Ethnographie und imperiale Politik im 18. Jahrhundert* [Russian Ethnography and Imperial Politics in the 18th Century] provides some insight into how Russian science and politics came together in the first place, Austin Jersild's (2002) *Orientalism and Empire. North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845–1917* has to be considered the standard reference to the background and implications of 19th century Russian ethnography in the Caucasus. He especially adopted Said's attention to the significance of the West's (the Russian Empire's) contrasting of the Orient's (the Caucasus') sacred antiquity with a degenerate past (Jersild 2002: 6). Two case studies by Christian Dettmering (2011; 2014) support the idea of ethnographic knowledge and politics in the Russian Empire being two sides of the same coin. For the details on how Russian Orientalology became an important discipline in the empire, an excellent overview is provided by Aleksej A. Vigasin and his *Istorija otečestvennogo vostokovedenija s serediny XIX veka do 1917 goda* [History of National Orientalology from the mid-19th century until 1917] (1997).

Russian images of the Caucasus are, however, not the monopoly of poetry or ethnography but can be derived from many other fields of interest. Even so, these are notably understudied, so that, for instance, the question of Russia's perception of the Caucasus peoples during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 is limited to a single study by the Turkish historian Kezban Acar (2004). In general, the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 was reduced to its political

implications for a long time, which meant that the development of Russo-Caucasus relations remained out of focus. However, the contributions by Martina Baleva (2012) on image battles and image frontlines during the war and by the historian Onur İşçi (2014) on wartime propaganda in both Russian and Ottoman newspapers provide an important insight into how images were created and controlled at that time.

The important role of the Caucasus in political history throughout the 19th century has led to the publication of a very high number of studies on various episodes in Russia's imperial conquest. As the focus of the present study in no way rests on the region's political history, and critical research into the Caucasus War or the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 do not fall under the study's purview, it therefore relies on the abundant existing literature on the Caucasus. Alphabetically listed, the works of Chasolt A. Akiev (1980), Eva-Maria Auch (2004), Irina L. Babič and Vladimir O. Bobrovnikov (2007), James Forsyth (2013), Andreas Kappeler (1992), Moshe Gammer (1994), Charles King (2008), Jeronim Perović (2015), Donald Rayfield (2012), Clemens Sidorko (2007), and Ronald Suny (1994) are my primary choice to enhance my study with the necessary background information on political developments shaping the Caucasus throughout the 19th century.

Based on this literature, the first chapter will give the reader insight into how Russia's imperial project developed, as well as an understanding of how the empire's southward expansion transpired. It will outline the major political milestones in Russia's ambition to subdue both the regions north and south of the Caucasus Mountains, it will discuss the implications and consequences of these plans, and it will focus on how the tsarist authorities aimed at establishing and strengthening rule and authority over both the conquered territories and their native populations. The second chapter explores the notion of the "Russian Orient" and illustrates six examples of how imperial expansion went hand in hand with imaginations of Russia's borderlands.

The following two chapters will then explore how the 19th century's progressing military conquest of the Caucasus by the Russian Empire's troops was simultaneously accompanied by both cultural and scientific acquisition. The third chapter will therefore shed light on how the native population became a cultural point of reference in Russian literature, while the fourth will focus on the relationship between knowledge and authority at the hands of the many ethnographers trying to grasp the region's specifics during the latter half of the 19th century.

The concluding three chapters are dedicated to the role assigned to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 in Russia’s cultural and political life, as well as the implications of this war to the perception of the imperial southern borderlands, or rather provinces. The fifth chapter will thereby deal with the war’s ideological connotations, it will address the Russian public sphere’s understanding of the war, and will also place the focus on the political implications of the war to the native population of the Caucasus. The sixth chapter will then analyze documents and diaries written by Russian military men and women during the war. This section will show how Russians perceived and described the region’s non-Russians and which images and narratives prevailed. The seventh and last chapter will then also examine the mechanisms of Caucasus representations during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, only this time on basis of Russian press coverage from the frontlines in the southern borderlands. Special emphasis is thereby placed on the interplay between written and visualized reports. What all of these chapters have in common is that they will examine Russia’s perception of the Caucasus from many different angles and will give the reader a multi-faceted understanding of how imagination and conquest correlate.

1 CONQUERING THE CAUCASUS

The location of this region contiguous to Persia and Asia Minor could provide Russia with the most significant capabilities toward establishing the most active and profitable commercial relations with southern Asia and therefore toward enrichment of the state. However, all of this gets entirely lost because the Caucasus peoples are such dangerous and restless neighbors, such unreliable and useless allies (Pestel' 1906: 47).

Pavel I. Pestel' (1793–1826) was a Russian military officer and an ideological leader of the Decembrist movement, leading its so-called Southern Society [*Južnoe občestvo*]. By 1824, he had composed a blueprint for socio-economic and political transformations titled *Russkaja pravda* [The Russian Truth], wherein he not only called for the abolishment of tsarist rule but also put forth his ideas on how to handle the empire's minority populations, such as the Jews, which read like an instruction manual for genocide (Geraci 2008: 354–55). In the eleventh paragraph of his manifesto, Pestel' elaborated his view on how the Russian Empire should deal with the Caucasus natives and described them as a semi-savage people ruling over a beautiful country. According to him, all gentle and friendly measures to pacify the native peoples were doomed to failure and, while it is very dubious that any “gentle and friendly measures” were truly applied prior to the outbreak of the Caucasus War in 1817, he offered a threefold plan to lead the Russian Empire to “profitable commercial relations with southern Asia”: 1) conquer all the peoples living in the lands lying between Russia and Persia respectively Turkey; 2) divide the Caucasus peoples into two groups, peaceful and violent, of whom the former were to be placed under Russian governance and living conditions and the latter were to be relocated to inner Russia in small groups; 3) distribute the lands of the expelled to Russian settlers, to erase all signs of the previous (i.e. present) inhabitants and turn the region into a peaceful and pleasant Russian province (Pestel' 1906: 47–48).

Of course, Pestel' was arrested and hanged a year later when the Decembrist Revolt failed and was therefore never in a position to personally implement his plans for the Caucasus, but his program came to represent the Russian Empire's endeavors to ruthlessly subdue any neighboring smaller peoples in order to enforce territorial claims and eventually assert its imperial project. The present chapter will briefly outline the development of Russia's imperial project with respect to its endeavors to subdue the Caucasus region. It will begin with an overview of Muscovy's rise to succeed the Golden Horde's heritage and the

subsequent collection of its lands, eventually making it a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional empire and gradually assuming a position to aim at the conquest of its southern borderlands both north and south of the mighty Caucasus mountain range. The second sub-chapter will then address the exhausting Caucasus War of 1817–1864 and illustrate some of the difficulties and local developments the Russian Empire was about to encounter when trying to subdue the many ethnic groups living in the mountainous north of the Caucasus. The third section will then take a look beyond the mountains and examine the Russian incorporation of the territories that make up today's Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. The fourth and last point of discussion encompasses certain select methods which exemplify how St. Petersburg tried to establish and reinforce its rule and authority over the territories and peoples it was either about to conquer or was already hoping to integrate into its vast empire.

THE RISE OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE TO A CAUCASUS POWERHOUSE

By the beginning of the 19th century, Russia had established itself as one of the world's largest empires, both in its population and its territorial expansion. But unlike most of the other European empires at the time, the Russian Empire did not seek to expand its territory with oversea colonies, but continuously redrew its borders by integrating its borderlands. After medieval Rus' had disintegrated in the 13th century due to the invading Golden Horde [*Zolotaja Orda*], the latter, a powerful confederation of Mongolian nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, was able to impose its long rule over the vast territory between Siberia and Moscow. Towards the end of the 15th century however, a lack of internal cohesion manifested itself in the split between the ruling elites of the different khanates, which at last led to the decline of the Golden Horde and to an opportunity for the grand prince of Moscow to solidify his position within the Russian principalities. The reign of Ivan III and his son Vasilij III, which extended from 1462 to 1533, is considered the end of the appanage period in Russian history. A new era had begun, both signifying an end to Muscovy being a tributary to the Golden Horde in 1480 and emphasizing the constantly growing significance of Moscow. Ivan III's predecessors already had achieved a twenty-five-fold increase of their principality's territory, but it remained for Ivan III to subjugate old rivals such as Novgorod and Tver' and finally establish unified rule in former appanage Russia (Riasanovsky 2000: 103).

While the decline of the Golden Horde did favor the rise of Moscow, it did not automatically cause a complete withdrawal of the nomadic tribes from their peripheral territories. The core of the Golden Horde, known as the Great Horde

[*Bol'shaja Orda*], remained a nomadic confederation itself and controlled the steppe between the Don and Jaik Rivers (since 1775 known as Ural) (Khodarkovsky 2002: 77). The rivaling khans each considered themselves successors to the khans of the Golden Horde and were based in their khanates of Kazan', Astrachan', the Crimea, and Tjumen'. They continuously attempted to re-establish their power over the former Golden Horde's territories. From the middle of the 15th century, these internal conflicts within the Golden Horde generated a large number of rebels and outcasts, who sought to escape the ongoing rivalries. While some of them sought their independence by living as Cossacks in the open steppe, an increasing number of nobles preferred to settle in Muscovy and perform military service for the Moscow princes in exchange for a stable income (Ibid.: 82–83). As a result, a significant contingent of Tatars was formed in the service of Moscow, a circumstance that the khan of Crimea, a temporary ally of Moscow's Ivan III, favored in their common campaigns against the Great Horde. On the other hand, the khans of Kazan' kept a cautious eye on their neighbor, the prince of Moscow, which was accompanied by several campaigns against Moscow and more frequently against smaller Muscovite frontier towns on their own.

By the 1470s, Moscow had come into a position which allowed it to think about taking advantage of the internal conflicts in the khanate of Kazan' and the related political division within the Golden Horde. Throughout that very decade, several attempts to send forces and to displace the ruling khan failed, but it had become clear that the first step of Muscovite Russia's expansion to the east had its goal in seizing the khanates of Kazan' and Astrachan' at the Volga Delta. After Ivan III's conquest of Kazan' in 1487, it had become obvious that Moscow was quickly changing from a peripheral principality to both a military and economic factor in the region. By deploying a new khan in Kazan', who was fully dependent on the great prince of Moscow, Ivan III was able to establish full control over the city by the close of the 15th century. Nevertheless, the Muscovite state remained subject to constant raids by the armies of its Tatar neighbors from Kazan', Astrachan', and the Crimea. It was the burden of these raids and the need to constantly fortify the state's southeastern borders, which convinced Ivan IV ("the Terrible") to reform Moscow's army and to finally launch an offensive against its neighbors at the beginning of the 1550s. A long campaign and siege against Kazan' let the Muscovite army to conquer the city in 1552, but it took five more years before Russian rule over the entire khanate of Kazan' was finally established (Kappeler 1982: 67–83; Riasanovsky 2000: 147; Romaniello 2012: 19–21).

Following the conquest of the city on the Middle Volga, Moscow quickly turned its attention to the Volga Delta and its large settlement Astrachan'. They seized it first in 1554 and installed a khan there, who was supposed to be loyal to Moscow. After the vassal khan established contacts with the Crimean khan though, Moscow decided to seize Astrachan' in 1556 again. This time, the khanate was annexed to the Muscovite state. By the annexation of the khanates of Kazan' and Astrachan', Ivan IV was able to get rid of two of the three Tatar khans at the Russian frontier, while only the khanate of the Crimea remained, which however had strong backing from the Ottoman Empire. But not only did Moscow defeat two of its rivals in the Volga steppe, it also acquired a significant Tatar and therefore Muslim population. With the annexation of Kazan' and Astrachan', Russia emerged as both a multiethnic and multi-confessional state (Riasanovsky 2000: 147).

Not only had the population structure in the Russian state changed, it now also joined the competition for the vast territory between the Caspian and Black Sea, which until then had been dominated by the Persian and Ottoman Empires. With the capture of the khanates of Kazan' and Astrachan', the Caucasus appeared on the Russian horizon. This was in the 16th century, when the *Povest' ob carice Dinare* [Tale of Empress Dinara] spread throughout Russia (Suny 1994: 49). The tale, more a mythical account, reflects on the memory of Queen Tamar, under whose reign (1184–1212) the medieval monarchy of Georgia had reached its apogee and was able to achieve numerous victories over its predominantly Muslim neighbors. Interest in the Christian kingdom isolated between Muslim empires, increased in Moscow. The first contacts between the court of Ivan IV and Georgian rulers and with King Levan I of Kakheti were established in 1558. Two decades later, and during the reign of his son Alexandre II, it was Tsar Fëdor Ivanovič who sent a series of embassies to Gremi in Kakheti. The ruler of Kakheti had contacted the Russian Tsar, hoping for help in his conflicts with the Persian Empire and the powerful Šamchal of Kumuch in Dagestan. The exchange of ambassadors in 1586/1587 was accompanied by the willingness of the Russian tsar to take Kakheti under his protection, but nothing more than a brief Russian campaign against the Šamchal of Kumuch followed (Ibid.). Georgia simply lay too far away for the establishment of more than nominal ties at the end of the 16th century. The Persian and Ottoman Empires continued to be the dominant political entities in the Caucasus. The request of Alexandre II of Kakheti, however, did indicate the potential direction for further Russian expansion.

As the Ottoman and Persian struggle in the Southern Caucasus continued, so did Russia's expansion, only it brought more land to the east under Moscow's

control. After the so-called “Time of Troubles” [*Smutnoe vremja*] and the establishment of the Romanov dynasty in 1613, the advance continued. As to its southern frontiers, estimates for the time between 1610 and 1640 indicate a movement of Russia’s military line and colonists of 480 kilometers further into the southern steppe, disregarding the constant confrontation with the Crimean Tatars and other nomadic tribes (Riasanovsky 2002: 194). More spectacular expansion throughout the 17th century occurred in the direction of the vast lands in the East: toward Siberia. Throughout the same three decades, the Russians advanced all the way from the Ob’ River to the Pacific Ocean, exploring and conquering rather than settling the vastness of Siberia.

The reign of Pëtr I (1682–1725) led to a new era in Russia’s history, an era known as the Imperial Age because of the new designation of both ruler and land, as the St. Petersburg Era due to its new capital, or the All-Russian [*vse-rossijskij*] Period because the state increasingly included more peoples than the Great Russians, that is, the inhabitants of the former Muscovy (Riasanovsky 2002: 213). The imperial designation of the Russian Empire under Pëtr the Great drew the state nearer to the Caucasus again, as the new tsar continued to pay attention to the south, despite the Empire’s more pressing agendas during his reign, such as the Northern War between 1700 and 1721. Pëtr’s attention to the south for instance manifested itself in ordering the governor of Astrachan’ to cultivate friendly relations and trade with the ruling elite of Dagestan and also in consulting the governor of Azov about his opinion on the attitude of the North Caucasus natives to become Russia’s allies (Forsyth 2013: 231). Interestingly enough, one of Russia’s most reliable sources of recruits during the Northern War were the Kalmyks, who supplied 40,000 men and thereby a fifth of their total population (Khodarkovsky 1983: 23–24). However, the Russians were also faced with turmoil in the early 1700s, as another *strel’cy* revolt broke out at Astrachan’ in 1705, while a widespread mutiny among the Don Cossacks between 1707 and 1709 coalesced with uprisings of several peoples of the southern Urals and the middle Volga (Forsyth 2013: 231). The disastrous campaign against the Ottoman Empire in 1710–1711 not only resulted in Russia’s retreat from the Azov Fortress but also led to a more aggressive policy by the sultan in the Caucasus.

However, at the beginning of the 18th century there was still a third empire, the Persian, which had a foothold in the Caucasus and made the region complex in terms of power dynamics and various claims to influence and control. As the power of the Persians under the late Safavids declined, Russia soon realized that a vacuum left by a weakened Persia could all too soon be filled by the Ottomans, who were poised to conquer Persia’s possessions in the Caucasus if Rus-

sia itself did not do so first. The end of the Northern War in 1721 allowed Pëtr I to focus on Russia's southern frontier again. He did not hesitate for too long and the Russian incursion into the Caucasus began in 1722, when Pëtr himself led the so-called Persian campaign with the goal of seizing Persian territories on the Caspian shore, preventing the Ottoman Empire from doing so. The Russian tsar amassed some 100,000 men at the Terek River for his campaign, before leading his main force as south as far as Derbent and later on to Baku. The Russian grip on the newly conquered territories did not last long, however, as Persia showed signs of regrouping and was a welcome ally against the Ottoman Empire in the 1730s. The inner political crisis in Persia had its effect on contested Dagestan as well, as Persia's ruling Shi'ites were struggling with the local Sunni population, whereas the latter played a significant role in Dagestani opposition to the Russian advance to the Caspian Sea (Ibid.: 235; Babič/Bobrovnikov 2007: 38–42).

Pëtr's campaign also caused great turbulence in both the Kingdoms of Kakheti and Kartli, as the ruler of the latter, King Vachtang VI, decided to ally with the Russian army in Shirvan as he thought it might favor him within the Persian-Kartlian-Kakhetian struggles for influence. The gamble massively backfired though, as the Russian and Kartlian troops did not arrive simultaneously and the former were soon forced to retreat to Astrachan', leaving behind the exposed Vachtang. What followed was an attack by the new king of Kakheti, Konstantine II, who together with Persian troops sacked the city of Tbilisi in 1723, and then a full-scale invasion by the Ottoman army only a year later. In the same year, a Russo-Ottoman treaty was signed in Istanbul, whereby the Russian Empire acknowledged Ottoman sovereignty over all of Georgia and Armenia, while the Ottomans agreed to leave the Persian Empire intact and to cede the Caspian coast to the Russians (Rayfield 2012: 225–27). While neither of the gains by the two sides at the cost of the Persian Empire lasted beyond 1735, this short episode of the Russians vying for influence south of the Caucasus mountain range mainly led Pëtr I to accept that his empire was not ready to compete for the southern Caucasus just yet.

North of the Caucasus mountain range, the Russian advance into the region was not only blocked by the Ottomans and Dagestan's local population, but also by the presence of another predominantly Sunni people: the Turkic Nogajs. In the early 1780s, it was also the Nogajs whom the Russian Grand Chancellor Aleksandr A. Bezborodko (1747–1799) called “a very dangerous people because of their inherent wildness and their being co-religionists with the Ottomans” (Fisher 1970: 144–45). For Russia, seizing the steppe between the Don and Terek Rivers was the only way of playing a direct part in Caucasus politics until the end of the 18th century, since the entire region surrounding the Black

Sea was under the control of the Ottoman Empire and the territories to the north, between the Dnepr and Kuban Rivers, were subjected to its vassal, the Crimean Khanate. The Russian advance into the steppe however did not go unchallenged, as the example of the resisting Nogajs illustrates. While the Russian advance into the steppe continued and the city of Stavropol' was established in its heart in 1777, the Nogajs kept raiding Russian settlements and sometimes established alliances with Adyghe tribes in doing so (Forsyth 2013: 245–46). After Russia's annexation of the Crimea, the Nogajs finally swore allegiance in 1783, but the Russians nevertheless attempted to oust them from the Kuban again and have them move to the arid plains of the North Caspian steppe. An uprising among the Nogajs led to them to slaughter their Russian armed escort and attempt to join their Adyghe allies, but they were intercepted on their way and many were killed. It was allegedly Empress Ekaterina II who in a subsequent battle against the Nogajs gave the order for their "decisive defeat, annihilation or capture," for they were "not Russia's subjects but enemies of the fatherland deserving every punishment" (Kočekaev 1988: 242–44; cit. in Forsyth 2013: 246). A series of massacres followed in the Kuban steppe over the next few years, which led to either the extermination or expulsion of the native inhabitants, thereby leaving practically the entire Kuban plain empty and available for Russian colonization. The brutal subjugation of the Nogajs is the first example of the ruthless consequences for the inhabitants of the Caucasus, as Russia's advance into the region brought colonial warfare with it (Forsyth 2013: 246).

The main haven for the expelled Nogajs was Circassia, which like Kabarda had been under Ottoman control until the early 18th century, while the threat of potentially invading Crimean Tatars had also been present. The Kabardian aristocracy, however, had always partially supported Russia and had therefore been useful to St. Petersburg as the Kabardians helped guard the passes to Georgia and keep peoples such as the Ossetians, Balkars, Ingush, and others under control. The Russian seizure of the Kabardian settlement Mozdok in 1763, where they established a fortress, and their encroachment upon Kabardian land provoked a vigorous protest by the princes of Kabarda, and when a Kabardian delegation to St. Petersburg demanded that the Mozdok fortress be destroyed in 1771, they were told that Russia had no intention of doing so, as Kabarda belonged to Russia. As a consequence, Kabarda drew closer to the Ottoman Empire again and allied with the Crimean Khanate in an attack on Mozdok, which proved unsuccessful (Ibid.: 248–50). At this stage, the two Kabardian factions previously split between their leanings towards the Russian and Ottoman Empires, the Kashkadau and the Bakhsan, were united in their animosity toward St.

Petersburg (Jaimoukha 2001: 61). Another important consequence of the local disagreement with Russia's policy in the Caucasus was that Islam gained ground rapidly throughout Kabarda and Circassia.

The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774) eventually declared Kabarda a part of the Russian Empire and St. Petersburg was able to reinforce its position at Mozdok with the Volga Cossacks and a Kalmyk regiment. By building a line of forts from Kabarda to Mozdok, the Russians had effectively separated the Kabardians from the Chechens, thus bolstering St. Petersburg's policy to hinder both communication and mutual support between the Caucasus peoples (Forsyth 2013: 249–50). Russia's fortifications between the settlements of the native peoples could still not prevent them from collectively siding in a war of resistance against the colonizing Russians in 1774, in which the indigenous peoples from Kabarda, Circassia, Chechnya and Dagestan, although not the Ossetians, faced Russian forces, who outnumbered the local units by far. The Russian response to the native population's resistance was reflected in the strengthening of their military lines along the frontier with the Ottoman Empire, all the way from the Sea of Azov to their fortress in Mozdok. Further small-scale uprisings among the Kabardian aristocracy against the construction of Russian fortifications on Circassian territories ended with the defeat of the insurgents and the inevitable loss of men and resources due to imposed reparations.

The annexation of the Crimea and the steppe north of the Kuban River in 1783 provided a convenient bridgehead for a further advance into the Caucasus at the end of the 18th century. Circassia remained divided between the Russian and Ottoman Empires, with Kabarda belonging to the first and western Circassia including its Black Sea coast to the latter. The newly acquired territories were first and foremost settled with peasants from Russia and Ukraine, as St. Petersburg encouraged colonization of the steppe by those alien settlers. However, they were not the only source for Russia's goal to colonize the Northern Caucasus, as other newly arriving settlers came from the south, including Armenian and Georgian refugees from the Persian and Ottoman Empires, who mainly sought to settle at Mozdok and Kizljar (Ibid.: 250). The Armenian community, together with a large part of the older Armenian community in the North Caucasus and the Crimea, migrated to establish the town Nachičevan' on Don, near Rostov on Don. The settling policy of the Russian Empire forced peoples such as the Kabardians, Ossetians, and Chechens to leave the plains they were initially encouraged to move into, which aroused heightened resentments against the Russians and their Cossack frontier troops, whose grip on the North Caucasus steppe grew increasingly tighter.

In Ossetia, the majority of the local chiefs adopted Christianity and sought integration in the Russian gentry, but not all of them were pleased to become Russian citizens. Parts of the Ossetian nobility felt that their status had deteriorated due to the Russian presence in the North Caucasus, and they staged revolts already at the end of the 18th century. The Tagaur chiefs, for instance, resented the loss of toll revenues on the road through the Dariali Gorge and rose against the Russians three times, in 1769, in 1785–1791, and in 1804 (Ibid.: 274–75). The last revolt must be considered in the aftermath of Russia's annexation of Kartli-Kakheti in 1801 and notably involved the South Ossetians, who had believed that the annexation of Georgia and the displacement of its princes would mean that they would cease to be serfs. Additionally, the Ossetians attacked Russian fortifications in protest against forced labor along the Russian Military Road. The Russian reaction took the form of punitive campaigns against the Ossetians both north and south of the Caucasus Mountains, so that Ossetia remained unstable throughout the first half of the 19th century. Further conflicts in Ossetia stemmed from the Cossack villages established in the fertile lowland areas that had belonged to native Ossetians before, who were thereafter resettled to the less fertile north bank of the Terek River. The native population that did not have to move in favor of the arriving Cossacks also found itself in disputes with the Russians over land and forest rights. However, the changing population structure also caused the Ossetians to stumble into internal strife over their land. The traditional rights assumed by the Ossetian Digor chiefs, most of whom had converted to Sunni Islam in the 17th and 18th centuries (Minahan 2013: 211), put them at odds with the Ossetian peasantry, who had been moved from the mountains and were usually Christians or Animists, seeking for their own farms and land free from feudal bondage (Forsyth 2013: 275). Even so, the Ossetians, or at least their Christian majority, proved to be the most collaborative people toward Russia in the Caucasus. Throughout the 19th century, the Ossetians often took part in the Empire's wars against the Ottomans or Swedes, and by the 1860s and 1870s, they were prominently represented by Ossetian generals or divisions, winning distinction for their bravery on the battlefields, which was often exploited in retrospective Russian interpretations of the Ossetians as having collectively collaborated with imperial Russia.

Not all of the peoples in the North and South Caucasus excelled in integrating their elites into the imperial structures as the Ossetians managed to do when the Russians tried to restore the region's structure during the many decades of their expansion. On the contrary, the results of the successful wars against the Ottoman and Persian Empires stood in contrast to the intense native resistance movements in Chechnya and Dagestan, to say nothing of the Adyghe tribes who

continued to resist Russian rule toward the shore of the Black Sea. The conflict between the peoples of Circassia and the Russians lasted for more than a hundred years; beginning with the Russian construction of Mozdok in 1763 and reaching its tragic conclusion at the end of the Caucasus War in 1864.

One reason why the conflict between Russia and Circassia lasted so long has to be seen in the Ottoman efforts not to lose their grip on their Caucasus sphere of influence, while Russia was determined to expand further south at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. While an advance in the regions to the east of the Caucasus, such as Chechnya and Dagestan, with its weakened overlord Persia at least initially seemed more feasible to the Russians, they had to expect heavy resistance by the Adyghe to the west of that region, who were backed by their Sunni co-religionists from the Ottoman Empire (Forsyth 2013: 285). The Russo-Ottoman conflict in the northwestern Caucasus also led to the division of the local peoples into rivaling factions. Already in 1728, the Kabardians were divided into two, the Kashkadau and Bakhsan, with the latter preferring the Russians and the former leaning toward the Ottoman Empire. This societal fragmentation certainly did not help strengthen the Kabardian resistance and eventually contributed to their defeat and conquest by Russian troops (Jaimoukha 2001: 61–63).

The building of the fortress of Mozdok as Russia's first military outpost in the region in 1763 can certainly be considered a turning point in both the Russian Empire's policy in the Caucasus and its relationship to the peoples of Circassia. By building Mozdok, Russia had moved the eastern frontier of Kabarda by 64km and in the following years the line of fortifications was extended in the direction of Kizljar, 250km east of Mozdok, as well as toward the Sea of Azov to the northwest (Ibid.: 59–60). The so-called Caucasus Military Line had put the Northwestern Caucasus under siege and the native population was gradually pushed southward between 1763 and 1793.

Due to Russian oppression, for many inhabitants of West Circassia the resistance had assumed an anti-colonial connotation and Islam became the ideological banner in the war (Forsyth 2013: 285). When the Russians mainly attacked the Kabardians in the first stage (1763–1779) of their war in Circassia, those under attack attempted to hold their position, also receiving some support from the Crimea and the Ottoman Empire, but they were eventually overrun on the battlefields. The Russians thereafter built more fortresses and by that measure they were able to isolate the inhabitants of Kabarda and Circassia from one another, while the Kabardians' inner political factions were still not able to find common ground. As a result of the inner political divisions among the Kabardians, in the following Russo-Ottoman War (1787–1791) some of their nobility

sided with the Ottomans, while others decided to fight for the Russian Empire (Tracho 1992: 35–36).

When in 1794 a part of the Kabardians again sided with the Circassian peoples in another large-scale uprising, two very different but equally effective reasons hindered the rebellion from being successful: First of all, the Russians massively outnumbered the insurgents, harshly suppressed the revolt and sent many of its leaders into exile, mostly to Siberia. Secondly, the Circassian peoples were not able to achieve a united front as they were politically split because of different tribes' different interests. These tribes were split on questions of social order, as some of them relied on a feudal class system while others were more democratic. The latter's convictions inspired an anti-feudal movement and ultimately widened the gap in Circassia's society between hereditary landowners and the peasantry. A side-effect of the widening gap was also a split in Circassian society's foreign policy, with the landowners tending to collaborate with the Russians. Similar to the Kabardians a few years prior, the inter-tribal conflict led to parts of the Circassians siding with the Russian Empire (Forsyth 2013: 287).

However, the fact that parts of Kabardian and Circassian society collaborated with the Russian Empire did not mean an end to the warfare between the Russians and the western territories in the North Caucasus. In fact, the further construction of Russian fortifications such as Kislovodsk and Cossack settlements provoked even more resistance, which was met with destruction and brutality by Russian troops. Taking more and more land in the Kabarda, thereby destroying villages and opening the land by cutting down forests, the Russians eventually forced the Kabardians to submit but also paved the way for subsequent anti-Russian campaigns launched by the Kabardians, Balkars, Karachays, Ossetians, and Chechens (Ibid.: 288–89). When those Kabardian princes willing to surrender did so, they asked for a maintenance of their privileges, and among those granted was the formation of Kabardian regiments in the Russian army. The inability of the Kabardian princes to establish a united front was exploited by the Russians and thoroughly weakened the local people's resistance from year to year. With Kabardian numbers already depleted (historian Amjad Jaimoukha (2001: 63) states that by 1818, the number of Kabardians had fallen from a pre-war 350,000 to a mere 50,000) and Kabardian land massively devastated, the Russian Empire continued its policy in the region. Many new fortresses were built in the mountains and occasional uprisings lost their momentum when many of the native population's nobles accepted the promise of restored rights if they abandoned their compatriots' struggle for independence. The measures eventually paid off for Russia, and by 1828 it seemed that Kabarda

had finally been subdued. In neighboring Balkarija, the nobility also agreed to become Russian subjects and thus, east of West Circassia, only the Karachays continued to resist, receiving a moral boost from the resistance movements originating in Dagestan and Chechnya.

THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE'S EXHAUSTING ATTEMPT TO SUBDUE THE NORTH CAUCASUS

By the late 1820s, the Russian Empire came into a position in which it eliminated its former primary competitors in the struggle for influence in both the North and South Caucasus. While the Caucasus War in the north had already lasted for more than a decade by then, the Treaty of Torkamanchay that effectively expelled the Persian Empire from the region was followed by the Russo-Ottoman War of 1828–1829, which brought another success to the Russian Empire. In 1829, the Treaty of Adrianople forced the Ottomans to forsake the Black Sea coast in West Circassia and apparently gave the Russian Empire a stronger grip on the region. Although formally under Russian control now, the Black Sea coast was the venue for most of the skirmishes in the following decade. With the help of Ottoman vessels continuing to supply Circassia's population, the resisting natives were able to hold their lines against Russian troops. The latter's response was the effort to establish the blockade of the coast by building a line of forts at potential harbors. These forts were manned by Black Sea Cossacks and additional soldiers from Ukraine, but the policy ultimately failed. The forts were hastily built and subjected to continuous harassment, so that Circassian fighters were able to take many of them while other fortifications on the Black Sea coast quickly became uninhabitable (Forsyth 2013: 291).

The Treaty of Adrianople, whereby the Ottomans had given Russia a free hand in the Caucasus, convinced many in Circassia of the necessity of intertribal solidarity (Jaimoukha 2001: 63–65). The efforts of the peoples of the northwestern Caucasus led to the establishment of a federation that included twelve tribes and furthermore culminated in the declaration of Circassia's independence in 1836. Backed by these developments, the resistance remained strong throughout the coming years. Since the Russian fortifications were considered the main threat to the sovereignty of the local peoples, a series of coordinated raids were staged to eliminate them, and for a short time they did succeed in breaking out of their stranglehold and take a series of forts. However, a new Russian counter-offensive was inevitable and the Circassian peoples were quickly driven back into isolation. The only thing that spared them from suffering a complete military defeat in the 1840s was that Russia did not concentrate

on the western flank of the mountains, instead focusing its military efforts to oppose the thriving movement of Imam Šamil'.

Šamil''s movement certainly had its strongholds in Chechnya and Dagestan but also made an impact on the western flanks of the North Caucasus. Šamil' thought of a united front of all Caucasus peoples against the Russian Empire, spanning from Dagestan to Circassia. He sent many envoys to the West and tried to organize joint forces with the peoples from Kabarda (Jaimoukha 2001: 65–67). The Russians however, anticipated his plans, separated the two flanks, and drove his forces out of Kabarda. Šamil''s plan to unite the Caucasus peoples into a single front never came to fruition. This was in part due to a certain indifference to Sufism by the Circassian peoples, as well as a widespread disinclination to join the forces led by Šamil'. As the fronts never joined forces, the Russians were able to focus on the eastern front first, where the war ended in 1859 with the imprisonment of Šamil', and only then turned their full concentration to the west. The Circassian tribes had also entertained the hope that they would receive help from foreign powers, especially Great Britain, or that they would at least profit from Ottoman intervention during the Crimean War. However, the only thing gained by the Circassians was three more years in which they were spared of Russia's policy to undermine local morale by razing whole villages (Ibid.: 66–67). The Crimean War caused no significant reduction in the Russian military presence either to the east or west of the Caucasus, but the Blockade of Sevastopol' meant that the Russian forts along the Black Sea coast could not be supplied, taking away an important strategic stronghold at the foot of the mountains during the years of the war. However, the forced halt during the Crimean War and the subsequent Treaty of Paris of 1856 did not put a dent in Russia's ambition to finish its incorporation of the Caucasus into its empire.

The Russian advance was quickly resumed in 1856. The ruthless Russian campaign left Circassia's population with the choice of surrendering by moving to the plains or withdrawing even farther across the mountains, all the way to the Black Sea, where they eventually reached their uttermost point of isolation and were forced to take the "back door" in form of ships to the Ottoman Empire. After the Russian capture of Šamil' and the consequent end of the Caucasus War in the East, a last alliance, mainly consisting of Abkhaz, Ubykhs, Šapsugs and Abadzechs formed the last stronghold of North Caucasus peoples who had not yet surrendered and proclaimed *ghazawat* in 1861 (Forsyth 2013: 293). The western front and with that the entirety of Russia's Caucasus War came to an end in 1864. The Circassians were defeated at Krasnaja Poljana and the war ended in massacres and a mass exodus. With hundreds of thousands dead or exiled, Circassia became a desolate country after Russian occupation. The few

remaining inhabitants in the mountains were forced to settle in the country's northern plains, where they were easier to control, and the emigration continued to empty the land of its native population. Moreover, Russian settlers and Cossacks found a new home in former Circassian territory and gradually the demographic balance tilted to the disadvantage of Circassia's natives—making them a minority in their own land by the end of tsarist rule (Jaimoukha 2001: 72). As Russian rule in Circassia was strongly backed by its military presence rather than by local economic and social development, the resentments of the Circassian tribes did not diminish and culminated in local revolts even after the end of the Caucasus War. However, a new large-scale conflict did not break out until the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878.

South of Circassia, the Russian advance into the Caucasus extended into Abkhazia at the beginning of the 19th century, which at that time was at least superficially Muslim and just like the western provinces of Georgia was still subjected to the Ottoman Empire. The Abkhaz aim of independence from the surrounding powers prompted their rulers try to find a balance between them and they sought negotiations with the Russians after having sworn allegiance to the Ottomans. The Russo-Ottoman War of 1806–1812 brought the Russians to Sukhumi and the Treaty of Bucharest between the Ottoman Empire and Russia meant that the latter acquired the entire coast of Abkhazia and Samegrelo. However, the military occupation did not put an end to strife, nor did the ensuing Russo-Ottoman War of 1828–1829 result in Abkhaz submission to the Russian Empire. On the contrary, together with their Circassian neighbors to the north, the Abkhaz continued to resist the Russian advance until the 1860s (Forsyth 2013: 290). As a result, several punitive expeditions were carried out from the 1830s until 1860, which were meant to subdue the disobedient Abkhazians, who were living in the mountains and actively participating in the general resistance to Russian troops by the Caucasus peoples, supporting the anti-Russian sentiments of Šamil's movement (Lak'oba 1999: 79–81). Only after the Crimean War (1853–1856) came to an end did attention turn to Abkhazia and the subjugation of the eastern and western flanks of the Caucasus once again. While the submission of Šamil' brought an end to the resistance in the East in 1859, the position of the natives to the northwest turned from bad to worse as they found themselves surrounded by Russian armies from both the mountains and the Black Sea coast. Despite their hopeless situation, the Abkhaz together with the Adyghe and the Ubykhs managed to keep their struggle alive for another five years. Russia's Caucasus War ended with the defeat of the Circassian tribes at Krasnaja Poljana in May 1864 and one month later, the autonomous Abkhazian

principedom was abolished. Abkhazia was reorganized into the Sukhumi Military Sector and successfully integrated into the Russian Empire's administration.

What accompanied and followed the Russian victory over the peoples in the northwestern Caucasus were waves of forced mass migration and brutal repression of an attempted revolt which broke out due to Abkhazian discontent over a planned peasant-reform. The uprising in 1866 encompassed up to 20,000 persons in Abkhazia and began with the insurgents killing the head of the Sukhumi Military Sector. Under the command of the governor-general of Kutaisi, Svjatosolk-Mirskij, the uprising was struck down by military force. Part of the movement's leadership was executed; others were transported to central Russia and Siberia. The forced resettlement of Abkhazians, the so-called *amha'dzyrra* [exile], among the people brought 20,000 persons to the Ottoman Empire from April to June 1867 only. Furthermore, the iron fist of the Russian Empire trying to strengthen its rule in Abkhazia helped spur a new insurrection linked to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 (Lak'oba 1999: 81–83). Also, the expulsion of the Abkhaz from their native lands was followed by multiethnic colonization by Russians, Greeks, Armenians, Megrelians, Germans and Estonians, who took advantage of the deserted district (Tsutsiev 2014: 47).

MUSLIM RESISTANCE IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

Other centers of resistance against Russian rule throughout the 19th century were Chechnya and Dagestan. The beginning of the Chechen uprisings was strongly associated with the name of Ušurma, or Sheikh Mansur (“the Victorious”) as he came to be known, who led an early anti-Russian campaign in the 1780s. A follower of the *Naqšbandiyya* brand of Sufism, he was considered the first leader who propagated North Caucasus unity as a necessity to resist further Russian encroachment. Having been trained under strict Islamic law in Dagestan, Mansur returned to his home in Chechnya, where he began to advocate the cessation of pagan practices and the replacement of *adat* with *sharia*. He initiated a process that cannot be considered easy nor quick, for people in Chechnya tenaciously held on to their beliefs and ancient customs, while Islamic traditions were not as deeply rooted as they were in Dagestan. He declared *ghazawat* and began to organize attacks against the Russian troops stationed in the Caucasus (Jaimoukha 2005: 40). After a victory at his native *aul* of Aldy, his movement gained strength and large numbers of warriors from many communities in the North Caucasus joined him. They were able to capture Vladikavkaz, defeat the punitive expedition sent by the Russians to Kabarda, and advance further west towards Circassia. Mansur reached the Ottoman port of Anapa on the Black Sea

coast and hoped for Ottoman support in his movement against the Russians, but when the next Russo-Ottoman War broke out in 1787, large Russian contingents, including Kabardian participation, subjected western Circassia to large-scale attacks and burnt down many of the local villages (Forsyth 2013: 286). Other military set-backs cost him many allies, most of all the Kabardians and peoples from Dagestan, but even his own people abandoned him. The year 1791 brought an end to the Russo-Ottoman War, and when the Russians stormed Anapa they were finally able to take Sheikh Mansur prisoner. Mansur was imprisoned at Schlüsselburg [Šlissel'burg], where he eventually died three years later. However, the war and the campaign against Sheikh Mansur ended without any permanent territorial gains for the Russian Empire, which was furthermore forced to recognize that West Circassia was still an Ottoman dependency (Benignsen 1964: 192–195; Jaimoukha 2005: 40–41). Even so, the Chechens did not gain any permanent territorial or societal freedoms from the advancing Russians, but what remained of Mansur's movement was an often exploited legend of heroic resistance, which was romanticized and connected to the Chechen imams of the 19th century—above all to Šamil'.

In Chechnya in particular, the end of Sheikh Mansur's movement and his personal influence did not signify a parallel end to resentment against the Russian presence in the North Caucasus among its inhabitants. On the contrary, the socio-economic situation in Chechnya contributed to increased anti-Russian sentiment among the native population. The Chechens and the related Ingush stood out from most other peoples in the Caucasus Mountains at the turn of the 18th century, because feudalism was scarcely known to them and they did not have any princes, beks or khans themselves (Forsyth 2013: 277–78). However, the majority of the lower Terek Valley was under the control of Kabardian feudal lords, while farther to the east, the Chechens could not free themselves from certain Dagestani rulers like the Šamchal in Tarki. Later in the century, with Russia's Caucasus War not only bringing violence but also a change in the population structure, the region's most fertile areas were primarily given to military and civil administrators, so mostly to Cossacks and native mountain rulers including some Chechen officers. As a result, even among the Chechens a class of herd- and land-owners developed, while the rest of the people, especially ordinary tribesmen in the mountains, suffered from a lack of land, which in consequence they had to rent from rich Cossacks. Furthermore, many Chechens were forced to move down from the mountains to the foothills and lowlands around the Sunža River, where the Russians had begun to fortify their settlements. Russian forts, such as Vladikavkaz, Stavropol', Ekaterinodar (today's Krasnodar), and Groznyj, had all been built in the plain between the 1780s and the 1810s

and had cut wide clearings through the Chechen forests to expose their settlements (Ibid.: 279).

On that basis, the ruthless campaign of Ermolov did the rest to provoke fierce resistance among the Chechens and also among the neighboring peoples suffering under the military advance of the Russians. Having its ideological predecessor in Sheikh Mansur's movement in the 1780s, from about 1824 onward the resistance in Chechnya assumed an Islamic character. The Avar Ghazi-Muhammad [Kazi-Mulla] picked up the ideas of Sheikh Mansur, placed *sharia* above *adat* and preached *jihad* among his disciples, the so-called *murids*. A strong resistance movement was needed by the end of the 1820s, as the Russian Empire was able to extend his control over almost all of the southern Caucasus and was now able to focus on the still independent left and right flanks of the North Caucasus. When Russia had been given an additionally free hand in the Caucasus by the Ottoman Empire as a result of the Treaty of Adrianople in 1829, the struggle of the Sufi Imams against Ermolov's replacement, Count Ivan F. Paskevič (1782–1856), became even more popular. After declaring war on Russia soon after being proclaimed imam in 1829 and leading his followers in a war against the Russians for three years, Ghazi-Muhammad was killed in 1832 (Babič/Bobrovnikov 2007: 117–19; Jaimoukha 2005: 43–44).

His place as imam was filled by Hamza-Bek [Gamzat-Bek], one of Ghazi-Muhammad's disciples, who would only live for another two years and who had to resort to force to establish his authority, as not all communities were willing to acknowledge his right to succession. In 1833, Hamza offered to make peace with the Russians and in return asked for *sharia* to become the law of the land. The Russians dismissed Hamza's appeals and even called upon the Avar leaders to deliver him to the Russian authorities. Hamza's response was to take Chunchach, the capital of the Avar khanate, and execute most members of the Avar ruling house, thus spreading his claim to authority over all of Dagestan. However, the Avar response was similarly decisive and Hamza was assassinated in retaliation (Jaimoukha 2005: 44). His death led the Russians to assume that the war in the North Caucasus was practically over and won. However, Hamza-Bek was followed by another Avar, who turned out to become the most famous leader of the *murids* in their resistance against the Russian Empire: Šamil'.

Within only three years, Šamil' was able to strengthen his grip on almost all of Dagestan, and he created a theocratic state, the imamate. His victories had a huge effect on the peoples of the Northern Caucasus, as several anti-Russian uprisings occurred in the first years of Šamil''s rule alone. The movement spread over the entire region and therefore even to Circassia, where his call for *jihad* was taken up. Due to the fast and widespread success of his movement,

the Russians were quick to pursue Šamil' and in 1839 they were able to drive him out of his stronghold in Dagestan. With the strongest repercussions of his movement felt in Chechnya, he moved to the West, where the Chechens joined him and inflicted serious casualties on the Russian troops in the battle near the Valerik River a year later and even went on to raid the Dariali Pass (Forsyth 2013: 280). For the next two decades, Šamil's imamate and his *murids* were able to mount a fierce resistance to Russian troops, which reached its apogee at around 1850. After having established his power base, Šamil' not only wanted to organize the military but also aimed at fundamental societal changes. His primary objective remained the unification of the Caucasus under his banner in order to be able to eliminate the unwanted Russian presence in the region. Šamil' strongly challenged the *adat*, as some aspects of these long-standing and deeply-rooted traditions, such as the blood feud, posed a threat to his unification plans. Capitalizing on the many legends surrounding his person and his allegedly heroic deeds, he cultivated an image of "a man on a holy mission" (Jaimoukha 2005: 45).

On the battlefields, the two opposing sides, i.e. the Russian Empire's army against the local peoples of Chechnya and Dagestan, could not have been more unevenly numbered and equipped. The circumstances, however, allowed the supposedly less-favored *murids* to challenge the power of the Russian Empire and its subservient native rulers in the region. Apart from the Cossack irregulars, the Russian army was based on serfdom and a state system, which bound peasants to the frontlines under dreadful conditions (Forsyth 2013: 281). These troops were neither efficient nor were they in any kind dedicated, which opposed the motivation of the rebelling peoples in the North Caucasus, who felt that they possessed moral superiority as defenders of their own land and who drew additional legitimacy from the Muslim movement of Imam Šamil'. Šamil', on the other hand, never took his forces into the open field but rather let his troops engage in guerilla warfare—a strategy that allowed him to claim spectacular victories from time to time. Of course, Šamil' was helped by the fact that the Russians were simultaneously trying to subject both the western and the eastern flanks of the North Caucasus. Not only did the Russians have to split their troops and their efforts onto two different fronts, but the bloody campaign in Circassia also favored Šamil's goal of a united front among the peoples in the North Caucasus.

At first, the Russian Empire's units could break the fierce resistance of the Caucasus natives only by sheer weight of numbers. At the end of the 1830s, the Russians deployed a massive force to take on Šamil's men, who they outnumbered seven to one (Jaimoukha 2005: 45). Laying siege to his headquarters in

Achul'go in 1839, the Russians were able to take the stronghold but had to sustain heavy losses and were once again unable to capture Šamil', who succeeded in slipping away, thereby enhancing his myth amongst the peoples of the North Caucasus. For a long time, it appeared that whenever the Russians finally seemed to be in a position to gain full control over the eastern flanks of the Caucasus, Šamil' was able to rebuild his resistance and re-emerge in full strength. In 1839, when the Russians were able to undermine his position in Dagestan, he fled to Chechnya, to what would become the stronghold of Caucasus resistance throughout the next two decades.

The Russian Empire's war in Chechnya's lowlands included a system of direct rule through a network of local inspectors, who supervised the villages under their jurisdiction (Ibid.: 46). Confiscating Chechen belongings, collecting taxes and arresting many people did its share to stir up local resistance to Russian oppression. Not only were the Chechens deprived of their livestock, food and ammunition but also of their personal weapons—a huge blow to Chechen heritage and pride. To both control the lowlands and to further isolate the Caucasus natives in order to eventually have them surrender, contacts between the people of the plains and their mountain kin were forbidden. A result of the forced isolation of the local inhabitants was a differentiation into plains and mountain Chechens, which created a schism in Chechen society that according to Amjad Jaimoukha (2005: 46) has persisted to the present. The Russians used the natural line of the Sunža River to separate the southern Chechens in the mountains from the Chechens in the northern plains. The latter were more exposed to the Russians, both culturally and militarily, and hence had little choice other than surrender and adoption of neutrality. The southern Chechens in the mountains remained anti-Russian and their resistance became radicalized in isolation. Only a few clans could not tolerate Šamil''s harsh laws and his will to abolish *adat* and were therefore forced to leave the mountains and seek their fortunes under Russian control (Ibid.).

The early 1840s marked the height of Šamil''s movement. Sticking to his guerilla tactics and enjoying the support of most of the local population, by the end of 1843, he managed to get a grip on almost the entire northeastern Caucasus. The Battle of Dargo (1845) saw him and his forces secure a spectacular victory over Russian troops led by Viceroy Michail S. Voroncov (1782–1856). The latter's campaign ended in an unprecedented defeat while Šamil' was at the peak of his power and prestige (Gammer 1994: 182–184). The Russians were forced to find alternatives to open warfare, which had proved to be unfavorable for them and over the years, the Russians were gradually able to overcome their disadvantage on the battlefields, when the building of new roads deep into

Chechnya and Dagestan allowed them to bring heavy artillery to the front (Forsyth 2013: 281). Additionally, the Russians built new fortifications, e.g. the Vozdviženskaja Fortress on the Argun River as the first of a string of new fortifications of the “Chechen Forward Line.” A systematic siege strategy by Voroncov also had the result of driving the people living in the mountains of Chechnya to the plains. There, the Russian campaign was aimed at resettling the population beyond the Terek River and to maintain the established practice of burning down villages and depriving the native population of its livelihood. The new strategy worked well for the Russians, as they finally gained access to the entire region and Šamil’'s movement was gradually weakened. The many years of open conflict began to wear the Chechens down by the 1850s, and only the Crimean War (1853–1856), which demanded Russia’s full attention, gave Šamil’ a few more years to breathe. Prince Aleksandr I. Barjatinskij (1815–1879), the newly appointed Viceroy of the Caucasus since 1856, quickly resumed the war against the Chechens. With the Russian position in Chechnya well established and with Šamil’'s support among the Caucasus natives crumbling in face of the Russian advance, the attackers made quick progress and consequently wore down the last hotspots of resistance. Šamil’ himself was finally pinned down at Gunib in 1859 and sent into exile in Russia (Jaimoukha 2005: 47–49).

Although the capture of Imam Šamil’ was a heavy blow to the resistance movement in the Northern Caucasus, it did not automatically bring it to an end. With the resistance still active in Circassia, the Caucasus War itself did not officially end until 1864 and in the 1860s and the 1870s several revolts flared up all over the region. In 1861, Chechnya was annexed and incorporated into the Terek Province [*Terskaja oblast*], which had been established in the previous year and also included the Kabarda, North Ossetia, and Ingushetia. Thus, the war in the northeastern Caucasus was also formally over and allowed the Russians to turn to the west in order to put an end to their efforts to subject the entire North Caucasus. The formal end of the war did of course not mean that the region was entirely “pacified,” i.e., that the deeply rooted antagonism had faded away. Jaimoukha (2005: 50–51) refers to the years following Šamil’'s defeat as very crucial in Chechen history, for “fundamental societal transformations engendered inimical antagonism towards Russian hegemony,” ultimately leading to periodically occurring revolts. A societal regrouping in Chechnya saw the *Qadiriyya* rapidly gain ground. Russian oppression, just like with the *Naqšbandiyya* in the previous decades, effected a change in the order’s ideology and eventually the armed struggle against the occupying Russians was accorded the priority over pacifism. Followers of both Sufi orders found themselves

joined in an ideological front against the Russian Empire, especially during the next large-scale revolt during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878.

THE FINAL CONQUEST OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

While the incorporation of the territories north of the Caucasus Mountains into the Russian Empire in the 19th century was accompanied by constant struggles and resistance by the native population, the region to the south was annexed much more smoothly. On the other side of the mountains (from the Russian point of view), the region's ethnic groups could boast of a far longer cultural and territorial tradition than that of the Eastern Slavs (Kappeler 1992: 141–149). While the annexation of the southern Caucasus was an oppressive conquest for most of the region's Muslim population, in the contemporary Russian political and public spheres it was depicted as the liberation of the Christian Armenians and Georgians from the rule of backward Muslim empires. The Georgians and Armenians, on the other hand, expected integration into the Russian Empire to grant them political and cultural autonomy—a hope that was only marginally fulfilled and left ambivalent Georgian and Armenian perceptions of Russia's annexation of their countries which persists to this day.

Meanwhile, 1783 not only proved decisive to Crimean history but also to Georgia's relations with the Russian Empire, for in that very same year King Erekle II of Kartli-Kakheti placed his territories under Russian protection. The Treaty of Georgievsk established Eastern Georgia as a Russian protectorate and assured its territorial autonomy as well as the continuation of the ruling Bagrationi dynasty, while granting prerogatives in Georgian foreign policy (Rayfield 2012: 250–51). Russia's assurance of protecting Georgian territories in case of an enemy invasion proved to be worth less than the paper on which the treaty was written, for in 1795 the Persian Agha Muhammad Khan invaded Eastern Georgia and ravaged its capital Tbilisi. St. Petersburg's prestige suffered a massive blow as the Persians easily ran over the Russian vassal kingdom, and the mountain passes of the Caucasus dividing the Russian territories north of the mountain range from Georgia were too much to handle for the Russian troops. The Russian Empire decided not to send any troops to defend their protectorate against the Persians, leaving it at the mercy of Persia's ruler until his death in 1797 (Ibid.: 255–56). The solution came only two years later as the route across the mountains was considerably facilitated when the Dariali Gorge was opened up by the Russian construction of the Georgian Military Road which connected Vladikavkaz and Tbilisi. Opened in 1799, the Georgian Military Road was continuously extended and fortified under the supervision of General Aleksei P.

Ermolov. The road was subject to heavy investment until the 1860s and played an important role in the development of the Southern Caucasus and in Russia's involvement in the region.

The death of King Giorgi XII of Kartli-Kakheti precipitated an internal political crisis in Eastern Georgia. Tsar Aleksandr I decided to take advantage of the power vacuum in the Southern Caucasus and declared the annexation of Eastern Georgia in 1801. The monarchy led by the Bagrationi was abolished and the Georgian aristocracy was forced to swear allegiance to the Russian Tsar. Even the Georgian Orthodox Church, which had been assured of its autocephaly by Ekaterina II and the Treaty of Georgievsk, was not spared in the extensive changes Russian annexation brought to Eastern Georgia. The Georgian Orthodox Church was deprived of its catholicos ten years after the annexation and finally subordinated to the Russian Orthodox Church as an exarchate and thereby practically abolished in 1817, while the Georgian liturgy was replaced by services in Church Slavonic, a language incomprehensible to the vast majority of Georgians (Forsyth 2013: 270–71).

Since the provinces of Western Georgia and Western Armenia were still part of the Ottoman Empire and Shirvan, Azerbaijan, and Eastern Armenia were controlled by the Persian Shah, among the territories south of the Caucasus Mountains, only the east Georgian principalities of Kartli and Kakheti were initially annexed in 1801. Several wars waged by the Russian Empire against the Persians and Ottomans gradually changed the political landscape in the region in favor of Russian expansion. Between 1803 and 1810, one by one the provinces of Samegrelo, Guria, Imereti, and Abkhazia were occupied and integrated into the Russian Empire. However, the occupation and annexation of the Georgian provinces did not proceed as smoothly as intended, with parts of the Georgian aristocracy siding with the Ottomans or Persians and others launching armed uprisings against Russian rule. Parallel to developments in the North Caucasus, several revolts were staged against early Russian command over the South Caucasus, but the armed protests involving Megrelians, Gurians, and Abkhazians as well the neighboring tribes living in the Georgian mountains such as the Khevsur and the Kists, were all quelled by Russian troops (Ibid.: 271–72).

The triangular Russo-Persian-Ottoman interest in the Caucasus also shaped the region at the onset of the 19th century, and the Russian Empire was able to incorporate northern Armenian territories such as the province of Lori together with the Georgian kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti in 1801. The Persian response to the Russian advance in the South Caucasus escalated into the Russo-Persian War of 1804–1813, which saw the majority of the Armenian population siding

with the Russian army and allowed the Russians to take Gjumri and Yerevan (Payaslian 2007: 111). Thus, the wars against the Ottoman and Persian Empires not only led to Georgian territories along the Black Sea coast gradually becoming part of the Russian Empire, as in the first decade of the 19th century they also brought major expansions in Eastern Armenia and the khanates of Azerbaijan, both at the expense of the retreating Persians. Beginning with the seizure of Ganja in 1804 and continuing with Shirvan, Karabakh, Baku, and Derbent in the several years following, the Russian army advanced as far south as Lankaran, when the Persian Empire finally sued for peace and confirmed Russia's possession of the former Persian vassal khanates of northern Azerbaijan in the Treaty of Gülüstan in 1813. A year earlier, the Treaty of Bucharest had concluded the Russian war with the Ottoman Empire and the two treaties now changed the strategic balance in the Caucasus and at last acknowledged Russia as a Caucasus power, although all three sides remained important factors for the region's future (Auch 2004: 75–76; King 2008: 29–31).

The parallel wars with the Ottoman and the Persian Empires as well as Napoleon's campaign across Europe were not conducive to the Russian aim to solidify its rule over the newly conquered territories in the Caucasus region, and a series of treaties followed which were supposed to stabilize the frontiers between the three empires. For Armenia, the Treaty of Gülüstan in 1813 meant that with Russia gaining control over large territories that had hitherto been Persian, the regions of northern Armenia and Karabakh were incorporated into the Russian Empire. As the Persians were unwilling to accept their territorial losses, they attempted to re-establish their rule over Karabakh and thus instigated another Russo-Persian War (1826–1828), which led to yet another Persian defeat. The concluding peace treaty of Torkamanchay granted the khanates of Yerevan and Nakhchivan to Russia and established Russian control over all of Eastern Armenia with the new boundary between the Persian and the Russian Empires set at the Araxes River (Payaslian 2007: 111–12). The integration of Eastern Armenia into the Russian Empire also caused a mass migration of Armenians from the Persian and Ottoman Empires into what was now Russian Armenia. In only a few years, the Armenians would then constitute the majority of the population, while under Persian rule they had been outnumbered by Muslims (Kappeler 1992: 145).

In all of the newly acquired territories south of the Caucasus, the Russian Empire conducted similar policies to rebuild the local ruling class and structure. The local khans were deposed and the former khanates transformed into Russian provinces and partly renamed, as for instance the khanate of Ganja, which became the governorate [*gubernija*] of Elizavetpol' in 1804, and remained so

until 1918 (Forsyth 2013: 276). On the local level however, some of the former clerks in the newly incorporated Russian provinces decided to collaborate with the region's new dominant power and formed military units serving in the Russian army in the upcoming wars against the Persian and Ottoman Empires. As a result, among the officers of the Russian Imperial Army, Russified Azerbaijani surnames such as Alikhanov, Nazirov, and Taghirov appear in the lists since the 1820s (Ibid.: 276–77). The collaboration of the local elites certainly helped to maintain the Russian position in the South Caucasus when the Persian Empire once again waged war against St. Petersburg. The Russo-Persian War of 1826–1828 resulted in further Persian territorial losses and a Russian advance to Yerevan and Nakhchivan, confirmed by the Treaty of Torkamanchay in 1828. With the Treaty of Torkamanchay, the Persian presence north of the Araxes River ceased, resulting in a conclusive division of Persia's Turkic-speaking region with it, as the Araxes River thereafter separated the northern Russian half with its main city Baku from the southern ancient Azerbaijan, which remained part of the Persian Empire.

The Russian victory over the Persian Empire once more aroused Istanbul, which led to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1828–1829. The Russian army defeated its opponent and seized fortresses and towns such as Kars and Erzurum, then the largest city of the eastern Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of Adrianople was signed in 1829, whereby the eastern coasts of the Black Sea with the port of Poti and the regions of Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki were ceded to Russia. Nevertheless, western Armenia remained with the Ottoman Empire and the captured cities and fortresses were returned to Istanbul's suzerainty. Furthermore, Russia elevated Yerevan and Nakhchivan to the status of the Armenian Province [*Armjanskaja oblast*'] in 1828, thereby consolidating its control over this territory. When the province was dissolved in 1840 and the Caucasus Viceroy Office established only four years later, the Russian Armenian provinces were tightly integrated into the Russian administrative and territorial structure, and by 1849 the Yerevan Governorate was created and Armenia had become an integral part of Russia's territorial administration in the South Caucasus (Tsutsiev 2014: 20–21).

At the time, Russian Armenia's society consisted of a relatively small nobility, as its elite was mainly composed of the clergy and wealthy urban merchants. Most Armenians did not, however, live in Russian Armenia, rather they were scattered all over the rest of the South Caucasus, the Ottoman Empire and more distant diaspora communities outside of the region (Kappeler 1992: 193). Throughout the latter half of the 19th century, the continuous migration of Armenians into the Russian Empire eventually made them an ethnic minority in

Russian Armenia. The end of the century saw the Armenians furthermore develop stronger national movements that became increasingly politicized after the treaties following the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 did not bring them the autonomy and rights they had hoped to receive. Until then, Armenians constituted the majority of the urban middle class all over the South Caucasus. In 1803, almost three out of four of Tbilisi's inhabitants were Armenians. While Muslims and Georgians dominated the region's countryside, city life was under Armenian control (Suny 1994: 116). With Georgians beginning to migrate to Tbilisi in the second half of the century, Armenian demographic dominance eventually diminished, but their influence on the city's economic and political structure did not. The Armenian merchant community in South Caucasus urban centers profited from the new security provided by the Russian military presence, and despite competing with Russian merchants, they oriented themselves away from the Middle East and toward Russian and broader European commerce. In the process, they were able to lay the foundation for their future as the region's leading economic and political element (Ibid.: 63).

After Georgia itself had been annexed to the Russian Empire in 1801 and after several other territories such as Imereti were annexed to Russia in the following decade as a result of further wars against the Ottomans and Persians, Georgia was reunified inside one common territory for the first time in centuries, albeit with the loss of its independence. The Russian annexation of formerly Georgian territories continued into 1878, when as a result of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, Istanbul ceded the south-westernmost province of today's Georgia, Ajara, to the Russians. The Russian incorporation of Georgian territories transformed Georgian society enormously. Of all the Caucasus peoples now living under Russian rule, it was the Georgians who were most firmly included in the Russian Empire and whose nobility took the lead in adopting Russian culture. By the mid-19th century, the once rebellious semi-independent rulers of Georgian provinces had become a service gentry loyal to the Russian tsar (Ibid.). Not only did Russian rule therefore bring administrative integration into the empire, it also transformed the region's Georgian and Armenian social elites into estates [*soslovija*] of the Russian type. Thus, both the Georgian nobility and the Armenian bourgeoisie identified their status and security with their connection to the Russian Empire, a development that extended well into the 20th century (Ibid.: 95). In the latter half of the 19th century however, a confrontation emerged between the intellectual elites of these two groups and the Russian Empire's autocracy. This confrontation was fueled by the abolition of serfdom and the end of seigneurial Georgia, which satisfied no significant group, and by the emergence of a civil society, which by the end of the 19th century

had acquired a nationalistic character promoting distinct Georgian cultural achievements in language and folklore (Ibid.: 96–143).

From the modern standpoint, the third dominant ethnic group in the South Caucasus are the Azeri or Azerbaijani. At the beginning of the 19th century however, the region of what would eventually become Russian Azerbaijan had not been a place with any kind of movement evoking or propagating a collective Azerbaijani identity. A specific Azerbaijani national consciousness would not develop prior to 1900 and would only then tackle issues of under-representation and also misleading ethnonyms, such as the then common classifications as “Persians” or “Tatars.” Therefore it is not appropriate to speak of Azerbaijan’s 19th century population as a homogenous ethnic group, and since the ethnonym “Azeri” or “Azerbaijani” did not become common until the 1930s, they are usually referred to as “Turkic-speaking Muslims” (Kappeler 1992: 142). The vast majority of the multiethnic local population was of the Muslim faith, but the Sunni-Shi’a ratio changed immensely throughout the 19th century. In the 1830s, the numbers of Sunni in the territory of today’s Azerbaijan were virtually equal to the Shi’a, with the latter constituting only a slight majority (Bolkvasi 2011: 21–22). Most of the Sunni lived in the northernmost part of the country bordering Dagestan and many of them began to migrate to the Ottoman Empire after the Russian suppression of the resistance of the North Caucasus peoples, thus shifting the Sunni-Shi’a ratio to 1:2.

The beginning of the 19th century saw the Russian Empire resume its expansion south of the Caucasus mountain range, both by force and by treaties, also toward the territory adjacent to the Caspian Sea. The Treaty of Gülistan (1813) allowed the Russians to establish their rule in the northern parts of today’s Republic of Azerbaijan. The historic region Azerbaijan was split in half by the Treaty of Torkamanchay in 1828, which confirmed the Russian annexation of the region’s northern part while the south remained under Persian control—a division that is still in place today and roughly marks the position of today’s Azerbaijani-Iranian border. In favor of the Russian administrative system consisting of governorates [*gubernija*], provinces [*oblast*] and districts [*uezdy*], the local khanates were gradually abolished and the ruling khans replaced by Russians, mostly military commanders (Forsyth 2013: 310). Often these administrative changes were met with local revolts. While the khans lost their positions, the lesser gentry continued to be landowners and over time, some of them were admitted into the Russian military and civil service in a manner similar to the Armenian and Georgian gentry. Military rule was replaced by civil imperial administration in 1841, and the Russian territorial holdings in the South Caucasus were divided into the Georgia-Imeretia Governorate [*Gruzino-Imeretinskaja*

gubernija], with its seat in Tbilisi, and the Caspian Province [*Kaspijskaja oblast*] centered in Šemachy [Šamaxı]. In his administrative and legal restructuring of the entire region, Viceroy Voroncov drew new borders and created four governorates: Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Šemachy, and Derbent. Ganja remained under the jurisdiction of Tbilisi while in 1849 the governorate of Yerevan was created and it encompassed Nakhchivan (Bolukbasi 2011: 22–23).

These administrative reforms placed the southern Caucasus firmly under Russian control, contributed to the population's internal cohesion and facilitated the region's economic integration, as they were aimed at removing the level of division that had promoted local particularism (Shaffer 2002: 24; Swietochowski 1995: 16). Until the construction of the "Transcaucasus Railway" [*Zakavkazskaja železnaja doroga*] along the Caspian Sea and the growth of demand for and supply of large-scale oil production, Russian Azerbaijan was far from being a modernized region with urban centers. Baku would only experience rapid growth at the end of the 19th century, and while in 1860 it was still a small town with 14,000 inhabitants, by 1904 Azerbaijan's new urban center already had a population of 177,777. Oil production in general had preceded Russian rule in 1813, but the oil yields of the Baku wells only increased dramatically in the 1870s in combination with the growth of industry, banking, trade, construction, and communication networks, which led to Baku becoming the Russian Empire's oil production center (Auch 2004: 231; Bolukbasi 2011: 24).

Parallel to the decentralized region's lack of industrial modernity, there was still a vacuum in the construction of identity until the end of the 19th century. The majority of Northern Azerbaijan's population spoke a Turkic language and was officially classed as "Tatars," while the delineation between its identity as "Turks," "Azeri" or "Azerbaijanis," "Persians," and "Muslims" remained unclear (Shaffer 2002: 15). The development of a collective Azerbaijani identity intensified only toward the end of the century, and it was related to the link between questions of identity and its instrumentalization as a political force, something that became apparent in several polemics on national identity near the end of the 1870s (Ibid.: 29–32). Furthermore, unlike Georgia and Armenia, the region of Azerbaijan did not have a clear cultural center or at least a capital city that stood out in terms of population. "Russian Azerbaijan" was not only an ethnically fragmented territory but also decentralized at the administrative level. The industrial importance of Azerbaijan and subsequently the attention accorded to it by St. Petersburg were therefore closely connected to increasing demand for the region's oil reserves and production. The first refineries near Baku were established in 1859, and by the 1870s, most industrial production sites were in the hands of either Russian or Armenian investors. While production was most-

ly in the hands of non-locals, the working class in Azerbaijan included a majority of “Persians” or “Tatars,” i.e. local inhabitants from Azerbaijan, and also other peoples from neighboring regions, such as many Lezgians from Dagestan. While the majority of Baku’s oil workers were therefore of local origin and predominantly Muslim, the new Russian system of local government via restricted implementation of the so-called Urban Reform Act introduced in 1870 did not allow non-Christians to compose more than 50% of any council, a figure that would be further reduced to 33% in 1892. Consequently, the local government of the city of Baku remained in the hands of propertied Russians and Armenians. The same applied to the booming oil industry, and when the state’s monopoly system was replaced with the auction of oil fields in 1872, mostly Russian and Armenian entrepreneurs benefitted. In 1888, only two of the 54 major companies extracting oil in Baku were Azerbaijani-owned (Bolukbasi 2011: 24; Forsyth 2013: 310).

By the time of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, the Russian Empire had quite effectively asserted its rule over both the North and South Caucasus and was practically unchallenged in foreign policy in its ambitions to re-model its newly conquered territories. In order to achieve that, the tsarist authorities relied on a whole set of methods which were supposed to first establish control over the region and, once achieved, to reinforce and expand Russian authority over the native peoples.

RUSSIAN POLICIES TO ESTABLISH AND STRENGTHEN ITS RULE IN THE CAUCASUS

With its conquest of territories to both the north and the south of the Caucasus Mountains, the Russian Empire had acquired hundreds of thousands new Muslim citizens. These Muslims were highly heterogeneous in their ethnic composition as well as in their social and cultural traditions. The peoples of the Volga Delta and Northern Azerbaijan had either lived under Russian rule for centuries already or they had developed an urban tradition on their own. In the Caucasus however, the majority of the native Muslims lived a nomadic life (Kappeler 1992: 195–198). In the North Caucasus, resistance against Russian conquest was also staged by militant Islamic movements, most famously the ones led by Mansur and Šamil’ in Chechnya and Dagestan (Bobrovnikov 2006: 205). By the 1780s, Islam had become a central element of political mobilization in the region. Thus, a question that gradually developed throughout the 19th century was whether the Russian Empire’s Muslims would eventually also adopt a supra-ethnic collective identity based on their common belief.

A crucial role in the development of a rise in Islamic political consciousness was played by the Sufi *Naqšbandiyya* brotherhood, also known as Muridism, in the North Caucasus (Dettmering 2011: 211–16; Karpat 2001: 33). The Chechen-Dagestani imamate of the 19th century was the most visible manifestation of political Islam in the 19th century; it was mostly based on *sharia* institutions and some adapted Sufi principles which dictated the relationship between a ruler and subjects. The perception of Sufi orders as the ideological foundation of all anti-Russian sentiments in the North Caucasus shifted the imperial perception of Islam, so that it was seen as a threat to the Russian Empire in the region. These fears of Sufism led to several anti-Sufi decrees and persecution, while in 1836, Sufi sheikhs were denied Russian citizenship and were not allowed to pass the Russian border (Ibid.: 211; Kemper 2002). *Naqšbandiyya*-Muridism did not, however, start out as a pan-Islamic and anti-Russian movement; it only became a militant resistance movement as a result of historical events in which the Caucasus Muslims stood against Russian expansionism and its inherent threat to their faith (Karpat 2001: 33). It was under Šamil' in particular that the religious-military movement became further imbued with a national character and incorporated the idea of a territorial fatherland and allegiance to a home territory. After the famous imam's demise in 1859, the *Naqšbandiyya* retained its political vigor while its religious form soon changed and the Chechen-led *Quadiriyya* movement took over. As both groups pursued the same national goals under a similar Islamic terminology, the change did not precipitate a rift in political Islam in the North Caucasus, as many former followers of the *Naqšbandiyya* branch were attracted by the *Quadiriyya* (Ibid.: 40).

Until the 1850s, the traditional Islamic centers exerting influence on the Muslim communities of the Russian Empire continued to be the renowned Central Asian *madrasahs*, such as those in Samarqand and Buchara. By that time, though, this was challenged by Tatar scholars from Kazan', Orenburg and Ufa, who began developing modern ideas, introducing Russian language and secular concepts, and thus earning a place in international Islamic thought. The opening of a Russian university in Kazan' played no small part in urging the Tatars to think about their further education, and as a result both the Volga and Crimean Tatars became the politically most significant Muslim communities in the Russian Empire (Forsyth 2013: 312–18). The school of Nikolaj I. Il'minskij (1822–1891), a professor of Turkic languages at the University of Kazan', played a particularly crucial role in establishing Islamic scholarship in Russian curricula and introducing a network of Russian Tatar-language schools for baptized Muslims (Bobrovnikov 2006: 212; Geraci 2001: 116–157).

In the Caucasus region, local Muslims at first largely remained organized by their tribal structures and Sufism. Gradually, however, Muslim politics in the Caucasus was not limited to the Sufi-inspired movements under the leadership of imams such as Mansur or Šamil. Despite the political and geographic barriers that made contacts between the Caucasus Muslims and their religious and ethnic counterparts elsewhere in the Russian Empire difficult, eventually social and political developments among the Tatars from the Crimea and Kazan' reached the Empire's far south. Still, it was not until the end of the 19th century, when Baku became one of Russia's new centers of Muslim politics, that the booming oil industry and prosperous businessmen from Azerbaijan brought a new awareness of the wider world to the Empire's geographical periphery. Azerbaijan's growing middle class funded the construction of new theatres and educational developments, including secular schools for both sexes. While secular schools in Azerbaijan had been Russian-language schools before, by the 1870s, schools with vernacular instruction appeared. New cultural achievements saw vernacular newspapers and magazines appearing as of that decade, which influenced the gradual development of a national consciousness (Kappeler 1992: 197; Shaffer 2002: 25–26). Furthermore, the second half of the 19th century also saw Muslim ideas from outside the Russian Empire strongly influencing the Muslim community of the Caucasus, as new ideas of pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism spread to Azerbaijan (Forsyth 2013: 316–17).

At the civic level, the second half of the 19th century also saw the increasing integration of Muslims into the Russian Empire's system, including its army. Muslim clergymen were introduced into the army and navy as the number of Muslims in service grew, especially after the introduction of compulsory military service in 1874. Muslims were exempt from conscription as were their co-religionists from Central Asia, but many of them served as volunteers in irregular Muslim regiments. The so-called "military-communal administration" [*Voenno-narodnoe upravlenie*] granted the North Caucasus Muslims legal and administrative autonomy under the supervision of Russian military officers and allowed them to preserve their *adat*. What followed was a jurisdictional practice of mixed *adat*, *sharia*, and imperial laws, while *waqf* properties as well as mosque schools were subject to state supervision (Bobrovnikov 2006: 215–16). The relationship between North Caucasus Islam and the tsarist authorities should therefore not be automatically equated with the narrative of ideological resistance and confrontation, but rather considered a story of interaction and development leading to different regional characteristics and accomplishments.

The question of Russian tolerance of Islam was nevertheless often juxtaposed with active Orthodox proselytism, putting pressure on the empire's non-

Christian population. In the Caucasus region, this had the effect of the latter being subjected to several campaigns of conversion by St. Petersburg as the Russian advance successfully continued throughout the 18th and 19th century. Just as the Russian Orthodox church had employed missions against Islam and Animism in the Volga-Ural region in prior centuries, so too did the missionary centers in Mozdok and Tbilisi seek to convert the peoples of the Northern Caucasus. Islam, as the primary target of the missions, was conducted under the narrative guise of the reconversion of the North Caucasus Muslims, as they had all been Christians before and had only subsequently adopted Islam as their religion (Forsyth 2013: 272). Increasingly, the Russian conquest was further linked to the idea that it was an opportunity to counter the historic rise of Islam in the Black Sea region by strengthening Christianity at the same time if allegedly former Christian territories and peoples could be reclaimed under the Russian banner (Jersild 2002: 41).

However, the different peoples in the North Caucasus had obviously not adopted Islam simultaneously. The Ossetians were certainly the most significant exemption to the otherwise predominantly Muslim population, as half of them were still Christians in the 18th century. The conversion of the Muslim Ossetians can be considered the starting point of Russian efforts to Christianize the North Caucasus when they established their first mission on the Fiagdon River in 1745. Staffed by Georgian priests, the mission was soon destroyed by an Ossetian lord and moved to Mozdok, where it became a center producing thousands of converts in the years to come. These Georgians were not given any written instructions so as to avoid any Persian or Ottoman suspicion regarding the missionaries sent by the Russian state (Khodarkovsky 2002: 199). Because of their Christian majority and strategic location astride the Dariali Pass, the Ossetians played a major role in Russia's advance into the Caucasus and were therefore favored by the Russians accordingly. With the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774) allowing the Russian Empire to annex Kabarda and lay claim to Ossetia, the Christianization of the region received a new boost. After long and complicated entanglements with the Kabardians, many of the Ossetian communities willingly swore fealty to the Russian tsar and were integrated into Russian society, experiencing both the benefits and costs of such a move. Ossetian leaders were seduced into converting to Christianity with the offer of incorporation into the Russian nobility and the promise of state salaries. On the other hand, they had to give their sons as hostages to the surrounding Russian fortresses while the Ossetian chiefs who received land from the Russian administration and therefore became members of the Russian gentry meant that the Ossetian peasantry was reduced to the same status as Russian serfs (Forsyth 2013: 272–74).

Furthermore, another college was founded in Georgia and more missionaries were trained, who were supposed to work all over the North Caucasus to convert Muslim Ossetians, Ingush, Adyghe and Daghestani peoples, until Georgia was eventually overrun by the Persians and the Ottomans. With Russia's control of the South Caucasus becoming more stable at the beginning of the 19th century, Russian missionary activity was renewed in 1815 and the Ossetians once more became the primary targets of the "Ossetian Spiritual Commission" [*Osetinskaja duchovnaja komissija*]. Its mission was also expanded to other native peoples living in the North Caucasus, and by the 1830s its work also included the construction of schools. The mission operated until 1860, when it was replaced with the more programmatic "Society for the Restoration of Orthodox Christianity in the Caucasus" [*Obščestvo vosstanovlenija Pravoslavnogo Christianstva na Kavkaze*] (Forsyth 2013: 272–73; Jersild 2002: 42–43). With the provocative notion of "restoration" already in its title, this society's work underscored the Russian understanding of its own empire as a bearer of civilization, culture, and tradition, as the Caucasus natives would not have been able to preserve it on their own. The idea behind this society thus exceeded simple proselytism, for it also supported a Russian self-perception of the Empire as a "Third Rome," as well as the subsequent interpretation of the Russian conquest of its southern borderlands as a way to counter the decline of Christianity in its confrontation with Islam. Furthermore, the establishment of such an organization is representative of a form of imperial identity based on religious conformity, which made the Russian conquest of a predominantly Muslim realm like the Caucasus a rather delicate matter (Jersild 2002: 56–57).

Proselytism was, however, not the only way to attempt to tilt the balance of Christianity and Islam in the Caucasus. Another way to increase the number of Christians in the region was to settle Christian peoples, and not necessarily Russians, which was especially true of the Russian provinces south of the mountain range. The first case in which the Russian state consciously settled Christians in the South Caucasus was the introduction of approximately 7,000 German colonists in 1817 (Auch 2004: 98–100; Mostashari 2006: 40). Settlements such as Neu-Tiflis, Marienfeld, Helenendorf, Petersdorf, and Annenfeld appeared on the maps of the South Caucasus (Černova-Děke 2008: 36–37.; Tsutsiev 2014: 45–46). But these became an isolated community, and what effectively had a much greater impact on the demographic composition of the South Caucasus was the exchange of populations sponsored by the 1820s treaties of Torkamanchay and Adrianople, which brought a significant number of Armenians from the Persian and Ottoman Empires into Russia (Mostashari 2006: 41–44).

Furthermore, by 1830, the settlement of Russian sectarians such as the Duhobors and Molokans commenced (Breyfogle 2005: 51). Exiled to the Caucasus, they were on the one hand expelled from Russian main lands which agreed with Nikolaj I's harsh treatment of religious dissidents, and on the other hand served the Russian Empire's aim to have more Christians settle its southern borderlands. Quite ironically, these sectarians, deemed a source of concern in the heart of the empire, were now perceived as useful allies at the periphery (Mostashari 2006: 44–46). The settlement of such sectarian colonists not only helped the imperial ambitions to "Russify" the region, but also provided the installment of new support structures upon which the Empire could rely in the absence of the necessary infrastructure. Especially in cases of war, the sectarian settlers were called upon to support Russian troops, which therefore meant that the Crimean War (1853–1856) and the subsequent Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 strongly influenced the economy, society, and culture of the settlers (Breyfogle 2006: 259). Once exiled, these sectarians, for instance, became responsible for providing rusk production for Russian troops at the Caucasus front in 1877–1878 (Popova 2015).

As unlikely these allies—such as German colonists, former residents of the Persian and Ottoman Empires, or the sectarian settlers—may appear, they were not the only group upon which the Russian state counted to enforce its status and policies in the newly conquered territories. The different groups of Cossacks roaming the Caucasus steppe were certainly a strong factor in asserting Russian rule at the Empire's periphery. From the late 15th century onward, Muscovy began to employ these steppe mercenaries for services such as the protection of diplomats and merchants. By the mid-16th century, the payments to the Don Cossacks had become regular and included cash, weapons, and gunpowder, effectively making them a supplementary military contingent for the Russian state (Boeck 2007: 43). The Don Cossacks were one of the first Cossack groups, living in the areas between the Don River and the lower Volga since the 16th century. Their southern offshoot was the Grebensk Cossacks, whose culture included many elements from the North Caucasus peoples, especially the Chechens and Nogaj. Furthermore, the Terek Cossacks were another offshoot of the Don Cossacks, including local cultural features from the peoples of Circassia, Ossetia, and the Nogaj (Wixman 1984: 51–52). Thus, the Cossacks often culturally and politically stood between the Russian Empire and the peoples it sought to subject.

Soon enough, the Cossacks were also used by the tsarist authorities to uphold the Empire's imperial claims in the Caucasus. In 1792, the growing oppression of Šapsug peasants provoked a revolt, in which the other tribes of Cir-

cassia joined in. Even though West Circassia was still an Ottoman dependency at the time, the Russians sent a Cossack detachment in order to crush that uprising and effectively ignored the fact that its troops operated on foreign lands where they had no authority to interfere. The Cossacks continued to play a major role in Russia's ambition to conquer Circassia and subsequently the entire Caucasus region. In order to get a firmer grip on west Circassia, the next step undertaken by the administration in St. Petersburg was the transfer of Don Cossacks to western Circassia's northern frontier along the Kuban River. After the Cossacks rebelled and decided to leave the Kuban region, which signified the failure of this measure, they were substituted by 9,000 men of the Black Sea Cossack host from Ukraine. The Ukrainian Cossacks established the town of Ekaterinodar and numerous other villages and until 1850, more than 100,000 Ukrainians had moved to the Kuban. The fortification with Cossack units to the west of the existing Terek Cossack lines were said to be a defense against the allegedly "predatory Circassians," but they should rather be thought of as another example of the Russian Empire's efforts to extend and stabilize its rule over the Caucasus territories. The settlement of Cossacks was also used to drive a wedge between the two regions, as in 1803, when the construction of the Kislovodsk fortress and the arrival of new Cossacks on the hills south and west of the Kuban River made Kabarda and West Circassia drift farther apart (Forsyth 2013: 286–88).

Referring to the settlement of Russian peasants and the construction of Cossack forts on newly conquered territories implies that these lands were actually empty. Russia's settlement policy and the practice of cutting down forests in order to make the landscape more suited to its troops and artillery certainly helped the tsarist empire to secure its grasp on the Caucasus region, but the action that changed the region most brutally and significantly was the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of the region's native inhabitants, or what became "a colonial experiment in cleansing" (Kreiten 2009: 213). Russian pressure on the Caucasus natives compelled them to leave their homes, primarily for the Ottoman Empire, already at the end of the 18th century and during the first decades of the Caucasus War, but when Šamil's resistance movement was about to be broken in the late 1850s, the politics of expulsion and emigration finally became a central element of St. Petersburg's vision for a North Caucasus under Russian rule. The discussion on the emigration of the Caucasus peoples is politically and emotionally charged even today and therefore is often interpreted in contradictory ways, spanning from the emigrants allegedly leaving for the Ottoman Empire on a voluntary basis to the claim to officially recognize it as genocide (Babič/Bobrovnikov 2007: 155–56; Perović 2015: 91–101). Either way, the

emigration waves of the so-called *Muhajir* surged or forced the natives to seek their future in the Ottoman Empire, while the crossing of the Black Sea turned the latter into a mass grave. Several peoples were driven from their land in their entirety and had no choice other than either surrendering to the Russian authorities, thereby risking execution or forced exile, or migrating to the Ottoman Empire. Virtually all of the Ubykh, for instance, resettled in the Ottoman Empire, as did the Sadzians (Lak'oba 1999: 81). Wide areas of the traditional lands of these and other Circassian tribal groups were left completely abandoned. Precise numbers are unknown for all the Caucasus peoples and especially for the entire family of Circassian tribes. Estimates diverge (cf. Skibickaja 2011), but what can be stated for certain is that only a fragment of the native Circassian population was left after Russia had subjugated the Caucasus. The remnants of the formerly large Circassian population were subjected to Russian resettlement plans.

While the expulsion of the Circassian peoples might be the most visible case today, the deportations of significant parts of the population also affected other peoples in the North Caucasus and ultimately were not limited to the end of the Caucasus War in 1864. The response to ongoing rebellions among Caucasus natives against Russian rule were often further waves of deportation. The Abkhaz' uprising of 1866 led to violent suppression and an additional 25,000 Abkhazians following the *Muhajirs* to the Ottoman Empire. However, it was not only the peoples of the last stronghold in the Northwest Caucasus who sought a life away from Russian rule. Peoples from regions that were allegedly long pacified and integrated into the Russian Empire, such as the Ossetians and Kabardians, joined the mass exodus. The same applied for the population of Chechnya and Dagestan. Approximately 5,000 Chechen families, i.e. 23,000 people, were expelled to the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of the Caucasus War, while the inhabitants of Russia's province of Dagestan, mostly Avars, who had taken part in the war and the subsequent rebellions, were perceived as elements "known for their political unreliability or criminal propensities" and were therefore subjected to mass executions or exile in Siberia during the 1860s (Forsyth 2013: 294–95; Jaimoukha 2005: 50; Perović 2015: 92).

On the other hand, the situation of the *Muhajirs* often was not better. Emigration via the Black Sea caused many fatalities, with Circassian émigrés dying on overcrowded boats, and if they made it to Ottoman territory, many perished due to diseases and privations on the way or in the camps, where conditions were bad. The harsh life in the Ottoman Empire's fugitive camps convinced some of the *Muhajirs* to try to return to their homeland, but a restrictive Russian policy condemned them to Siberian imprisonment rather than a re-integration on

Circassian land (Forsyth 2013: 294; King 2008: 96–97). While the total number of *Muhajirs* had actually declined after the end of the Caucasus War, the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 again caused a major population exchange between the Russian and Ottoman Empires. In Abkhazia alone, up to 50,000 people were compelled to leave their native lands, meaning that Central Abkhazia had become almost completely depopulated (Lak'oba 1999: 83) while in Chechnya and Dagestan in particular, thousands of families decided to leave their home lands during local uprisings in the course of the war (Babič/Bobrovnikov 2007: 175).

Ultimately, Pestel's vision for the Caucasus as set forth in the 1820s was actually executed and found its manifestation in the brutal expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Caucasus natives. What had started in the 15th century when Muscovy began to seize the Golden Horde's former territories, transforming Russia into a multiethnic and multi-confessional state after it had sacked the cities of Astrachan' and Kazan' in the 1550s, eventually culminated with Russian imperial expansion in the Caucasus (and Central Asia). The annexation of the pluralistic region north of the Caucasus Mountains began in the 18th century, with St. Petersburg's desire to subdue it underpinned by the construction of the Mozdok Fortification Line in the 1760s. Even so, in the first decades the struggle for the Caucasus entailed a confrontation with two powerhouses on the foreign policy stage, as both the Persian and the Ottoman Empires had their own interests and territories to defend there.

By the beginning of the 19th century, however, Russian advance into the region became predominant, and decisive victories over the opposing powers gave Russia more freedom to move in the Caucasus, resulting in the annexation of Kartli-Kakheti, i.e., the most of today's Georgia, as well as the incorporation of broad swaths of Eastern Armenia and Northern Azerbaijan. This secure hold over the South Caucasus also allowed the Russian Empire to bolster its endeavors to conquer the North Caucasus, which remained a precarious endeavor due to the many different peoples resisting the tsarist army and their tactical edge in what became a guerilla war in the mountainous hinterlands. The Caucasus War lasted from 1817 until 1864 and was as exhausting as the long time span indicates. The tsarist authorities not only tried to militarily defeat the region's native population, but also aimed at a thorough demographic change by pursuing missionary activities and a settlement policy that saw Russian peasants settling in the Caucasus lowlands, Cossack forts driving wedges between the natives, and Christian peoples re-settled to the region in order to change the ratio between Christians and Muslims there. The most tragic consequence was the Russian

policy of removing the natives from their lands, forcing or compelling them to seek their future in the neighboring Ottoman Empire—a journey that many did not survive, so that the Black Sea itself became a mass grave site.

The Russian conquest of the Caucasus therefore changed the region for all time, and the long history of belligerent encounters between Russian imperial troops and the resisting natives gave the region a special place in Russian perceptions. The brave and surprisingly successful resistance of these little peoples against a supposedly mighty empire, coupled with the fact that the Russian public knew little to nothing about those peoples who dared to stand in the way of the Russian Empire's successful expansion, made the region and its population a well-suited realm for spectacular, imagined visualizations and essentializing attributions.

2 LOCATING RUSSIA'S ORIENT

In a word, ever since Russia has been written about, apart from the problem of language, there has been the problem of transference from one cultural code to another. Furthermore, European writers, embroiled in religious and political conflicts of the period, often adapted the description of Muscovite Rus to fit with their arguments against their opponents, giving, in effect, a desired picture rather than a true one. [...] Besides, Europeans who write about Russia today rarely go beyond the trivialities which had been formulated then—in the first half of the 16th century. That is why it is worth reading the old treatises in order to see how Russian stereotypes developed (Wilk 2003: 43–44).

In *The Journals of a White Sea Wolf* [*Wilczy Notes. Zapiski solowieckie 1996–1998*], the Polish author Mariusz Wilk reflects on the origins of (Western) European depictions of Russia and its population and how these early stereotypical images still influence how Russia is written about today. Larry Wolff (1994) has masterfully shown how these images have led to an “invention” of Eastern Europe as a backward and underdeveloped European periphery, but this phenomenon is obviously no one-way street. While Russia became an object of such Orientalist projections as early as in the 16th century and retained that position for centuries to come, regardless of Pëtr I’s attempts to open a “window on the West,” it would soon also accept the role of an equivalent protagonist within this process, putting the Russian Empire in the very ambiguous position of both an Orientalizing subject and an Orientalized object.

In *Secondhand Time* [*Vremja second chënd*], Svetlana A. Aleksievič, the winner of the 2015 Nobel Prize in Literature, put together a masterful choir of post-Soviet reflections on everyday life in the Soviet Union and in the Russian Federation. One of the anonymous contributors provides an account of the latent racism prevailing in contemporary Russian society, which strongly affects peoples from Central Asia and the Caucasus: “I am in Moscow for five years already, and never has anybody greeted me. The Russians need us ‘Blacks,’ so they can think of themselves as ‘Whites’ and can look down on somebody” (Alexijewitsch 2013: 469). The “Blacks” being referred to are people from the latter region, as in racist Russian slang they are designated as such due to their allegedly darker physical features (hair, eyes—not necessarily skin).¹ In the

¹ It is therefore ironic that, thanks to the German anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, “Caucasian” in the English language is used as a racial category for people with light skin color.

example of a Caucasus migrant to the Russian Federation's capital city, it becomes clear that today Russian self-confidence is created or enhanced by imagining a Caucasus counter-image. This "looking down on somebody" is one aspect of a discourse in which identity is formed via alterity, and following Edward Said's (2003: 2) formulation of Orientalism as "a style of thought based upon an ontological epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident,'" and considering the long history of conflicting Russian-Caucasus encounters, one may well wonder if racial stereotypes about the Caucasus peoples are primarily a contemporary phenomenon or whether their suggested inferiority is part of a more deeply-rooted similar system of Russian dominance and authority over the Caucasus as in the concept of the Caucasus being the "Russian Orient"—a concept of "Caucasianism" if you will.

As already set forth in the introduction, Said himself was not too convinced of Russian Orientalism's long tradition, which prompted his critics to point the other way and led to a rather fruitful discussion on a distinct Russian Orientalism, in which the question of whether one could or should even speak of such a concept was posed and debated. The result of this discussion was that a focus on British and French Orientalism would come nowhere near the complex matter of different empires in a global context and that one should not speak of just one standardized model for Orientalism, but rather look for the promising plurality of Russian mental maps (among many, cf. Irwin 2006; Jobst 2013; Miller 2004; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2010). Thus, before coming to address the question of the Russian perception of the Caucasus region, I feel that the questions which have to be posed at the very top of this discussion really are: Does it make sense to speak of *the* "Russian Orient" or rather look for its plurality? Where can they even be located?

While Said's primarily British and French Orient is already difficult to define in geographic terms, I follow Schimmelpenninck van der Oye's (2010) magnificent discussion on Russian Orientalism and thus argue that Russia's argument is fluctuant not only in its display but also in its geographical localization and thereby closely related to the respective stage of the Russian Empire's imperial project. In the present chapter, I will use six examples—by no means is this list intended to be exhaustive—to illustrate the point that the growth of the medieval Muscovian state into the late 19th century Russian superpower went hand in hand with a multitude of Orientalizing concepts, both within and beyond the empire's borders. As blurry as any imaginative geographical designation and as blurry as Said's Western European "Orient," the "Russian Orient" at different times encompassed territories to the geographical south, east and even

north of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Asking myself where to start and where to end a brief discussion of Russia's manifold Other, I choose to emphasize Orientalization's strong connection to the state's imperial expansion over the Eurasian landmass, and therefore start with what became the foundation for eventual development of the Muscovian state into a poly-ethnic and multi-confessional empire: the conquest of the steppe and Russian inheritance of the Golden Horde's territories. I will end this synopsis at the very east of the Eurasian landmass, where Russian imperial ambitions were finally put to an end in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905. Between these two cornerstones of Russian history, I will address how the Russian perception of the Crimea, Siberia, and Central Asia developed when the tsarist empire conquered these realms and what the role of the Ottoman Empire was in that respect.

It would certainly be presumptuous to assume that one could address each and every aspect of the respective "Orient" adequately within a few pages, nor do I intend to do so. What I do want to illustrate in this chapter is that the idea of a "Russian Orient" is by far not a frozen concept and is not limited to a single particular region; rather, I shall examine how it correlates with each respective stage of the empire's territorial expansion. Did different "Russian Orients" at different times abet the idea of what Russia stood for gain legitimacy?

STEPPE

Long before the Russian Empire had become a powerful state and long before categories like Europe and Asia or East and West had become the defining categories for the images of self and other, the forest and steppe embodied these notions (Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2010: 12–30). Already at the time of Kievan Rus', the greatest external threat came from the steppe that stretched all the way from the Hungarian Plain through Eurasia to Manchuria and the Pacific Ocean. Several nomadic peoples from Inner and Central Asia traversed westward across these vast grasslands and threatened or occupied Russian territories. Early monastic chronicles provide some insight into these first confrontations between Rus' settlers and Asian nomads, suggesting an unrelenting contest between the two sides. Even so, these early contacts were not exclusively hostile, but rather varied between conflicting and common interests (Halperin 1987: 10–20). In fact, the first encounters with the Polovcy (also referred to as Kypčagi or Kumany (of which one political sub-confederation was also tellingly called "Wild" Polovcy in Rus' sources [Polovcy Dikii]; cf. Golden 1991: 134) and the Pečenegi began on a cordial note, as the latter had initially allied with Kievan Rus' against the Byzantine Empire in the mid-10th century. These relations with

the steppe people became an essential component in various historiosophic visions of the place Russia would assume between East and West, between Europe and Asia, or between the Occident and the Orient (Chekin 1992: 9–10).

As the Rus' eventually adopted Christianity from Byzantium in 988, it also adopted the corresponding *Weltanschauung*, which drew a clear line between believers and non-believers when it came to images of the self and the other. The view of the steppe nomads as troublesome neighbors grew into an image of evil and godless enemies and the Orthodox chroniclers furthermore incorporated anti-Islamic polemics on the Shamanist Cumans into their works, patterned after the writings of the Byzantine chroniclers, who were deeply preoccupied by Islam since beginning of the Arab advance in the 7th century (Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2010: 14–15). As a result of Grand Prince Vladimir's baptism and the subsequent anti-Muslim influence of the Byzantine Empire on Kievan chroniclers, the notions defining self and other were not restricted to differentiating between forest and steppe anymore, but led to the first denominational othering, even though the Russians' other factually had not yet adopted Islam. On the other hand, the grip of the Orthodox understanding of the world was not all-encompassing when it came to the portrayal of the steppe peoples. The famous 12th century epic poem *The Song of Igor's Campaign* [*Slovo o polku Igoreve*] stands out among all Russian accounts of the encounter with the steppe nomads. In the poem, one can find several references to pre-Christian beliefs and values, while the Polovcy are described as fierce adversaries. Unlike the chronicles, the term "pagan" is used synonymously with the steppe peoples and carries an ethnic rather than a religious connotation (Ibid.: 15–17).

By the 13th century, the antagonist the chroniclers began to describe was far more powerful and left a stronger mark on Russian history than any of the other steppe peoples. The Mongols, or the Golden Horde, as they would be recalled in Russian history, easily overpowered the Russian principalities, and after they had seized Rjazan', Vladimir and Moscow, they finally sacked the ancient Rus' capital of Kiev in 1240. The Mongols ruled over the former Rus' for more than two centuries and exerted a strong influence on the developing Grand Duchy of Moscow. While the Golden Horde's legacy in Russia has been and still is a point of scholarly debate (Borisov 1976; Cherniavsky 1959; Kargalov 1967; Lieberman 2009: 184–216; Ostrowski 1998), the era of Mongol rule over the Russian principalities certainly did lead to one of the most prominent and persistent images of the Oriental other in Russian history. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye (2010: 20–21) stresses that many well-known portraits of the Mongols were not exactly flattering and that, although the Mongols had not converted to Islam at that point, they were labeled with the widespread Byzantine epithets for

Muslims, such as “godless” and “infidel.” An example of this Russian image of the Mongols can be seen in *The Tale of the Destruction of Rjazan'* [*Povest' o razorenii Rjazani Batyem*], although it was written at the end of the 16th century, long after the described events had actually taken place. Halperin (1986) showed that the Russo-Mongol relations can in fact not be understood by the simplistic picture of Russians being exclusively hostile to the Tatars, but rather that they were far more complex and even contradictory. Sources at the time did not contain such aggressive othering, rather they very often ignored their adversaries, leading to what Halperin called an “ideology of silence” (Ibid.: 13). Concepts like conquest and occupation were avoided and only retrospectively, i.e. after Muscovy had managed to end the Mongol rule, did the Russian writers adopt harsher rhetoric when describing the era of the Golden Horde. Again, Byzantine narratives had a considerable influence on the invective employed, bearing some resemblance to Russian images of the Polovcy, the Mongols' predecessors from the steppe.

The Orthodox worldview nonetheless did not monopolize thinking in Muscovy, and what one can read into the othering of the steppe people is a contrast between the Christian Weltanschauung and growing secular views, not least fostered by the Mongol heritage. The most famous example for an alternative narrative in the depiction of a “Russian Orient” and especially of an early Russian encounter with Islam is the 15th century travelogue *A Journey Beyond the Three Seas* [*Choženie za tri morja*] by Afanasij Nikitin, a merchant from Tver', describing his 1466–1472 travels through Persia and all the way to India. In his accounts, Nikitin wrote favorably about local Muslim cultural and religious customs, which he began to increasingly adopt. After he had died on his way back to Russia, his works made him posthumously famous, as copies of *A Journey Beyond the Three Seas* were widely circulated until the end of the 15th century and today this book is deemed one of the most important medieval Russian literary works (Martin 1985; Maxwell 2006; Morris 1967).

Other than these occasional glimpses into an Orient farther away from Muscovy's borders, it was the steppe nomads who continued to represent the “Other” for the Russians until the 17th century. However, the 16th century already saw Muscovy commence a process of imperial expansion that continued gathering the Golden Hordes' (successor) states, and by the 1550s the Tsardom of Russia had conquered the khanates of Kazan' and Astrachan'. These territorial acquisitions can not only be considered a milestone in Russian history but in the development of Russia's Oriental “Other” as well. Until then, Muscovy had relied on historical ties to former Rus' territories when seeking legitimation for the (re-)conquest of states from the Golden Horde. But the khanates of Kazan'

and Astrachan' had never been part of Rus' and therefore new justifications were required, such as preemptive defense, retaliation or fulfillment of appeals for liberation (Kappeler 1992: 25–36). With the conquest of the two khanates on the Volga River, the predominantly Eastern Slavic and Orthodox Muscovian state eventually became a poly-ethnic and multi-confessional empire (on the process of the steppe's integration, cf. Kappeler 2001, Sunderland 2004, and especially Khodarkovsky 2002). Unconnected to the Byzantine traditions of othering on a religious basis against Islamic tribes, the conquest of the Kazan' and Astrachan' khanates added precisely this connotation to the early “Russian Orient” in the steppe and initiated a process of an internal othering rather than looking across state borders. The chronicles which accompanied the Russian expansion in the 1550s portrayed the conquests as the outcome of a campaign against Islam and include descriptions of the Tatars as “godless” who were fought by Ivan IV with the “help of our almighty Lord Jesus Christ and the prayers of Our Lady” (Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej 1965: 108; in: Kappeler 1992: 25) and of the frontier lands as historically inhabited by “evil” and “godless” infidels (Jersild 2002: 146).

In the beginning, the vast steppe beyond the borders of Rus' was the space for the first Russian projections of an Orient. Based on a very superficial knowledge of Islam and in the wake of Muscovy's expansion to the east, which included the integration of predominantly Muslim peoples into the Russian state, the othering process increasingly began to affect Russia's own borderland territories. This othering process was therefore also increasingly based on confessional affiliation as the primary identity marker, going beyond adopted Byzantine traditions to establish a distinct Russian tradition of Orientalizing Islam. This narrative of a Muslim “Other” was strongly backed by the Orthodox Church, which was responsible for much of the relevant literature and which backed the mission of Russian rulers to conquer the East by providing ideological support against Muslim foes (Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2010: 30). However, other than definitions of the steppe nomads as “savages,” “non-Christian peoples” or as “Muslim peoples,” the imagination of the “Other” did not acquire any exotic or mythical connotations, and these new subjects did not trigger any increase in ethnographic interest whatsoever on the part of the Russians (Sunderland 2004: 18–20).

OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The growing political power of the Russian Tsardom allowed the ruling class to increasingly look beyond the own territory's borders and to position themselves

on the larger geopolitical map. Dominance over their former primary external foes, the steppe nomads, led to a decrease in the steppe's importance in Russian minds and to a shift from an external to an internal othering, as the Muslim Tatars were considered an internal "Other." Over time, and partly based on the very same Christian-Muslim dichotomy, the primary external foe became the Ottoman Empire, which was well-suited to "Oriental" projections onto a concrete political entity. Aside from earlier confrontations between the Muscovian state and the Ottomans, such as the quarrel over the Astrachan' khanate in the late 1560s, the primary confrontations between the Russian and Ottoman Empires took place in a series of wars, beginning in 1676–1681 and ending with the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. These increasing contacts between the Russian state and the Ottoman Empire constitute an aspect of Russia's history of an "Orient" that, according to Victor Taki (2011: 322), "remains unappreciated in the modern historiography of Russian Orientalism."

At the time when Russo-Ottoman wars became frequent events in the foreign policy of the two empires, with campaigns occurring every 15–30 years for two centuries, the Muscovian state found itself at the periphery of the Western European concept of an *orbis christianus*, together with the Tatars and the Ottomans (Kappeler 2001: 599), and, until the 17th century, with an anti-Orthodox undertone over and above its anti-Muslim implications (Wünsch 2013: 208). The Russian ascent to importance on the geopolitical stage, sparking the attention of Western European state, raised the question of the position Russia would take with respect to the latter. Interestingly enough, it seems that the Ottoman Empire gave Russia the backdrop to discuss its relations with Western Europe and its stance toward both the concepts of Europe and Asia. The Orientalization of its southern adversary allowed the Russians to perceive and present themselves as a part of a European conception which constituted the fundamental opposite to the Ottoman Empire. So by understanding their opponent as the "Orient," the representation of Russia as a part of the notion of "Europe" was meant to overcome any opinion claiming the opposite.

According to Taki (2011: 323–30), the Orientalization of the Ottomans was deeply rooted in Orientalist descriptions of both the Ottoman military and political systems. These descriptions only gradually acquired an Orientalist connotation, as early accounts on the Ottomans, for instance, hardly contained any critical references of their political system *per se*. Considering the political power of the Ottoman Empire in the 15th and 16th centuries in comparison to the mostly regional influence of the Muscovian state, Russian rulers did not have much to criticize but could rather only attempt to follow the Ottoman model. Furthermore, the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople was often interpreted as God's

punishment for Byzantine sins—a narrative that would gradually change as the increasing conflicts with the Ottomans suggested greater credence to the narrative that the city fell due to Ottoman ferocity rather than Byzantine decadence. Increasingly, pejoratives exceeding anti-Muslim rhetoric dominated the Russian perception of the Ottoman Empire, such as when Grigorij A. Naščekin, the Russian ambassador to Constantinople, already wrote in 1592 that “there is no order or justice in the state. The sultan plunders the officials and officials plunder the people. Robbery and murder are everywhere [...]” (cit. in Taki 2013: 328). Gradually, the political system of the Ottoman Empire was portrayed in a very negative way while the perception of Ottoman superiority over the Russian state began to decline.

Thomas Wünsch (2013) illustrated exceptionally well how this gradual change in the balance of power influenced the Russian image and portrayal of the Ottomans and eventually the narratives surrounding the Russo-Ottoman relations. Using the example of Russian historian Andrej I. Lyzlov (ca. 1655–1697) and his *Skifskaja istorija* [Scythian History], Wünsch furthermore showed how the Russian ascent led to an understanding of the Ottoman Empire as an equal opponent, wherein the need for stereotypes and clichés dwindled in favor of a reasoned debate on the adversary’s strengths and qualities. While the suggestion by David Das (1992: 505) that Lyzlov had “no interest in creating a nonprovidentialist, rationalist accounting of events” might be true of events such as the Ottoman seizure of Constantinople, which were indeed linked to prophecies and divine signs, it is not true for the work in its entirety. Lyzlov’s *Skifskaja istorija* includes a rather neutral description of the Ottoman Empire’s structure and characteristics and in this part, he avoided any aggressive polemics. Quite the contrary, Lyzlov praised some of the Ottomans’ achievements, which was still unusual for discussions on the powerful empire to Russia’s south at that time. Employing this strategy, Lyzlov underlined Ottoman strength, but not without coming to the conclusion that it not only affected Orthodox Russia but also (Catholic) Western Europe, thereby implying that a pan-Christian alliance was needed in order to successfully contain the Ottoman Empire’s expansion. This Russian shift did not therefore mean that the Ottoman Empire was no longer essentialized, i.e. Orientalized, but that the geopolitical triangulation between Constantinople, Moscow and Western Europe had begun to exert an influence on Russian portrayals of the Ottomans, as the Muscovian state wanted to position itself as a suitable partner in the Western European struggle with the Sublime Porte (Wünsch 2013: 206–09).

This newly articulated self-confidence with respect to its foreign affairs is symbolic of the Russian state’s rising importance at the end of the 17th century

and the beginning of Pëtr I's reign. While the first military clashes with the Ottoman Empire did not affirm this newly expressed self-awareness, a series of military successes over the course of the 18th century eventually elevated the state's military organization into the main platform for asserting Russian superiority and claiming an Ottoman otherness (Taki 2013: 324–27). Not only did appreciation of the opponent's army gradually become an expression of denigration, but the military sphere also became a stage for Orientalizing representations of Ottoman inferiority due to alleged differences in the “way of war,” which Colonel Andrej N. Puškin (1792–1831) considered a “consequence of [their] mores, [their] way of life, and [their very] character” (cit. in *ibid.*: 326). This otherness was also portrayed in very superficial categories, visible for instance in a Russian officer's accounts during the Pruth River Campaign of 1710–1711, in which one can read of the Ottomans' “sunlit jazzy vestments, the flutter of their weapons shining like diamonds, their majestic headwear, and their light, enviable horses” and the view that “no army is more beautiful, majestic, and splendid than the Turkish” (cit. in *ibid.*). In Russian accounts and by the end of the 18th century, the Ottoman Empire's otherness was deemed a consequence of its different military structure and its inability to adapt to European military organization, as well as its antiquated diplomatic rituals (*Ibid.*: 335). This emphasis on differences between the Ottoman and the Russian armies again primarily served the Russian desire to present itself as a rising political factor on the one hand and, especially after Pëtr I had ascended to the throne, to support the Russian Empire's claim of belonging to Europe on the other.

This image of a fundamentally different Ottoman Empire and its connection to the question as to whether Russia fit into a European or Asian framework was furthermore reinforced by the initially Western European theme of Ottoman decline (*Ibid.*: 330–36). It took a long time for awareness of internal disorder in the Ottoman Empire to develop into a perception that this once overly powerful neighbor was actually becoming weak in comparison to the Russian Empire and would come to represent a stagnating, Oriental despotism. When the European theme of the “sick man of Europe” was accorded to the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, many Russian authors and diplomats assumed this narrative and, according to Fariba Zarinebaf (2011: 492), they did so very uncritically. However, Russia found itself in a highly ambiguous position, as the Western othering of the Ottomans encouraged St. Petersburg to borrow such Orientalizing idioms as it legitimized its policy in the south. On the other hand though, some tropes were also equally applicable to the Russians and occasionally demonstrated to the Russian readership that their own country did not have the status they might have wished for themselves (*Ibid.*: 337–42). Therefore, one can ob-

serve a shift in Russian narratives throughout the 19th century, as suddenly the Ottomans were criticized for trying to imitate European military arts and technology, while it was precisely the ignorance of these qualities which had previously been dominant in the othering process of the Ottoman Empire (Ibid.: 346–50). This mimicry was considered superficial, and with this discursive shift Russian writers were once again able to assign to the Ottomans the status of a fundamentally different actor in the relationship between Western Europe, Russia and the Ottoman Empire.

One can debate as to whether the Ottoman Empire truly constituted an “Orient” for the Russian state as Victor Taki suggests. In medieval sources, commentary on the Ottomans certainly did continue the narratives surrounding the Golden Horde, particularly with respect to their late Muslim heritage. Over time, the themes became very ambiguous, but in their different representations they all served the Russian desire to emphasize its cultural closeness to Europe. One cannot understand the Russian perception of the Ottoman Empire without considering the history of Russia’s relationship with Western Europe, as the Ottomans mostly served as a mirror for Russia’s self-perception between Europe and Asia. So when the theme of the Ottoman Empire’s decline proceeded apace in the 19th century, Russian writers gladly assumed it in order to avoid Russia’s own status as a target of Orientalizing notions via Western Europe.

CRIMEA

The year 1783 brought the Russian Empire one of its most prestigious territorial acquisitions and moreover, according to Sara Dickinson (2006), Russian culture discovered its first “Orient” when Ekaterina II managed to incorporate the Crimea into the Russian Empire. The annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Empire was a crucial event, not only for the empire itself but also for the Ottoman Empire and for international politics in the region in general, as the so-called “Eastern Question” had picked up pace by that point. The annexation of the Crimea meant the entrance of Russia into Ottoman, Middle Eastern and Balkan affairs and therefore made Russian access to the Balkans and the Caucasus, both by land and sea, much easier (Fisher 1970: 156). However, it not only had huge political implications but coincided with the rising popularity of “Oriental” *topoi* and narratives in Western European cultures, something St. Petersburg had been watching closely since Pëtr I initiated the opening of his empire towards the West. Susan Layton (1994: 1) also opened her stellar work on Russian Caucasus literature by stating that the Russian periphery had also offered other candidates for Orientalization, for which she cited the Crimea as the most

suitable example, for Ekaterina II had already proclaimed it a “fairy tale from *The Thousand and One Nights*” on her first visit to the peninsula on the Black Sea’s northern coast. Therefore, Russian culture seized the opportunity to join the West European trend of addressing “Oriental” fashions and imagined its newest borderlands in line with “Western parameters of Oriental stylization” for the first time in its history (Dickinson 2006: 85–87). The notion of the Crimea constituting an ontological borderland was thereby not a Russian invention, for it could rely on a strong tradition of imagining the shores of the Black Sea as the boundary beyond which one could locate the “Other.” Said (2003: 56–57), for instance, referred to *The Persians* of Aischýlos, in which “Asia” was depicted as the hostile “Other” beyond the seas, and Wolff (1994: 11) stressed that it was the Black Sea’s Scythians, on whom Hēródotus had reported, who were perceived as barbarians from ancient Greece’s perspective. Dickinson (2006: 104–05) furthermore elaborates on Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris*, where the Crimea’s location was portrayed as the edge of the civilized world.

When the Russian Empire thus managed to annex the Crimea in 1783, one can hardly consider the Russian “othering” of the Crimea as the fully-fledged Orientalism described by Said’s model. Since the annexation scarcely arousing any resistance and political conflict on the peninsula beyond the year of the actual conquest, there was no institutional effort at political and cultural control over the Crimea yet, something that the Russian Empire would develop for its colonial territories only in the 19th century (Dickinson 2006: 85). From the Russian side, it was really more a matter of assuming the acknowledgement of “Oriental” fashions at a preliminary stage, i.e. the production and perpetuation of images of the region, stressing its fundamental or partial otherness and subsequently presenting it as a deviation from the norm, the latter being the dominant cultural standards of Western Europe which were increasingly claimed as those of the Russian Empire itself. When considering Wolff’s (1994) seminal work on how Eastern Europe was “invented” by the West throughout the 18th century and how the Russian Empire itself had become a part of the Western European Enlightenment’s cultural construction and intellectual invention called “Eastern Europe,” one can understand that the expansion to the Crimean peninsula with its population of Crimean Tatars and Ottoman Turks brought an opportunity to turn the narrative around and to let the Russian Empire present itself as more “European” than its newest territory’s peoples.

This wish to present Russia as a distinctly European power in combination with the classical heritage of the Crimea as the imagined territorial “Other” were ideal for Ekaterina II to assume at the end of the 18th century. The Tsarina’s “Greek Project” envisaged an extension of Russian-Christian control over

Southeastern Europe and most importantly over Istanbul (i.e., Constantinople) with its Byzantine heritage. This idea was to be bolstered by the resurrection of the classical concept of the Crimea and by claiming the Greek cultural heritage of the Black Sea, thereby reflecting the intent to emphasize Western European values since these were strongly rooted in Greek antiquity. This Russian European heritage connected to the Crimea made Ekaterina II set out from St. Petersburg in 1787 and head for the peninsula on the Black Sea's shore. She brought with her the ambassadors of Austria, England, and France, so she would have witnesses to the triumphal march her voyage was supposed to become, and so that the idea of civilization as a conquering force in Eastern Europe was disseminated to the courts in Western Europe as well (Jobst 2001; Wolff 1994: 126–141). The reports on this voyage portrayed the Crimea as the illusory Orient of Eastern Europe and using both this imagined otherness and the imagined link to Classical Antiquity, Ekaterina wanted to prove that her own empire's cultural achievements were a part of Western European civilization. Travelogues on Ekaterina's expedition depicted the Crimea as a land of ancient Greek heritage, of Oriental otherness and it additionally positioned the peninsula under the name Tauris [Russ. *Tavrida*] as the Russian equivalent to Western Europe's Italy, something which may have been further underscored by the publication of Goethe's *Iphigenia in Tauris* [*Iphigenie auf Tauris*] in the very same year (Ibid.: 138; Dickinson 2006: 105–06). Therefore, Ekaterina's voyage to the Crimea stands out for what can be understood as a triangular application of Orientalist thinking, which involved not only the Russian Empire and the Crimean peninsula, but also Western Europe, as the latter was the role-model to which the Tsarina aspired, striving to present her own empire as its equal. By presenting its own southern borderlands as exotic, i.e. fundamentally distinct, but also by creating a link between 18th century Russia and Greek antiquity, the Crimea served as the first template for Russian self-representation based on an othering process within its own borders.

Ekaterina's trip to the Crimea "ushered into Russia an unprecedented burst of Oriental imagery and rhetoric" (Dickinson 2006: 91), something which did not cease abruptly when the Tsarina passed away in 1796. Only 12 years after Ekaterina's journey to the Crimea and three years after her death, Aleksandr S. Puškin was born—a man who would exert immense influence on Russia's visions of its "Orient" and also its "Oriental" Crimea. His famous *Southern Poems* included a work on the Crimea which had also been strongly influenced by the accounts of the travelling party from 1787. *The Fountain of Bachčisaraj* [*Bachčisarjskij Fontan*] was written in 1821–1823 and eventually published a year later. The poem elaborates upon and reinforces the Russian Empire's cul-

tural and imperial claims upon its borderlands (Hokanson 2008: 73–107). It is interesting to see how the Crimea *topos* had developed over the 37 years that elapsed between Ekaterina's journey to the peninsula and the publication of Puškin's poem. *The Fountain of Bachčisaraj* effectively takes the focus from both Ottoman rule over the Crimea, mostly due to Russian foreign policy's ongoing struggle with the Ottomans, but also from the Russian Empire itself, as it was removed from the poem's center stage. Puškin's work is set during the time of the Tatar khanate and thematically opened new possibilities for Russian thinking with respect to its southern "Orient." Interestingly, distinct "Russian-ness" is not a dominant narrative in the poem but the main conflict is embodied in the contrast between two women, one of them, the Polish-Western Marija, extremely pious and sexually abstinent, and the other, Zarema, who quite ironically is Georgian, personifying the archetypical Oriental woman, i.e., a dark-eyed and fiery woman driven by her lust and sexual experience. With respect to its geographical setting however, *The Fountain of Bachčisaraj* remains within the triangulation between a south, i.e. the Crimea and increasingly the Caucasus, the West, i.e. Western Europe, and the North, i.e. the Russian Empire itself. The focus on the time of the Tatar khanate rather than on Ottoman rule or the Russian annexation of the Crimea is supposed to show how both Western Europe and Russia had once been vulnerable to the Crimean Tatars and particularly how St. Petersburg had risen when the khanate's glory had long since passed while Russia's was yet to come. This new adoption of the "Crimean Orient" implies an emphasis on how the Russian Empire perceived itself as the legitimate successor to the past glory of the khans and how the othering of internal territories once again served this narrative.

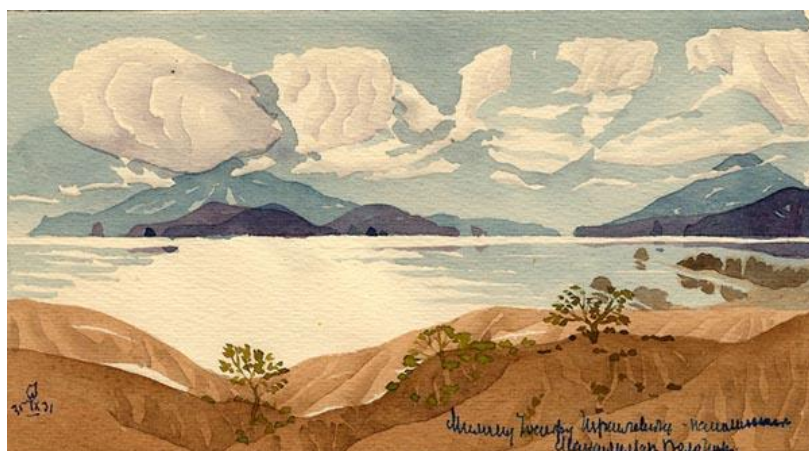


Figure 1: Maksimilian A. Vološin – “View of Koktebel”
[*Vid na Koktebel'*, 1931]

The Romantic image of the peninsula and especially of Russian rule over the Crimea was most famously but not exclusively envisioned by Puškin. Fellow poets and painters such as Ivan K. Ajvazovskij (1817–1900) and Maksimilian A. Vološin (1877–1932; cf. also Fig.1), and also academicians and bureaucrats such as Peter S. Pallas (1741–1811) and Pavel I. Sumarokov (1767–1846), contributed to the image of a dreamy Crimean shore with “sleepy” Tatar towns (Lazzerini 1997: 172).

On the 50th anniversary of the famous poet’s death, Ajvazovskij’s painting “Puškin at the Black Sea Shore” (cf. Fig.2) once again evoked the Crimea as the *topos* of inspiration. Going hand in hand with high plans for the Russian Crimea, the peninsula became a promised land, a potential paradise which had to be cared for, and whose fate was changed for the better by its integration into the Russian Empire. The implications of this narrative significantly impacted the relationship between the Crimea’s local *inorodcy* population, especially the Crimean Tatars, and the Russians—a conflicting perception that would not diminish in the centuries to come (Ibid.).



Figure 2: Ivan K. Ajvazovskij – “Puškin at the Black Sea Shore”
[*Puškin na beregu Černogo morja*, 1887]

How far the repercussions of the “Oriental Crimea” reached into the late imperial period and even into the Soviet era can be seen in the works of the poet Osip È. Mandel’shtam’s (1891–1938), for whom the peninsula served as a safe haven more than once and which inspired him to formulate his very own ambivalent description of the Crimea as an Ovidian exile in his first published collection of poems *Stone* [*Kamen'*, 1913. Reissued in 1916 with additional poems] and then all the way to cultural elevation via Sienese paintings and Pa-

lestrinian music in his *Tristia* [1922], which included poems written during the Russian Civil War of 1917–1922.

SIBERIA

To the east, the Russian state did not stop to look beyond its borders after having conquered the khanates of Astrachan' and Kazan' in the mid-16th century. At the very beginning of Russia's conquest of Siberia, it was less the state that pursued the campaigns into the Siberian steppe but rather private interests, especially the Stroganov family, who had made a fortune in salt-mining and the fur trade, for which Siberia was a promised land. Contemporary estimates from the mid-17th century show that a full one-third of the state's total revenues were derived from Siberian pelts (Bassin 1991: 767; Kivelson 2007: 26). Soon enough, Moscow joined the Stroganov advance into the lands behind the Ural Mountains and began to build a series of fortifications along the way into Siberia (e.g. 1586 Tjumen', 1587 Tobol'sk, 1604 Tomsk, 1632 Jakutsk). The alternation between state-military and private initiatives, however, continued to be characteristic of Russia's conquest of Siberia (Kappeler 1992: 38–39; Wood 2011: 25–40). Russian merchants and trappers roamed the steppe all the way to the Bering Sea and the Sea of Ochotsk, where a harbor of the same name was established in 1648. The expansion to the south progressed a little slower, as in this direction Russian interests collided with those of the militarily superior Mongols and Manchu China. In 1689, the Russian-Chinese border was set in Nerčinsk, which was in place until the 19th century (Dabringhaus 2001). The first half of the 18th century then saw Russian troops take the outermost parts of Eurasia, the Kamčatka and Čukotka Peninsulas. Since the many native peoples mounted fierce resistance to the Russian conquerors and Moscow did not want to jeopardize the enormous profits from the Siberian fur trade, the Russian state not only relied on its military superiority but also attempted to co-opt some of the Siberian nobility into adopting its administrative agendas and guaranteed a certain *status quo* to appease the rebellious, thereby doing its best to increase the level of taxation (Witzenrath 2007: 21; Kappeler 2001: 607–08).

But the Russians knew little about their Siberian subjects. Not only was Siberia a geographic *terra incognita*, but the region's many peoples were also largely unknown to the Russians when they began to conquer their lands—which served as an impetus for many fanciful imaginative forays. In the 15th century, there were still tales about Siberia telling of the Samoedy peoples who ate not only fish and reindeer meat but also each other, who died every winter when water came out of their noses and froze them to the ground, and who had

their mouths between their shoulders and eyes on their chests (Slezkine 1992: 475). Mark Bassin (1991) has shown how erratic and highly contrasting these images of Siberia and its native populations have actually been throughout the history of Russian encounters with them. The early image of Siberia has to be understood in a colonial or imperial standpoint. Siberia was perceived as a mercantile colony, useful exclusively for the natural resources that the Russian state could exploit (Ibid.: 767; Bassin 1988). The fiscal significance of the fur trade, for instance, cannot be underestimated, and it was out of this relationship between Russia and Siberia that an early perception of the region free from denominational othering parameters emerged. Abundant resources rather than Christian missionary narratives and proselytism were certainly the main driving force behind the Russian march through Siberia. However, chronicles written by Russian clergymen do contain interpretations of the conquest of Siberia as a triumph of Christianity over the inferior paganism of the natives, which is why the works of a 17th-century archbishop of Tobol'sk, for instance, read: "By the help of God the pagans gradually began to diminish and to weaken. [...] Thus they conquered the infidel, for the wrath of God came upon them for their lawlessness and idolatry, since they knew not God their creator" (Armstrong 1975: 72; cit. in Hartley 2014: 1). But outside of the monasteries, these images did not characterize Russia's conquest of Siberia. Kappeler (2001: 608) emphasized that the non-Christian faith of the Siberians hardly ever became a differentiating marker in the 17th century and that the designation *inovercy* [adherent of a different faith] became established only in the 18th century. Furthermore, 17th-century Russian sources only occasionally referred to the Siberian natives as "savages" or "barbarians" and mostly employed their respective ethnonyms or neutral terms such as *inozemcy* [foreigners] (Slezkine 1994: 32–45).

The 18th century and Pëtr I's remodeling of the Russian state into an empire also brought a shift in Russia's perception of its Siberian territory. In the 1730s, the Russian historian and geographer Vasilij N. Tatiščev (1686–1750) redefined the European-Asiatic border from the Don River line to the Ural Mountains, by which the boundary between Russia and Siberia additionally became the boundary between Europe and Asia (Bassin 1991: 767–70). This had huge implications on the Russian perception of Siberia, for in a single stroke the entire region was imaginatively transformed into an Asiatic realm, and contrasting features and attributes were assigned to Siberia. This Orientalization of Siberia went hand in hand with the European image Pëtr I wanted his empire to have, as Russia's conquered Siberian-Asiatic East now served well as a reliable and incontestable contrast to a Russian-European identity (Ibid.). In other words, i.e. those of Yuri Slezkine's (1994: 114–15), "Siberia was to Russia what Russia

was to the 'West': underdeveloped and therefore unspoiled, uncultured and therefore unadulterated—a land of absences as drawbacks and absences as assets." Furthermore, Siberia was understood within the framework of (Western) European colonialism and referred to as "our Peru," "our Mexico," a "Russian Brazil," or even "our East India" (Bassin 1991: 770). This image of a remote but glorious Siberian colony was neither dim nor short-lived, as it reached its apogee under Ekaterina II's rule (1762–1796).

This colonial glory was lost only in the 19th century when Siberia's exceptional economic importance came to an end with the decline of demand for the region's pelts. The image of the empire's gold mine was succeeded by a far more depressing view of Siberia: one of vast territorial expanses, dominated by desolation and the frozen tundra. After the loss of its economic significance, Siberia's negative qualities dominated the educated public's perception and the region became more and more the antitype to European Russia (Bassin 1991: 771–75). In the new 19th-century imperial perception, Siberia stood for a lack of (Western) civilization and an inhospitable environment. The harsh physical conditions combined with the enormous breadth of the territory greatly influenced Siberia's increasingly negative image. Its function as Russia's primary exile only reinforced this, especially after the 1825 Decembrist Revolt. "Siberia" and "exile" became synonyms at this time, regardless of whether or not the exiled were in fact sent to Siberia in a given case. This particular image and function was also assumed by Russian Romanticism in the 1820s and 1830s, at the very same time that Russian poets discovered the Caucasus (cf. Chapter 3), and became established in Russian literature as the so-called poetic formula of Siberia (Ibid.).

How ambivalent the image of Siberia became throughout the 19th century and how much the region became a space of projection is shown in the study by Claudia Weiss (2007) on the role of the Russian Geographical Society in the Russian mental appropriation of Siberia, but especially by Mark Bassin (1991: 775–79), according to whom a new set of images also became popular at that time, a set of images fundamentally different from the increasingly negative colonial perceptions. Within this discourse, Siberia retained its status as the geographical Other within the Russian Empire but its ideological quality was inverted. The perception of Siberia as a space open to new ideas and to political alternatives became attractive to those who sought social and political transformations in the state. Strongly influenced from the inside, that is from the Decembrists forcefully exiled to Siberia, Russia's East was not only a source of frost and emptiness anymore but also of hope and inspiration. On the one hand, Siberia was perceived as a bled-out colony, exploited for its rich resources and

rejected for its backwardness. However, on the other hand “it was a young and vigorous land settled by freedom-loving pioneers who had by now formed a separate nation” (Slezkine 1994: 114). Again, the qualities and characteristics that were ascribed to Siberia were motivated by ideas about the relationship between Europe and Russia and the 19th-century discourse on Siberia was furthermore strongly influenced by the idea that Russia’s colonial domains could serve a similar function for the empire as North America had for Western Europe (Bassin 1991: 777–79).

The imperial Russian discourse on Siberia did manage to develop another, third cluster of images over the course of the 19th century, which again stemmed from Russian debates on the empire’s position vis-à-vis Europe. Voices demanding greater independence from Western European ideas interpreted the empire’s expansion to the east as a remarkable and, most of all, uniquely Russian feat. Easily comparable to the colonial adventures of European empires, the occupation of Siberia would have shown that the Russians were equally capable of effectively pursuing their own colonial interests. What followed was a popularization of figures of such Cossack heroes as the 16th-century Ermak Timofeevič, “the Conqueror of Siberia” (between 1531 and 1542–1585), or Erofej Chabarov (ca. 1603–1671), the explorer of the Amur River region. Both were considered the Russian equivalents of Hernán Cortés or Francisco Pizarro. These figures and their history in the Siberian conquest became a part of Russia’s national saga and Russian romantic poetry, restoring some of the lost glory to the region (Bassin 1991: 780–88; Becker 1986). This narrative increasingly included the dissolution of the original contrast between Russia and Siberia and led to the juxtaposition of the Russian Empire on the one side with Western Europe on the other. This nationalist discourse finally set its sights on the many indigenous peoples living in Siberia, who in course of the interpretation of Russia’s conquest of the region as a noble civilizing achievement were generally depicted as depraved pagan savages (Bassin 1999: 62). This religious rather than economic or political connotation was also typical of this nationalist discourse, and the historical heroism was intermingled with Christian narratives. Nikolaj A. Polevoj’s (1796–1846) play about Ermak for instance reads:

As the pagan idol fell, so will
 The infidel before the Orthodox faith
 And divine grace and light will shine
 Over the Siberian realm, which hitherto
 Has stagnated in the darkness of idolatry
 (Polevoj 1845: 93; cit. in Bassin 1999: 62–63).

The Russian image of its Siberian territories is a good example of how ambivalent external attributions could become in an imperial context, which gave rise to conflicting interests and where opposing parties had differing hopes for the region. Furthermore, these constructions indicate how fragmented the 19th-century Russian Empire was in cultural, societal and political matters. But what these images have in common is that it was less the Siberian native peoples but rather the territory that served a vital function when asserting Russian self-conceptions. Siberia's many indigenous native peoples could have equally provided the impetus for a variation of the "Russian Orient," but the Russian Siberia discourse was strongly focused on the question of the empire's eastern territories in a geographical sense as well as a playground for imperial military heroism, while the population was often considered a "not particularly significant assortment of native Asian peoples" (Bassin 1991: 776). Instead, Siberia was perceived as a useless remnant of a past colonial gold mine, as the promised land of a future radical alternative to the empire's political *status quo*, and as a chronicle of unique imperial and, most of it all, distinctly Russian glory at the same time.

CENTRAL ASIA²

The Russian conquest of Central Asia can be viewed as the acquisition of the Golden Horde's former territories. The Western Mongolian Oirats, a group which also includes the Kalmyks, dominated the Kazakh steppe well into the 18th century and led the Kazakh khans to plead for alliances with Russian rulers (for an insight into Russia's conquest of the Central Asian khanates cf. for instance Becker 2004: 2–98; Carrère d'Encausse 2009: 7–53; Geyer 1977: 71–82; Gorshenina 2003: 37–57; Kappeler 1992: 155–68; Malikov 2014). These alliances gave Russia the opportunity to gradually widen and enhance its influence in Central Asia and, moving in from Southern Siberia and the Southern Urals, the Russian advance also brought with it fortifications and improved trade relations with the Kazakhs. These alliances nonetheless continued to have a temporary character until the first half of the 19th century, when one could begin to speak of the integration of the Kazakh lands and peoples into the Russian Empire. The increasing Russian influence in Central Asia did go hand in hand with

² The designation "Central Asia" obviously does not come with an easily delineated geographical or even cultural specification, but rather with other overlapping concepts such as "Middle Asia," "Inner Asia," etc. When I use the term in this section, "Central Asia" means all of the territories that the Russian Empire would later incorporate in its Governor-Generalship of Turkestan [Turkestanskoe general-gubernatorstvo] established in 1868 and the Governor-Generalship of the Steppes [Stepnoe general-gubernatorstvo] partitioned from it in 1882. For an outstanding discussion of the history of the "Central Asia" concept, cf. Gorshenina (2014a).

Kazakh resistance, and while they had already revolted against Russian suzerainty and participated in Pugačëv's rebellion (1773–1775), the level of resistance once again rose in the 19th century, when Russian pressure and control over the region constantly increased. As in the case of resistance by the Caucasus peoples, it took the Russian authorities a long time to crush the revolts in Central Asia, and just as the Caucasus had Imam Šamil', so too did the Kazakhs have their own idealized heroic figure in Kenesary Qasymuly (1802–1847). By the 1850s and in stages, the Russians eventually established their grip over the vast Kazakh steppe (Kappeler 1992: 155–59).

After the Russians had successfully integrated the Kazakh steppe into their empire, St. Petersburg began looking to the steppe's south, to three empires of Uzbek dynasties: the emirate of Buchara, the khanate of Chiva and the khanate of Kokand, whose culture and education were dominated by the local Sunni clergy (Ibid.: 161–62). Trade relations had been opened already in the 16th century, but they were long exclusively conducted by Central Asian merchants and the Volga Tatars. Occasional military expeditions by the Russians had utterly failed until the annexation of the Kazakh steppe in the 1850s eventually gave the Russian Empire a direct border with the khanates of Central Asia. While the Crimean War and the end of the Caucasus War necessitated the full attention of Russian troops in the 1850s and early 1860s, the following two decades saw the Russians take over the Central Asian khanates step by step. From a military standpoint, the latter lagged far behind the imperial troops, who were able to recruit veterans from the Crimean and Caucasus Wars for battles in Central Asia, and whose technological advantage was massive. Driven by a combination of economic, strategic, and political motives, the region was quickly conquered in the 1870s and in the years to come, the Russian army furthermore took on the Turkmens at Gökdepe (1881) and Merw (1884). While the defeat in the Crimean War had encouraged the Russian Empire to look for colonial expansion and to challenge the European powers and especially the British Empire in Central Asia, the Russian conquest was finally halted by the harsh reaction of the British, who indeed saw their interests in the region endangered. The conquest of the Central Asian khanates had cost the Russians with very little military effort and it was supposed to help them restore their prestige as a European colonial power. Russia only partially incorporated the conquered khanates largely due to partially foreign policy considerations, as St. Petersburg did not consider a full-fledged annexation more important than respect for British interests. It also wanted to preserve the reputation of Central Asia's cultural centers, such as Buchara, within the Islamic world (Ibid.: 162–65).

Although the Russian Empire's influence there was relatively modest and it had legally only incorporated little of its territory, this did not mean that Central Asia played only a small role in its internal and foreign policy at the end of the 19th century. This newly acquired sphere of influence that constituted another piece of the mosaic that was Russia's expansion to the east, to different parts of the Eurasian land mass, and the fact that the Russian Empire now controlled increasingly larger parts of Asia and had an increasing number of Muslim subjects in internal colonies obviously had a considerable impact on the Russian self-perception as a Eurasian empire. The increasing importance of Central Asia within the narrative of the Russian Empire as a colonial superpower nonetheless collided with widespread Russian ignorance of their newest lands and peoples. Until the mid-19th century, the Russians knew very little about the Central Asian khanates, which therefore remained something remote, peripheral and, most importantly, a part of "exotic Asia." Central Asia was associated with a mysterious world that was difficult to reach and not worth the trouble of the treacherous routes that led to it (Sela 2014: 83). The conquest of Central Asia therefore also entailed a self-proclaimed civilizing mission, and Foreign Minister Aleksandr M. Gorčakov (1798–1883) declared in 1864 that Russia's situation in Central Asia was "the same as that of all advanced states which come into contact with semi-savage peoples, vagrants lacking a stable social organization" which would require "the more advanced state exercise a certain power over its neighbors, whose savage and wild disposition is very inconvenient" and which would force the former "to bring about a virtual subjugation of its neighboring peoples" (Pokrovskij 1923: 323; cit. in Sahni 1997: 83).

The conquest of Central Asia also meant that the Russian Empire had finally found a colonial realm where it was practically unchallenged by Western European states and the Ottoman Empire. It might be this idea that had motivated Fëdor Dostoevskij to compose his famous 1881 essay "Geok-Tepe. What does Asia mean to us?" [*Geok-Tepe. Čto takoe dlja nas Azija?*] in which he formulated the often-cited idea that:

In Europe we were hangers-on and slaves, while in Asia we shall be the masters. In Europe we were Tatars, while in Asia we are the Europeans. Our mission, our civilizing mission in Asia will encourage our spirit and draw us on; the movement needs only to be started. Just build two railways and begin with that—one railway to Siberia, another to Central Asia, and you shall see the results at once. (Dostoevsky 1994b: 1374)

Central Asia and Siberia played similar functions in the Russian concept of the East—they were supposed to give the Russian Empire the opportunity to display strength and colonial power, which seemed to be achievable only in the

East as the Crimean War had painfully shown the Russian military. However, at the same time the two realms were Orientalized in order to highlight either a Russian Europeanness or the need for a Russian civilizing mission in the empire's newest territorial acquisitions.



Figure 3: “Pastimes of Central Asians. Musicians. Practicing the Kamanche” [*Obščestvennyja uveselenija Sredneazijatcev. Muzykanty. “Maški kamanča”*]

The strongest outlet of a “Russian Orient” concept in Central Asia can be found in its visualization. The increasing ability to capture scenes of everyday life in daguerreotypes, photographs and sketches drawn from life gained increasing importance (Bulatov 2010: 47). The growing Russian understanding of Central Asia was massively influenced by projects such as the *Turkestanskij al'bom* [Turkestan Album], a visual survey of Central Asia as seen by the Russian imperial administration. Released by order of Turkestan's first Governor-General Konstantin P. von/fon Kaufman[n] (1818–1882), the multi-volume album contains over 1,200 photos and was designed to make both Russian as well as Western European researchers familiar with the Russian Empire's newly conquered territories and their population (Dikovitskaya 2007: 104–05). Figure

3 shows one of the *Turkestanskij al'bom's* many photographs from the section “Pastimes of Central Asians,” in which natives were photographed while playing different local instruments such as the kamanche, rubab, or nai.

These early photographic activities were costly and ambitious and have to be understood as elite colonial projects (Parker 1983; Solovyeva 2010: 65; Sonntag 2007: n. pag.). With ethno-photographic collections such as the *Turkestanskij al'bom*, imperial Russia was able to visually support and legitimize its own imperial project and construct knowledge of the conquered and colonized population. Therefore, the album is an excellent example of how imperial Russia created an Orientalist image of its own colonial domains and how it transported these perceptions both to an educational elite inside the empire, but also abroad, where the display of Russia's newest and predominantly Muslim territories received considerable attention.

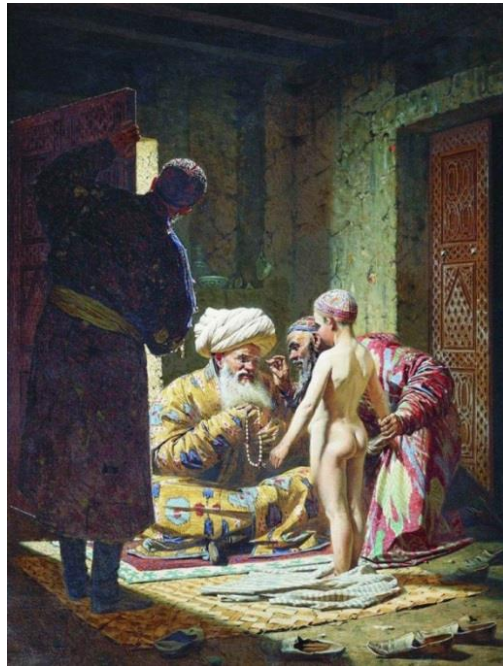


Figure 4: Vasilij V. Vereščagin – “Selling a Slave Boy”
[*Prodaža reběnka nevol'nika*, 1872]

The importance of early photographic ethnography notwithstanding, the visual representation of the East that was Central Asia was even more linked to one particular name, that of painter Vasilij V. Vereščagin (1842–1904). Having accompanied Governor-General von Kaufman to Central Asia as an official painter-ethnographer, he adopted many Central Asian themes in his works and

brought them to a Western European and Russian public in tellingly entitled paintings such as “Selling a Slave Boy” [*Prodaža rebënka nevol'nika*, 1872, cf. Fig.4], “The Doors of Timur (Tamerlane)” [*Dveri Timura (Tamerlana)* 1872], “Uzbek Woman in Taškent” [*Uzbeškaja ženščina v Taškente*, 1873], “Kirgizija. Yurts at the River Ču” [*Kirgizija. Jurty na beregu reki Ču*, 1869–1870], “Politicians in an Opium Den” [*Politiki v opiumnoj lavočke*, 1870].

Vereščagin became further acquainted with Central Asia while actively taking part in military operations. His famous “Turkestani Series” [*Turkestanskaja serija*], which also included battle scenes from the Russian campaigns in Central Asia (cf. Fig.5), was first displayed in London’s Crystal Palace in 1873, toured many European capitals and was eventually also exhibited in Russia a year later.



Figure 5: Vasilij V. Vereščagin – “A Surprise Attack”
[*Napadajut vrasploch*, 1871]

According to art historian Inessa Kouteinikova (2010: 92), “[...] for centuries Russians had seen Central Asia as the epicenter of uncertainty and treachery. It was the epitome of ‘failed’ civilization.” She went on to argue that for most contemporary observers, the encounter between the Russian Empire and Central Asia bore connotations of a tale of imperial glory. The works of Vereščagin, however, also show the other side of the coin: the side of war, death, and subjugation. Furthermore, the Russian painter idealized the Central Asian cities and cultures, spoke with “mixed feelings of amazement and pain” (Vereščagin 1898: 11; cit. in Kouteinikova 2010: 92) and referred to the Uzbek cultural center as “the glorious, incomparable, divine Samarkand—a city, the glories of which have been sung by the ancient and modern poets of the East, whose metaphors must of course be taken *cum grano salis*, for Samarkand itself, like all Asiatic centers, is foul and malodorous” (Vereščagin 1898: 3; cit. in Kouteinikova 2010: 93). Svetlana Gorshenina (2014b) illustrated this glorifica-

tion using the example of Samarqand's monuments, especially in connection with its Hellenistic and Timurid periods, and how it was intended to reinforce colonial power and present the Russian Empire as the legitimate successor and heir of both previous empires.

Vereščagin's paintings were on the one hand realist in form and orientalist in content and were at least partly first exhibited in Western Europe, thus fitting quite well into the narrative of creating an Asian counter-image to European Russia. On the other hand, however, they do not quite underscore the narrative of a glorious Russian imperial conquest of Central Asia. Daniel Brower interprets the ambivalent Russian perception of *Nikołaj Przewalski's* (1839–1888) exploratory missions to Central and Eastern Asia in a similar way. According to Brower (1994: 380), the Russian public elevated him to the rank of hero for his scientific endeavors because they had helped to legitimize Russia's presence in the region, but it also perceived the regions he had explored, both within and beyond the Russian Empire's borders, as testing grounds rather than conquests, for "the Orient had to remain Oriental."

Still, the Russian military advance into Central Asia triggered the artistically most productive conception of a "Russian Orient." Early photography and famous painters such as Vereščagin helped to imagine the Central Asian colonial domain as an Asian counterpart to Russian Europeanness, and it was precisely this Orientalizing artistic interpretation which proceeded to generate strong reverberations in the Russian self-conception as both a European and Eurasian powerhouse.

FAR EAST³

Of the many peoples and regions with whom the Russian Empire came into contact during its imperial conquest all the way to the Bering Sea, the Chinese and Japanese cultures may have been considered the most exotic and already from the very first contacts onward, Eastern Asia captured the imagination of Russian thinkers, statesmen, and writers (Lim 2013: 4–5; 17–41). Just as in the case of other Orientalized realms, Russian eyes wandered to Eastern Asia when it appeared that Russia's own identity had been brought into question.

³ The term "Far East" is part of a paradigm in which the easternmost reaches of the Eurasian land-mass are referred to by their distance from (Western) Europe, thus implying a certain Eurocentrism. However, the view from the European distance from the easternmost parts of Asia, mainly China and Japan, did result in an Orientalizing discourse which not only bore fruit in Western European states but also in Russia.

Of Japan and China, the latter appeared first on the Russian cultural radar. While official contacts between Russia and China had begun in the early 17th century (Kappeler 1980) and some encounters between Chinese and Russians had taken place even earlier, one cannot speak of a comprehensive Russian image of China prior to the 18th century (Lukin 2003: 3). By the time of Petrine rule however, “Asia” was no longer just an obscure designation for an unknown realm beyond their own borders and control, for it could be located by means differentiated and more or less precise geographical coordinates. When Pëtr I proclaimed his Russia an empire and St. Petersburg articulated imperial ambitions, both the competition with Western European states in terms of military conquest and territorial expansion and the plans of Petrine Russia to adopt Western European values made Russians reflect on the respective regions they declared fundamentally different from themselves and which increasingly also included images of faraway China and Japan. The Russian image of China was soon strongly influenced by European *Chinoiserie*, especially during the reign of Ekaterina II, when China was a significant cultural and ideological tool (Lim 2013: 42–57; Lukin 2003: 6–13; Maggs 1984; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2010: 44–59). Coming from outside rather than from inside Russia, the intellectual encounter with the “Far East” coincided with the time of the strongest Russian identification with Western Europe, which is why Russia’s elite mostly viewed China as a mystical and fascinating object of curiosity and desire. This notion was certainly the dominant narrative by which China was perceived in Russia, but the framework of territorial expansion within the Russian Empire’s imperial project added another dimension to it. In post-Petrine Russia, the Russo-Chinese border settled by the Treaty of Nerčinsk in 1689 was increasingly questioned, and tougher territorial claims of the 19th century led to an ambiguous image of China as both praised and idealized but also potentially subjugated. This imperially motivated image of China can be seen already in late 18th-century poetry, as in a 1794 poem by Gavriil R. Deržavin (1743–1816):

We will reach the center of the earth,
 From the Ganges we will gather gold;
 Arrogant China we will humble,
 Like a cypress tree, firmly planting our root.
 (Deržavin 1864: 608–21; cit. in Lim 2013: 58)

By the end of Catherinian rule, China had become a flexible and ambiguous notion in the Russian mindset. It could stand for both backwardness and disturbing modernity, for which China had at the same time become the very epitome of the Orient and was also equated with the Occident when needed to suit the prevailing discourse (Lim 2013: 5).

As seen in the cases of Siberia and Central Asia, the 19th century brought strong nationalist narratives to the “Russian Orient” discourse. The European conception of Russia’s Oriental characteristics and the subsequent search for the unique aspects of Russian history led to a new peak in debates over concepts like the “East” and the “Orient.” While the Slavophile movement mainly considered the redeeming qualities of the “East” to be those of Christianity, i.e. Eastern Orthodoxy, and did not care very much about the “Far East,” other radical thinkers like Aleksandr I. Gercen (1812–1870) and Michail A. Bakunin (1814–1876) began to propagate a more active Russian policy in Asia (Lim 2013: 8–10). The question only was how far Russia would penetrate into the geographical East. Again, the ambivalent image of the “Far East” massively influenced the opinions voiced. In his 1831-poem “To the Slanderers of Russia” [*Klevetnikam Rossii*] Aleksandr S. Puškin (1799–1837) asked:

Or from Perm to Tauris,
 From the frozen crags of Finland to the flaming Colchis,
 From the shaken Kremlin
 To walls of immovable China
 Flashing with steely bristle,
 Will not the Russian lands rise?
 (Puškin 1956–1958: 222–23; cit. in Lim 2013: 10)

In his perception, China stood for the outermost limit of Russian eastward expansion, at least this was the case early in the 19th century. The Russian military had a different view, and the Russian statesman Nikolaj N. Murav'ëv-Amurskij (1809–1881) expressed his dreams of imperial grandeur twenty years later: “It is highly natural [...] for Russia, if not to rule all of Eastern Asia, so to rule over the whole Asiatic littoral of the Pacific Ocean.” (Barsukov 1891: 323; cit. in Lim 2013: 10).

The relative weakness of China eventually brought Japan even farther into the foreground when it came to Russian imperial aspirations at the eastern periphery of Eurasia. The rapidly transforming Japanese Empire had developed its own imperial ambitions, and the looming geopolitical conflict aroused increasing Russian interest in its Eastern Asian adversary. While *Chinoiserie* had a strong influence on Russia’s perception of 18th-century China, a similar cultural phenomenon partly formed the Russian image of Japan at the turn of the century—*Japonism*. These influences of Japanese aesthetics on European culture, however, were only one component of a highly ambiguous Russian perception of this insular Eastern Asiatic country. The other component of Russia’s image of Japan at the turn of the century was influenced by the political opposition in which the two empires found themselves. The clash with Japan at the beginning of the 20th century was a milestone in the Russian Empire’s history. Its failure in

that war not only signified a halt to its eastward expansion, which had accompanied Russia's history for more than four centuries up to that point, but it also brought into question the empire's imperial project *per se* and therefore also Russia's place in the world. Once the Golden Horde became a non-factor in the steppe, the East became synonymous with endless conquest for the Russians, and in the 19th century in particular, Russian nationalists had begun to pursue the narrative of the empire's unique destiny as a conquering power in the East. Citing the different proponents of Russian expansion in Eastern Asia and the ideologies upon which their opinions were based, Schimmelpenninck van der Oye (2006) has shown how these ideological concepts inevitably drove the Russian Empire into war with Japan. By 1905 however, these concepts were shaken to their very foundations and the limit to Russia's expansion was eventually found in the Far East. This national shock was accompanied by an aggressive othering of the Japanese in what was understood a "racial war" and by stressing not only Russia's cultural superiority but also racial superiority over the Japanese people (Norris 2006: 107–34).

The popular print "Attack of the Japanese on Port Money" [*Ataka japoncev na Port Monè*] (cf. Fig.6) addresses the question of Japanese-American relations in opposition to the Russian Empire, and furthermore portrays Japanese soldiers as small and pesky when trying to grab the image's central bag of money. The text of the print refers to the Japanese as "squint-eyed warriors fighting over someone else's purse" (GPIB ORK, OIK 118-a; cit. in Norris 2006: 109–10) and established an image of them as racially inferior pests who fought for money rather than their nation's glory.

Japan and China therefore constitute an interesting aspect of Russia's Orient as they were well exploited for exotic representations on the one hand but were never ultimately colonized by the Russians on the other. Furthermore, the two Eastern Asiatic powers were linked to the greatest and keenest Russian imperial fantasies, but also served an important function in ensuring or questioning Russia's place in the world (Lim 2013: 5). Due to rapid modernization undertaken in both China and Japan, they were increasingly perceived as both fundamentally "Eastern" by their cultural values but also "Western," as modernization was equated with westernization in the Russian mind. Also "East" and "Far East" did not necessarily refer to parallel concepts, and it was often the case that the former held a positive connotation while the latter functioned as a negative reflection of Russian identity (Masing-Delic 2003). Neither a part of Russia's imperial project nor fully encompassed by the concepts of Orient and Occident, the two Eastern Asiatic states thoroughly challenged Russian definitions of what was East and what was West, which had immense implications for Rus-

sia's self-perception of its place in the world, for the question of whether Russia was part of the East or the West had been posed for centuries.



Figure 6: “Attack of the Japanese on Port Money” [*Ataka japoncev na Port Monè*]

As initially indicated, I do not consider the six examples set out as the only possible answers to the question of where the “Russian Orient” may be located. One could also point to the Russian perception of the Persian Empire/Iran (cf., for instance, Andreeva 2007; Azad/Yastrebova 2015; Cronin 2015; Khismatulin 2015; Volkov 2014), speculate as to the role Alaska might have had within Russia’s imperial project (Alekseev 1975; Vinkovetsky 2011), examine the discourse surrounding Buddhist Tibet (Laruelle 2008), and certainly discuss the Russian image of Korea before and after relations were established in 1861, when the Russian Empire’s acquisition of the Amur led to a shared border on the lower banks of the Tuman River (Lim 2013: 16).

It however becomes clear just how ambiguous the results of the problem of where to locate *the* Russian Orient actually are, making such a question superfluous. No particular region has ever been or is the sole space of Russian Orientalist projections, but a “Russian Orientalism” is closely linked to the extensive history of the Russian state’s (empire’s) imperial project. Thus, the history of the “Russian Orient” is a history of development but also flexibility. Nevertheless, a constant is that the respective discourse of the Orientalized realm not

only reflects the relationship between Russia and that particular region but has to be seen in from a broader perspective, as it also influences Russia's self-perceived belonging to an imagined common European civilization. As Alfred J. Rieber (1994: 334) put it, the ambiguity of Russian imperialism was strongly connected to the Russian desire to match Western European achievements, i.e. "to overcome backwardness and catch up to the West," which had the same effect on the imagination as an "Orient," while on the other hand it was wishful thinking to draw a clear line between Russia and that particular "Orient," to whatever geographical location specified in the discourse in question, in order to assert Russia's membership in the European community as distinct from Asia. So, yes, at different times (but possibly simultaneously), different "Russian Orients" reinforcing the idea of what Russia stood for gained legitimacy, both with respect to where Russia imagined itself as belonging and also with respect to legitimizing imperial rule over newly-conquered territories. The far-reaching territorial expansion of the Russian Empire led to a multitude of realms that had to be understood and integrated, a process in which existing images about the Empire's newest acquisitions and, more importantly, its newest subjects were often insufficiently questioned. This ambiguity meant that any "Russian Orient" was effectively the result of legitimizing imperial rule on the one hand and legitimizing a Russian self-image on the other—a balancing act between an essentialized "Orient" and an equally essentialized "Europe."

The ambiguity of the "Russian Orient" also makes it superfluous to try to apply the Eurocentric narrative of an East-West dichotomy to the Russian case. The intellectual struggle over the nature of Russia and its history and the intellectual struggle over Russia's position vis-à-vis Europe did not initiate a discussion of whether Russia was a part of *the East* or *the West*, but in the 19th century they led to the well-known disputes between Westernizers and Slavophiles, in which the latter condemned the "rotten West" [*Gniloj Zapad*] and asserted that the Russian Empire should be restructured on ideas and values derived from its own early history. Furthermore, the Russian self-perception also emphasized a Russian cultural proximity to ancient Eastern traditions (Solovyeva 2010: 63). Not least, this controversy makes it difficult to argue that a "Russian Orient" discourse could be found within the framework of East and West. Thus, the question of where Russia's East would be does not make any sense in the search for a "Russian Orient," or as Walter Benjamin (1999: 13) noted: "Russia had no use for the Romantic concept of the 'Far East.'" It is not only that the Crimea or the Ottoman Empire can scarcely be considered Russia's geographic East, for there was another Orientalized realm located to St. Petersburg's south: the Caucasus.

The Caucasus assumed a very special place within the Russian imperial project. As another region which had come into the focus of Russian imperial expansion, it was not only the militarily most contested region the Russian Empire intended to make its own—it had also assumed a prominent role in the Russian imaginative geography. While I do not consider the question of whether the Caucasus would constitute the Saidian-Oriental counterpart for the Russian Empire in any way adequate in order to describe the reciprocal relationship between the two sides, I do believe it is very productive to ask which particular discourses contributed to this particular perception and which Russian images of the Caucasus emerged from them. How did such a relatively small region like the Caucasus receive so much attention and discussion and soon become the primary target of Orientalizing projections in Russia? Driven by the protracted and complicated conquest and integration of the region into the Russian Empire, many debates evolved around the Caucasus. Certainly the most visible and most contested, however, was something that is known today as the “literary Caucasus” and constitutes an entire sub-genre of Russian literature.

3 IMAGINING THE CAUCASUS

But there—amidst the seclusion
of valleys, hiding in the mountains—
roost the Balkar and the Bach,
the Abazech and the Kamukinian,
the Karbulak and the Abazinian,
the Čečereian and the Šapsuk
(Žukovskij 1959: 190).

Ignorance is a key term in Russia's early contacts with the Caucasus. The issue of the Caucasus was scarcely broached in Russian culture until the empire's imperial expansion suggested a closer look at its newest territorial acquisitions. It took only a few years after the outbreak of the Caucasus war for Russia's most famous poet Aleksandr S. Puškin (1799–1837) to immortalize the region in his epoch-making narrative poem *The Captive of the Caucasus* [*Kavkazskij plennik*] in 1822. However, even before Puškin made the region a cultural point of reference, Gavriila R. Deržavin (1743–1816) and his 1804 ode “On Count V.A. Zubov's Return from Persia” [*Na vozvraščenie iz Persii grafa V.A. Zubova*] as well as Vasilij A. Žukovskij's (1783–1852) “To Voejkov” [*K Voejkovu*] are symptomatic for the early Russian perception of the region. Deržavin's ode does not contain any topographic information besides the vague “Caucasus” and neither do his verses contain any references to the local population. Žukovskij on the other hand not only gives the reader geographic coordinates (El'brus, Terek) but also names several peoples by name. But who are these peoples to whom Žukovskij refers? Who are the “Bachs,” who, though highly unlikely, Margaret Ziolkowski (2005: 43) believed to be identical with the Nach-speaking community of the Bacbi? Who are the “Čečereians,” if the very same poem also speaks of a “Chechen” 29 lines earlier? The answer is quite astonishing: Žukovskij simply invented or modified some of the ethnonyms in order to have them fit into his rhyming scheme. The fact that Žukovskij could do so already signifies that the cultural acquisition of the Caucasus was brand-new and hardly anything was known about the diverse region yet to be conquered by Russian troops.

Soon enough, an actual genre evolved from the many poetic endeavors to capture the Caucasus in Russian-language verse, a genre that still keeps literary scholars busy analyzing many different aspects of this “Russian Caucasus” (besides the many journal articles, cf. Hokanson 2008; Krüger 2008; Layton 1994; Ram 2003; Sahni 1997). Even so, one largely neglected aspect in the productive

field that the literary Caucasus has become are the explicit descriptions of the region's native population in terms of their belonging to a specific ethnic group. Does it make a difference whether a "Circassian" or a "Chechen" is the protagonist in a Russian poem or are all "mountaineers" assumed to have the same characteristics, qualities, and features? Consequently, can one even speak of ethnic precision in terms of the named and described peoples and did it develop throughout the increasingly extensive of Russo-Caucasus contacts? And what are the consequences of the 19th century portrayals of the peoples living in the region, about whom the Russian conquerors knew so little? Which stereotypes were created and perpetuated in the course of the Russia's cultural acquisition of the Caucasus? And do denominational differences play a decisive role in the portrayals of different ethnic groups living in the Caucasus? The present chapter will address these questions through critical discourse analysis and discuss the already existing literature on the Caucasus *topos* and how nominative and attributive strategies influenced the Russian perception of the Russian Empire's newest inhabitants. It will search for the dominant categories of characteristics, qualities, and features ascribed to the social actors described and ultimately examine the arguments employed in the discourse in question.

Since the "Russian Caucasus" produced a myriad of texts set in the southern borderlands, the selected canon for analysis includes the works of the four most influential authors in terms of both their productivity and popularity in the Caucasus genre: Aleksandr S. Puškin (1799–1837), Aleksandr A. Bestužev-Marlinskij (1797–1837), Michail Ju. Lermontov (1814–1841), and Lev N. Tolstoj (1828–1910). With the occasional reference to other authors' contribution to the literary Caucasus, these four big names of 19th century Russian literature seem well-suited to an examination of the development of Russia's cultural perception of the Caucasus peoples parallel to the bloody and seemingly endless political annexation of the region. The importance of literature and especially of these four writers should thereby not be underestimated with respect to the creation of the Russian image of the Caucasus. Susan Layton (1994: 34; 173–74) explained this importance as a result of the lack of news on the Caucasus War (1817–1864) in the Russian press, which eventually encouraged readers to formulate their own ideas about the military expansion and the subjugated peoples on the basis of precisely these literary works which accompanied the decades-long Russo-Caucasus struggle.

PUŠKIN AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE CAUCASUS TOPOS

At the end of the 18th century, both the territories north and south of the Caucasus mountain range were regions which the Russians considered remote and populated by peoples about whom they knew little or nothing. Knowledge was scarcely disseminated or even sought (cf. Chapter 4). Sporadic episodes of more intense Russian involvement in the Caucasus, such as in the 1780s, when tsarist troops suppressed Sheikh Mansur's movement in Chechnya, were sparsely covered by the press. The Russians had little contact and exchange with the Caucasus, especially with the mountaineers of the North Caucasus. That changed with the political annexation of the region at the turn of the century, but it was not only military men who suddenly came into everyday contact with the region and its population, for the Caucasus soon entered other spheres of Russian life and—most prominently—it soon found its place in Russian literature. Although the Russian Empire's expansion to the east stretched all the way to Alaska in the 19th century and encompassed a variety of realms suited to Orientalizing discourse, the Caucasus theme produced one of the richest genres in Russian literature and had huge implications on how Russians perceived not only the region and its population but also Russia itself.

When looking for a starting point for the Caucasus topos in Russian literature, one could point to Deržavin's ode "On Count V.A. Zubov's Return from Persia" (1804) or Žukovskij's "To Voejkov" (1814). However, Deržavin's ode does not contain any topographic information besides the vague "Caucasus" and neither do his verses contain any references to the local population. While his ode hardly contributed to any Russian public awareness of the many different ethnic groups living in the region, it at least represents the continuing Russian adoption of the alpine sublime as a *topos*, influenced by Western European texts on the Swiss Alps and articulated in Russian literature by Nikolaj M. Karamzin's (1766–1826) *Letters of a Russian Traveler* [*Pis'ma russkogo putešestvennika*, 1791–1792] (Layton 1986: 473). The paradigm of the sublime should not, however, be considered a simple borrowing by Russian Caucasus literature as Harsha Ram (2003: 25) argued that the Russian tradition of the sublime had already been aesthetically rooted in 18th-century odes, such as those by Michail V. Lomonosov (1711–1765) (Ibid.: 46–62). Deržavin's ode nonetheless brought together the aesthetic tradition of the sublime as well as the Caucasus topography as its marker.

Žukovskij additionally gave the reader some geographic coordinates (El'b[o]rus, Terek) and also designated several peoples by name. Some part of these 'peoples' were actually invented for his rhyming scheme. If one considers Žukovskij to have given the Russian Caucasus literature its initial impetus at the

onset of the 19th century, it was a starting point in which who actually lived in the region about to be conquered by the Russian troops was irrelevant and who, in their indistinct generalization, were described as ferocious savages. Portrayals such as that of the vicinity of the Terek “where often, hiding on the shore / a Chechen or a Circassian would sit / under his burka, with a deadly lasso” (Žukovskij 1959: 190), where the native peoples’ “arquebus, chain mail, saber, bow / and horse—swift-footed comrade-in-arms / are both their treasures and gods” (Ibid.), and who would “[...] like shadows / sit in the swirling smoke / and speak about killings / or praise the precise arquebuses, / from which their grandfathers shot; / or sharpen their sabers on flint, / preparing themselves for new murders” (Ibid.: 191), introduced the non-Russians of the Caucasus to the Russian readership. Furthermore, Žukovskij introduced some terms yet unknown to many readers such as the natives’ *auls*.

The term *aul*, for instance, also made Puškin add a footnote to his *The Captive of the Caucasus*, explaining that “[t]his is what the villages of the Caucasus peoples are called” (Puškin 2009: 34). In his famous 1822 narrative poem, Puškin also referred to both the previously noted works by Deržavin and Žukovskij, quoting them in the eight footnote to *The Captive of the Caucasus*. It is interesting however, that “To Voejkov” is only quoted partially, ending with the above-cited passage on the natives “preparing themselves for new murders” (Ibid.), despite Žukovskij’s ode not ending with these lines. On some level, Puškin thereby already set the tone for further literary approaches to the portrayal of the region’s native population. But Puškin’s poem did much more than simply pick up where Deržavin and Žukovskij had left the Caucasus in Russian poetry. His *The Captive of the Caucasus* is a work that made already Vissarion Belinskij write that “Puškin discovered the Caucasus” (cit. in Layton 1994: 15) and that, according to Layton (1994: 5), “securely fixed the territory on the readership’s cultural horizon in 1822.” Therefore it makes sense to consider Puškin’s narrative poem the point of reference when speaking of the creation or invention of the Caucasus, as it is fair to say that until *The Captive of the Caucasus* there was no common narrative about the Caucasus, nor was there even a concept of the Caucasus as it was later widely understood in Russian culture. With only a few travelogues on the Caucasus, which were furthermore known to only a very small circle of readers, the region had not become known to a wider audience—a void Puškin’s poetry was primed to fill.

However, Puškin was not only the first to make the Caucasus the theme of a larger-scaled narrative poem and thereby induce it to Russian literature; he also added another facet to his work, as it was actually based on travel and his own experiences in contrast to writing armchair adventurers such as Deržavin and

Žukovskij. Having been arrested for subversive activities, and before being exiled to Kišiněv, he was given the opportunity to visit the Caucasus and the Crimea. The reasons differ between the pretext of an illness (Lauer 2000: 188) and forgiveness “for his epigrams and the ode to freedom” (Ebbinghaus 2009: 113), but the common thread ensuing from the reasons for his sojourn in the Caucasus is certainly that Puškin was able to gain his own impressions of the region and its inhabitants. After staying in Gorjačevodsk (today's Pjatigorsk) for several months, his experiences were manifested in his so-called *Southern Poems*, of which *The Captive of the Caucasus* is a component, with the others being his Crimean “The Fountain of Bachčisaraj,” the Bessarabian “The Gypsies” [*Cygany*], and the Volga River setting of “The Robber Brothers” [*Brat'ja razbojniki*]. While the Southern Poems were certainly a result of Aleksandr Puškin travelling through the Russian Empire's southern frontier, it is hard to tell whence he had acquired his—admittedly meager—knowledge of the ethnographic detail in his works. Having seen mountains such as El' brus and Qazbegi only from a great distance, thus never coming close to the mountain peoples, Puškin produced a tribal milieu which solely relied on the “monologic power of uncontested imagination” (Layton 1994: 91).

Given Puškin's factual ignorance of the realm described, it was stylistic excellence rather than ethnographic details on the empire's borderlands that explains the poem's instant success and enduring impact. It was this aesthetic ascendance which led to widespread knowledge and recitation of the narrative poem, thereby shaping the Russian readership's image of its southern borderlands (Ibid.: 30–34). Therefore, this readership's acclaim of Puškin's aesthetic acumen accorded a much higher ethnographic value to his works than they should have had given his actual ignorance of the Caucasus peoples.

Another reason which certainly explains literature's considerable attractiveness was that it functioned as an alternative channel for the expression of social, political, and cultural issues which often lacked an adequate forum due to censorship in the Russian Empire. This can be observed quite well with regard to the Caucasus War, about which the Russian public knew quite little in the beginning—a void young Puškin's poetry could exploit (Ibid.: 33–34). It is not that readers of *The Captive of the Caucasus* could not perceive the verses as such, but the absence of first-hand information in the form of eyewitness reports and notes from the front itself enhanced the poem's attractiveness. For many, it represented the first encounter with a description of the tsarist army's warfare against the peoples of the Caucasus. Still in the 1820s, military reports and notes by war veterans broke the short-lived monopoly of poetry, but the latter remained in the public's center of interest when addressing developments in the

Russian Empire's southern borderlands, not least due to the persistence of heavy censorship of the Russian press.

But what exactly did early Russian poetry about the Caucasus convey to the readership, to whom this territory was still a blank space on their landscape? First of all, Aleksandr Puškin's narrative poem and the genre it eventually spawned made the Caucasus at least appear on the horizon of Russian public perception and secondly, the blank spaces were slowly substituted with hazy imaginings of how the southern borderlands would appear. Layton (1986) has shown that it was Puškin's impulse which led to "the creation of an imaginative Caucasian geography" and indeed, the focus of early Russian poetry about the Caucasus rests on the description on the mountains, which were yet to be discovered for Russian culture and served as an analogue, as a "new Parnassus" (Puškin 2009: 11, dedication, 19), to the Alps in Western European literature (Layton 1994: 37–39). Young Puškin was thereby strongly influenced by the Byronic tradition, for which the developing Caucasus literature represented another adequate parallel (Žirmunskij 1978). This Russian literature established by *The Captive of the Caucasus* was dominated by "glory and gloom" rhetoric (Layton 1994: 47–53) which brought together different approaches to the Caucasus and set the tone for Russia's cultural discovery of the mountains to the Empire's south.

Puškin's narrative poem and the cultural acquisition of the Caucasus as a lofty place of redemption and inspiration stood in contrast to the bloody battlefields of the Caucasus War, giving the territory a dual image which not only influenced the representation of nature but also its inhabitants. Dualistic and ambivalent are certainly key terms when considering the onset of Russia's literary Caucasus and especially when considering *The Captive of the Caucasus*. This begins with Puškin's portrayal of Caucasus natives in his poem. The Russian prisoner is deliberately described as "European" (Puškin 2009: 18, I, 224), thereby implying a difference between the poem's opposing sides at the level of civilization. Even so, one would abridge the literary Caucasus if one saw only a strict dichotomy between the archetypical Western conquerors and oppressed natives, for it makes more sense to consider the identities of the Russians and the native peoples as intermingling and overlapping. Layton (1994: 93) speaks of Puškin's mountaineers as having three major lines of affiliation with Russian national values and aspirations: heroic machismo, simple *moeurs*, and of course liberty *per se*. However, who exactly are these mountaineers and how are these qualities articulated?

The number of peoples named in Puškin's poem lucidly demonstrates his scant knowledge about the region's ethnic diversity, simply because the ethnic

group to which the described “mountaineers” belonged was not important. Thus, the common role of the “Circassians” in *The Captive of the Caucasus* was to function as the opposite pole to the Russian protagonist, regardless of whether these characters actually had an Adyghe background or came from any other related group living in the Caucasus highlands—the actual native group of the others in the poem simply did not matter. While the Chechens are the only other native group named in Puškin’s poem, the Circassians are often specified with designations such as “mountaineers,” indicating this interchangeability, or “bandits” (Puškin 2009: 13, I, 19; 19, I, 257), “villains” (Ibid.: 20, I, 296), and a “wild people” (Ibid.: 36, tenth footnote), underscoring the alleged savagery of the non-Russian peoples. This savagery is one side of Puškin’s mountaineer and it is supported by the attributional strategies in his work. The “robber” is in fact an “insidious robber” (Ibid.: 19, I, 257), who would live among his companions in “a nest of robber tribes” (Ibid.: 14, I, 40) and who is “hung about with weapons; / of which he is proud and by which he comforted” (Ibid.: 19, I, 242–43), behind which “a bloody trail follows him” (Ibid.: 19, I, 268). Implying an ontological thirst for warfare, Puškin went on to write that “monotonous peace is boring / for hearts born for war” (Ibid.: 21, I, 337–38), which is why the natives would feel the urge to keep themselves busy and entertain their children with “cruel games” in which “the heads of slaves fly into the dust” (Ibid.: 21, I, 340–44). Furthermore, the “Circassian Song” [*Čerkesskaja pesnja*] warns a Cossack not to fall asleep as “in the nightly darkness / a Chechen walks beyond the river” (Ibid.: 28, II, 196–97). Using such wording and themes, in Russian culture Puškin primarily denoted the Circassians and the Chechens an imminent danger to the Russians coming to the region.

Since Puškin’s poem and Puškin’s Caucasus are commonly believed to depict a very ambiguous picture, there is of course another side to that coin. The savagery and danger implied by the descriptions of Caucasus natives as a cut-throat society also served as a platform to project the Russian longing for authenticity. Strongly fostered by Romanticism, the idyllic concept of “wild peoples” preserving this authenticity in their traditional wild natural surroundings served as an alternative to those who were disappointed by the norms of “civilized” Europe and of Russia, for Puškin implied that they were interchangeable. The archaic and even anarchic social structures of the thusly described Circassians imparted among the Russian readership an impression of the Caucasus as a preserve of freedom and of the Caucasus peoples as openly living this dream of freedom. Thus, this “nest of robber tribes” is at the same time “the frontier of Circassian liberty” (Ibid.: 14, I, 41), quite similar in fact to Žukovskij’s (1959: 191) “cliffs of freedom” inhabited by natives, and “in the mountains the severe

Circassian / sang a song of freedom” (Ibid.: 30, II, 292–93). This freedom is undergirded by an implied all-encompassing vitality in both nature and its inhabitants. Circassians are portrayed as predominantly young and strong, who impress the Russian captive in the poem with “their free movement’s swiftness, / and the lightness of their feet, and the strength of their hands” (Ibid.: 19, I, 230–31) and he “loved the simplicity of their life” (Ibid.: 19, I, 228). Krüger (2008: 106) underlined that Puškin’s usage of *dlan’*, Old Church Slavonic for “palm” but in this context translated as “hand,” is another indication of the aesthetic elevation of the image of the belligerent nature of the Caucasus peoples. This narrative of the virile warrior is further exploited when Puškin wrote of the Circassian as being “undefeatable, unbending” (Ibid.: 19, I, 251) in his armor and weaponry, which again impresses the Russian captive, who “admired the beauty / of the martial and simple clothing” (Ibid.: 19, I, 240–41). Moreover, enhancing the might and potency of the battlefield adversary also served the idea of portraying any success over the resisting Caucasus peoples as a glorious victory by the not only more civilized but also militarily superior Russian Empire.

The ambiguity of Puškin’s Caucasus can already be seen in the first few verses, where the “idle Circassians” sit on their doorsteps in the *aul*, where:

The sons of the Caucasus speak
 about disastrous, martial alarms,
 about their horses’ beauty,
 about the enjoyments of wild bliss;
 [...]

 about the treachery of sly *uzdens*,
 about the strokes of their cruel *šaški*
 and of their inevitable arrows’ accuracy,
 and the ashes of destroyed villages,
 and the caresses of black-eyed female captives.
 (Ibid.: 13, I, 1–13)

Just like Puškin juxtaposed polarizing elements in the opening verses to The Captive of the Caucasus, one has to understand his portrayal of the region’s native population in its ambiguity. It is certainly fair to say that the first image of the entire native population of the Caucasus, for which the “Circassians” function as a surrogate, is that of the “noble savage” (e.g. Ellingson 2001; Fludernik 2002; Hulme 1986). Interestingly, Puškin’s initiation of the literary Caucasus already indicates a distinct role for the Chechens—the role of menace to the Russian Empire, in this case personified by the Cossack who gets warned not to close his eyes given the imminent danger of a Chechen just across the river in the Circassian Song. Furthermore, the poet’s mention of an *uzden’* indi-

cates that he was familiar with the Circassian tribal constitution (Ebbinghaus 2009: 104). Puškin again elaborates on the uzden' as well as the šaška in his footnotes, which constitute the ethnographic part of his poem.

The gender roles in Puškin's narrative poem are also ambiguous. While the Caucasus is portrayed as a male-dominated world, where virility and military potency determine one's position in society, women are mostly left out and primarily function as eroticized objects. The *topos* of the "Circassian beauty" was then already well-established even in Western European Orientalism, considering that in 1733 Voltaire in his eleventh letter concerning the English Nation described the Circassians as follows:

The Circassians are poor and their daughters are beautiful, so most of their trade is in them; they furnish with beauties the harems of the Sultan, the Sophy of Persia [...] they bring up these girls to take the initiative with the male sex by caressing them, to improvise dances fraught with lust and voluptuousness, and, by all the most sensual artifices, to revive the appetite of the disdainful masters whom they are destined to serve (Voltaire 2003: 42).

By the time of *The Captive of the Caucasus*, the "Circassian girl" was eventually linked to the Russian Empire's imperial conquest and Puškin developed an archetypal character, which would influence the poetic depiction of Caucasus women for decades to come. Alexander Etkind (2007: 620), though, stressed that the narrative poem's protagonist so evidently abuses the girl that one should in fact read the story as a moralistic cartoon due to all of the "exaggerated machismo" and understand it as an anti-imperial message.

With regard to the Russian stance on the Caucasus, the ambiguity in Puškin's display is most visible when comparing his *topos* of the native's liberty and freedom to the poem's epilogue. While the poem until then perfectly exhibits Russian readiness to deny the frontier tribes the right to determine their own destiny, the epilogue effectively breaks with this rhetoric, as this right is reserved for the civilized and militarily superior superpower ready to subjugate the Caucasus (Layton 1994: 103). Thus, it follows that Puškin closed his poem with verses such as:

When having felt the bloody battle
upon the indignant Caucasus
raised itself our double-headed eagle;
when on the grey Terek
for the first time roars the thunder of battle
and the roll of Russian drums
[...]
Bow your snowy head,

resign yourself, Caucasus: Ermolov is coming!
(Puškin 2009: 32–33, Epilogue, 26–46)

For the reading audience, the poem ended on a note of yearning for liberty, which was politically charged given the situation in the Decembrist Russian Empire of the early 1820s, yet still anticipating the implications of imperial expansion: bloody battles against the resistance of the Caucasus natives. Despite the positive connotations of virility and youth, the Circassians and especially the episode featuring the Chechen menace do reflect an image of belligerent savagery, which, given the meager knowledge about the region, colored the way many Russians perceived their newest fellow countrymen.

What is certainly clear is that *The Captive of the Caucasus* and also its “Circassian Song” had a huge impact on Russian popular culture. It influenced many different spheres of cultural life, manifesting itself for instance in Charles Didelot’s 1823 ballet of the same name or in the musical rendering of the verses by Aleksandr A. Aljab’ev in 1828. However, the major legacy of Puškin’s narrative poem was certainly literary. Puškin made the Caucasus a cultural point of reference upon which many writers would rely when attempting to portray the empire’s southern borderlands themselves. The increasing military success in parts of the Caucasus proceeding hand in hand with its political annexation of the region certainly helped to make the Caucasus an integral subject, a *topos*, in Russian literature. Poets like Aleksandr S. Puškin, Aleksandr A. Bestužev-Marlinskij, Michail Ju. Lermontov, Lev N. Tolstoj, and others spent months or even years in the Caucasus—some in exile, others serving in the Russian army—and discovered the region for Russian popular culture.

As indicated by *The Captive of the Caucasus*, dualistic and ambivalent are certainly key terms when considering both the onset of Russia’s literary Caucasus and also when considering the development of the literary Caucasus extending into the 20th century, most prominently in Tolstoj’s *Chadži Murat*. Puškin’s famous poem continued to highlight the Caucasus as the central theme, despite the fact that he did not have much of an idea of the peoples he sought to describe. Thus, when numerous poets followed Puškin’s example of writing a narrative poem about the Caucasus, they first and foremost celebrated the landscape, i.e. the region’s nature and its untamed beauty, emphasizing the latter’s superiority over human insignificance. Evidence of the heightened role of nature in poetry could already be seen when considering the negation of actual physical geography in favor of poetic symbolism, such as in Žukovskij’s “To Voejkov,” where the Terek and Èl’brus appear in the immediate vicinity and in Puškin’s 1829 poem “The Caucasus” [*Kavkaz*] where the narrator sees both the Terek and Aragvi Rivers at the same time, which is hardly a humanly possible

feat (Layton 1986: 477). Obviously, the landscape was the dominant feature of early Russian poetry about the Caucasus, but in contrast to Deržavin's "On Count V.A. Zubov's Return from Persia," the region is far from bereft of the human presence and its factual inhabitants. The dedication to *The Captive of the Caucasus* denotes Beš-Tau as a "lofty hermit" and a "five-headed Tsar over fields and auls" (Puškin 2009: 11, dedication, 17–18) while Lermontov's "An Argument" [*Spor*] has the Èl'brus and Qazbegi Mountains transformed into towering chieftains, arguing about their vulnerability to a military advance by the Russian Empire (Layton 1994: 49–50). The anthropomorphisms do not exclusively pertain to the mountains of the Caucasus but also the region's rivers, most prominently the Terek, which Puškin (1959: 266) described as a "young beast" in "The Caucasus," while for Bestužev-Marlinskij (1981b: 42) it was a "ferocious beast, black of wrath" in *Ammalat-Bek*.

Symbolism was certainly a dominant constant in early Caucasus poetry. It was conjured as a realm full of fantasies and expectations at a time when glory and gloom were the dominant theme and knowledge or even experience about and with the native population of the Caucasus were not yet widespread. However, the development of Russian Caucasus literature did not end with symbolism and anthropomorphisms. Soon, a broad variety of peoples was mentioned in the poetry, exhibiting some progress in comparison to those peoples invented by writers to fit rhyming schemes, such as the Čečereians in Žukovskij's "To Voejkov." As a result, the literary Caucasus was no longer solely a realm of fantasies and expectations but gradually became a reflection and expression of Russia's map of the Caucasus.

On another level, the increasing Russian interest in the Caucasus led to the region becoming a tourist attraction. However, tourism flourished in the *kurorty* rather than in the mountainous hinterlands, and just like Puškin, the arriving Russians stayed in the spas of Gorjačie Vody (Pjatigorsk since 1830), kept a safe distance from the battlefields, and did not become familiar with the mountaineers and their culture. Firsthand experiences with the Caucasus were therefore limited to vacations in an impressive landscape, thus fostering an idyllic understanding of the region. The manifestations of sentimental pilgrimages to the Caucasus survived throughout the Caucasus War and formed a genre on their own, in which the land was rhetorically depopulated and the native population disappeared behind idealized accounts of nature. However, with continuous warfare dominating life in the North Caucasus and the natives declaring war on the Russian conquerors, travelers were quick to populate their accounts with "Muslim savages" and to complain about Georgians and Armenians for not

adequately appreciating and making use of their admirable countries (Ibid.: 54–70).

Puškin himself had written *The Captive of the Caucasus* with hardly any knowledge of the region, but in 1829, he travelled to the Anatolian city of Erzurum [Arzrum], where Russian troops had fought a war against the Ottoman Empire. This trip inspired Puškin to write a number of new poems about the region such as “The Caucasus,” “On the Hills of Georgia Lies the Haze of Night” [*Na cholmach Gruzii ležit nočnaja mgla*], “A Monastery on Qazbegi” [*Monastyr' na Kazbeke*], and several others. Thomas Keijser emphasized the importance of an unpublished extra stanza to “The Caucasus,” which reads: “Thus laws constrain unruly freedom / Thus the wild tribe yearns [under] the yoke / Thus at present the speechless Caucasus is indignant / Thus alien forces oppress it ...” (Puškin 1949: 792; cit. in Keijser 2013: 39). It is hardly surprising that this stanza was not published in Puškin’s day, as criticism of the Caucasus “wild tribes” languishing under the yoke of “alien forces,” i.e. the Russians, would never have passed through Russian censorship. Nevertheless, in the same decade as the publication of *The Captive of the Caucasus*, this 1829 stanza reads quite differently from the epilogue to his earlier poem, to cite one instance. Increasingly, Russian poets began to at least partially challenge romantic poetic images of the Caucasus, and Puškin himself was one of them.

During his travel to Erzurum, he wrote down some of his impressions and produced something resembling a travelogue—an amalgam of actually experienced events and fiction, which was eventually published in 1836 as *The Journey to Arzrum* [*Putešestvie v Arzrum*] (cf. Helfant 1997 and Sobol 2011 on the difficulty of distinguishing between Puškin the author as artist and Puškin the author as creator in *The Journey to Arzrum*). This work should not be understood in rigid dichotomy to *The Captive of the Caucasus*, but it certainly demystifies the latter’s romance and attacks the aura of glory and gloom from the literary company of Russia’s conquest of the Caucasus—at least significant parts of it do (Layton 1994: 62–65). Puškin also partly criticized his own poem in the “travelogue” and calls it “weak, callow, incomplete; yet many things are already anticipated and correctly expressed” (Puškin 1964: 651). On the topic of incompleteness, *The Journey to Arzrum* indicates a greater awareness of more people than just Chechens and Circassians populating the highlands in the Russian Empire’s southern reaches. While the latter are again present and seem to play a decisive role in Puškin’s Caucasus, he mentions Kalmyks, Nogajcs, Ossetians, Armenians, and Georgians struggling for their respective destiny in the region with Persians, Turks, and Yazidis. Puškin also refers to Tatars, behind whom one might place a question mark in terms of their ethnic affiliation, as well as

“mountaineers” in order to point to certain social groups in their entirety. Seven years had passed between the publication of *The Captive of the Caucasus* and Puškin’s journey to Erzurum and by 1829, the Caucasus War had already gone on for twelve years. Furthermore, the two texts belong to different genres, one being a Romantic narrative poem and the other a generically distorted wartime travelogue. Thus, it is hardly a surprise that one can detect the first glimmering of a nominal diversity in the Caucasus peoples described. Consequently, the interested could learn about several ethnic groups living along the way from Moscow via Vladikavkaz, Tbilisi, and Gyumri to Eastern Anatolia. However, detailed information on them was still very limited, and while many readers simply did not know more about the region, it is hard to consider *The Journey to Arzrum* a proper ethnographic source for that time. In fact, the poet even ironically broached that issue when reporting of an Ossetian funeral he had attended. Instead of giving the reader any insight into the briefly described procedures, he concluded with: “Unfortunately, nobody was able to explain these rites to me” (Ibid.: 649).

On an attributive level, one can immediately see continuity in the narrative involving young and beautiful women—the female Caucasus Eros. In *The Journey to Arzrum*, Puškin, however, idealized the women in Ossetia, whom he described as “beautiful, and as I hear, well-disposed towards travelers” (Ibid.). Beauty and promiscuity thereby underline the erotically charged Caucasus. Ambiguous as Puškin’s Caucasus is, this image is immediately juxtaposed with the observation that the Ossetians would be “the poorest of all peoples dwelling in the Caucasus” (Ibid.). Poverty as the utmost expression of a lack of civilization serves as an antipode to the projections of desires. This lack of civilization is also emphasized by Puškin when he wrote about some Circassian captives, “sporting and handsome boys,” who would be kept half-naked, in woeful conditions and walk about in repulsive filth (Ibid.).

Furthermore, another predominant constant seems to be the prevailing peril, implying that wherever the author stayed, he saw an imminent threat to himself, and on a larger scale to the Russian Empire, from the region’s natives. Writing about his experiences during a stop in the Northern Caucasus, Puškin informed his readership about the permanent danger of “Ossetian bandits,” who would shoot across the Terek River at passing travelers (Ibid.: 650). Even worse is his portrayal of the Circassians:

The land here is full of rumors about their [the Circassians’] crimes. There is hardly a way to pacify them, until one has disarmed them just as one has disarmed the Crimean Tatars, which is however extraordinarily difficult to accomplish, because hereditary quarrels and blood-feuds pre-

vail among them. Dagger and sabre are essential parts of their body, and an infant learns to wield them before it babbles. For them, murder is simply a bodily movement (Puškin 1964: 647–48).

Puškin then went on to ask what one should do with such people, when an imprisoned Circassian, accused of having shot at a soldier, wanted to justify his actions on the grounds that his weapon had been loaded for too long. However, *The Journey to Arzrum* gives the reader a threefold explanation for the differences and also implies solutions for how to settle them. First of all, Puškin stressed ties between the Caucasus natives and the Ottoman Empire and that one should maintain the hope that the acquisition of the Black Sea's eastern coast would cut off Circassian trade with the Ottomans and thereby force the former to search for compromises with the Russians (Ibid.: 648). On the other hand, Puškin (Ibid.: 647) also critically reflected on how this came that: "The Circassians hate us. We have edged them out of their free pasture-lands; their auls have been destroyed, entire tribes annihilated." In *The Journey to Arzrum*, Puškin therefore compiled another very ambiguous portrayal of the Caucasus and of the Russian Empire's objective of subduing the region by arguing on the one hand that more of it should be annexed (he explicitly refers to the Black Sea coast), in order to mount pressure on the native population to assimilate. On the other hand, he considered the Russian methods of brutally suppressing the Circassians to be the reason for the steadily growing conflict between the latter and the Russians. Within the same passage, the poet both perpetuated and contradicted the discourse of colonial legitimization.

Secondly, Puškin implied that the Circassians would constitute a culturally inferior society and that the introduction of certain everyday objects—he explicitly mentioned a samovar—and a certain degree of luxury could appease the Circassians in their urge to fight the Russians. But Puškin considered the last method to be the most promising and "more compliant with our enlightened times": preaching the Gospel (Ibid.). Since the Circassians had only recently adopted Islam as their religion at that point, Puškin felt the Caucasus could welcome Christian missionaries (Ibid.). This active claim for proselytizing activities is interesting, as Puškin thereby at the same time equated "active fanaticism of the apostles of Islam" (Ibid.) with the danger emanating from the region's native population. This is a strong indication of othering based on denominational categories, also seemingly present in Russia's Caucasus literature.

Farther south, the othering process could hardly be based on religion, as the Georgian majority population had actually adopted Christianity long before the Russians. Indeed, the sought-after difference was articulated differently: an attributed Asian and therefore fundamentally different character. Monika Fren-

kel Greenleaf (1991: 940) has elaborated on how Puškin celebrated the “theme of seductive border crossing” in *The Journey to Arzrum* and while this might be even more the case with respect to the border in Eastern Anatolia, it can also be seen in the poet’s description when crossing the Caucasus Mountains and entering Georgia. In *The Captive of the Caucasus*, he emphasized the region’s alterity through its—in geographic terms—peripheral character from which “the remote path leads to Russia” (Puškin 2009: 14, I, 61). In *The Journey to Arzrum* however, he wrote that “the transition from Europe to Asia becomes more perceptible hour by hour” (Puškin 1964: 643). “The Asian buildings and the bazaar” (Ibid.: 659) of Tbilisi represent a perceived otherness, which however, is not applied onto the city’s inhabitants, who are widely left out. Once again, alterity is primarily expressed via scenery. The northern Caucasus is thereby a polar opposite of Georgia when the poet wrote of an enchanting transition from the “grim Caucasus into lovely Georgia” (Ibid.: 655), where “bright valleys, irrigated by the merry Aragvi, succeed the dark canyons of the grim Terek” (Ibid.: 656).

This strict opposition in attributive respect represents a fundamentally different perception between the natives living in the North Caucasus and the dominant ethnic groups south of the mountain range. Thus, it is hardly a surprise that Puškin’s only explicit portrayal of the Georgians in *The Journey to Arzrum* praises them as a “warlike people” (compared to the belligerent rebels of the North Caucasus,” who “have proven their bravery under our banners” and whose “mental abilities demand higher education,” while also being a merry people who know how to live and celebrate life (Ibid.: 661). The opposition to the peoples living in the North Caucasus is also expressed by the lesser presence of a female erotic undertone as with the Circassian girl in *The Captive of the Caucasus* or the beautiful and promiscuous Ossetian woman in *The Journey to Arzrum*, which is interesting given that “The Fountain of Bachčisaraj’s” massively Orientalized protagonist Zarema is of Georgian origin. Puškin did quote Thomas Moore’s romance *Lalla-Rookh* and confirms that many of the women in Tbilisi’s baths would indeed be beautiful and justify the Irish poet’s fantasies, by which he objectified the women there. He did however immediately come to speak of elder Georgian women, whom he referred to as “witches” and even remarked that he would “know nothing more disgusting” than them (Ibid.: 660).

By looking at the differences between Puškin’s two major contributions to the literary Caucasus, it is fair to say that they are different in many ways but perpetuate certain narratives, especially with respect to the descriptions of Caucasus natives. The few peoples from the North Caucasus specified by name are consistently portrayed as a semi-civilized source of peril for the Russians who

come into contact with them, for which the suggested countermeasures should include civilizing and also proselytizing activities. The expressed criticism about the conduct of Russian troops methods are nonetheless an indication of the poet beginning to undermine the strictly romanticized Caucasus, which also supports Susi Frank's (1998: 74–75) reading of the work as an emerging insight that both aesthetic and military colonization eventually had to inflict damage on both sides. But these anti-romantic strategies are only partially reflected in *The Journey to Arzrum's* portrayal of nature, for at one point the mountains are depicted as a "sanctuary," implying a quasi-religious connotation in harmony with the trope of the "new Parnassus" put forth in his 1822 narrative poem (Layton 1994: 64). On the other hand, Puškin also wrote how Georgian villages appeared to him like beautiful gardens from the distance but as he drew near, all he saw were some poor huts in the shadow of dusty poplars (Puškin 1964: 665). The poet thereby undermined the romantic perception of the Caucasus by attributing beauty to the Caucasus only from a safe distance while actual experience in the region brought disappointment and disillusionment.

Some less-renowned poets such as Pavel A. Katenin (1792–1853) and Aleksandr I. Poležaev (1804–1838) went a step further and found harsher words when attacking the romantic Caucasus and especially the landscape's romantic display. In his 1835 sonnet "Caucasus Mountains" [*Kavkazskie gory*], Katenin (1940: 234) calls the mountains a "row of ugly walls [...] of no avail, of no beauty" and suggested they were created by the devil rather than god (Layton 1994: 65). Poležaev's most important contribution to the demystification of the romantic Caucasus is certainly the narrative poem "*Èrpeľi*" (1830) which has its setting at the frontlines of Dagestan and Chechnya. The poem was strongly inspired by the author's experiences of exile and military service in the southern borderlands, and he attacked the armchair adventurers writing about the rugged nature of the Caucasus from their comfortable homes. While Poležaev's "*Èrpeľi*" rejected Puškin's concept of a romantic imaginative geography, it still endorsed the Russian Empire's claim to civilize the "savages" of the Caucasus and by using Christian symbolism it essentialized them by their Muslim faith (Ibid.: 66; 161–62). It is fair to say that the works of Katenin and Poležaev did not have the same impact on Russian literary history as Puškin's, but their works are certainly an indication that the romantic Caucasus was not monolithic, as it was already declining in the early 1830s. From that point onward, it would be military men in particular who brought the Russian public a counterpart to romantic travel literature, as they could not identify with the heightened aesthetic attractiveness of the Caucasus and they recorded their own impres-

sions and experiences in their campaign diaries, far away from relaxing thermal spas.

THE POPULAR “ETHNOGRAPHER” BESTUŽEV-MARLINSKIJ

Another name strongly connected to Russia’s literary Caucasus is Aleksandr Bestužev. After having participated in the Decembrist revolt, he was sent into exile to Jakutsk and in 1829 to the Caucasus, where he was killed eight years later. He was arguably this epoch’s Russian writer most familiar with the mountaineer life, and while his works are by far no bestsellers today, he enjoyed enormous popularity during his lifetime. His exile in the Caucasus was recorded in several works, published under his well-known pseudonym Marlinskij, i.e. among others “Story of an officer formerly in captivity among the mountaineers” [*Rasskaz oficera, byvšego v plenu u gorcev*] (1834), the two descriptions of the war between Russians and mountaineers in “Letters from Dagestan” [*Pis'ma iz Dagestana*] (1832) and “The Feat of Ovečkin and Ščerbina for the Caucasus” [*Podvig Ovečkina i Ščerbiny za Kavkazom*] (1837), as well as the two tales *Mulla-Nur* (1836) and *Ammalat-Bek* (1831), and many more (Chmielewski 1966: 57–63).

Bestužev-Marlinskij’s long exile and the related military service in the Caucasus afforded him with the opportunity to learn more about the native population and his works were indeed within the range of Russian knowledge about the Caucasus in the 1830s. His 1834 “Story of an officer formerly in captivity among the mountaineers,” for instance, contains ethnographic information about Dagestan which compared well to ethnographic studies of the time, while his other works such as *Ammalat-Bek* are filled with trustworthy ethnographic insights and authentic folklore. Bestužev-Marlinskij repeatedly wove local expressions and sayings into his stories. The writer also added many footnotes to his texts, in which he expansively elaborated on terms, dates, and figures apparently unknown to his Russian readers, and he did not expect much knowledge from his readers, as explanations, or rather translations, of terms like *imam* (Bestužev-Marlinskij 1981b: 95) suggest. Furthermore, Bestužev-Marlinskij demonstrated that he was fully aware of the long-lasting traditions of the native population and warned his readers not to dismiss these people as “savages” (Layton 1994: 112).

This did, however, not convince him to consider the region’s native population by collective references. Thus, the most common nomination strategies include “mountaineers” and “Tatars.” In contrast to Puškin, Bestužev-Marlinskij also equally employed references to the Muslim faith of the peoples described,

as he simply called them “Muslim” or “Muslim peoples.” However, a footnote to *Ammalat-Bek* (Bestužev-Marlinskij 1981b: 22) states that “all mountaineers are bad Muslims,” because simply referring to their Muslim faith was not sufficiently derogative. Furthermore, he denigrated the belief of these Muslims by writing in *Mulla-Nur* that it would “almost always end up in superstition” rather than piety (Bestužev-Marlinskij 1995: 190). Interestingly, another frequently used collective reference in Bestužev-Marlinskij’s works is “Asians,” which helped the author to immediately evoke a feeling of alterity among his readership. Predominantly writing about Dagestan and given his much higher level of ethnographic knowledge in comparison to Puškin, he furthermore referred to several other ethnic groups such as the Avars, Lezgians, Yezidi or Armenians, and includes some references to their geographical origins, such as in the “people from Derbent,” although the prevailing strategy was to refer to all the “mountaineers” collectively. In *Mulla-Nur*, one does however find a differentiation in the depiction of the “mountaineers” when the writer added a footnote to explain that “the deeper into the mountains, the more warlike, independent, and numerous they are” (Ibid.: 262).

This however did not lead to a break with the rhetoric of Russia’s literary Caucasus, for the relationship between Russians and the mountaineers remained highly ambivalent in his works. *Ammalat-Bek* is a good example of the absence of a strict dichotomy between Russians and natives, as cultural identities are represented as blurry and therefore destabilized (Layton 1994: 113–14). This can also be seen at the attributive level. As the framing of the Caucasus region as being distinctly “Asian” already suggests, he implied a fundamental alterity based on an Asian-European dichotomy and thereby frequently contrasted the two poles. Sometimes, Bestužev-Marlinskij even went a step further and contrasted a Russian Europeanness with Islam as its counterpart (Bestužev-Marlinskij 1995: 194). Following this pattern, Bestužev-Marlinskij frequently perpetuated the narrative of the Russian Empire’s borderlands as a backward periphery and home to semi-civilized peoples. Again, Bestužev-Marlinskij expressed this by referring to a collective “Asian” and claimed that he would “live from day to day, not remembering what happened on the third day, not caring what might happen the day after tomorrow; he lives negligently, because he is lazy while carelessness is his biggest delight” (Ibid.: 187).

“Asian” and “Muslim” seem to be interchangeable references throughout Bestužev-Marlinskij’s works and in *Mulla-Nur* “a Muslim is unconcerned with being seen but rather with not being seen: that’s the ground rule not only for his architecture but for his entire life” (Ibid.: 227). Furthermore, the portrayals of “Asia” and “Islam” both follow a similar pattern of equating them with a lower

level of civilization, cutting deep into private spheres by stating that a Muslim man does not rejoice over marriage, since he could have four wives (Ibid.: 250), or when writing that women and children are mere chattel for a Muslim man, about which he need not give any account (Ibid.: 258). A Muslim also only lives in the present, which is always great in comparison to a surreal tomorrow (Ibid.: 268–69). Continuously, Bestužev-Marlinskij never tired of stressing Islam's alleged inferiority to Russian Orthodox Christianity, making his work highly moralistic, for which *Ammalat-Bek* may be the best example with the Russian biblically turning his cheek to one side and the vengeful native to the other.

While *Mulla-Nur* has only native protagonists, *Ammalat-Bek* is another story of the confrontation between the Caucasus and Russia, although in contrast to Puškin's *The Captive of the Caucasus*, it lacks the erotically charged intercultural encounter of the Russian captive and the Circassian girl. Still, the attributions are identical. *Mulla-Nur* boasts an “enormously pretty Lezgian [girl]” (Bestužev-Marlinskij 1995: 197) and the protagonist Ammalat-Bek himself serves as a “surrogate eros” (Layton 1994: 119), who addresses “a Russian woman's repressed ideal of savage eros” (Ibid.: 126) in descriptions of the natives as “passionate, like a Muslim, who doesn't know any prelude in love” (Bestužev-Marlinskij 1995: 209). It is attributed a strength and virility that dominate Bestužev-Marlinskij's depiction of his titular native heroes. One can easily interpret this when the author's Russian protagonists come to conclusions such as this: “I knew quite well that even the most useless Asian would melt away at the sight of the perfect weapon [...]” (Ibid.: 285). The culmination of *Ammalat-Bek* with the murder of the Russian protagonist Verchovskij by Ammalat-Bek completes the process of shattering early Puškinian Caucasus romanticism. The aggression attributed to the native and what Layton (1994: 122–25) called “the violent surrogate” thus have a twofold effect; on the one hand it is supposed to underscore the savagery of the Caucasian mountaineer, while on the other it depicts them as akin to Russian military men, who are presented by Bestužev-Marlinskij as killers, engaged in senseless slaughter.

The latter is certainly the most important feature introduced by Bestužev-Marlinskij in the literary Caucasus, but it ultimately led to a dualistic evaluation of the region by the author. On the one hand, Bestužev-Marlinskij followed Byronic traditions (Bagby 1995), which also led him to frequently quote Byron, such as from *Childe Herold's Pilgrimage* in “Parting from the Caspian Sea” [*Proščanie s Kaspiem*] (Bestužev-Marlinskij 1995: 183), as well as the rhetoric of Russia as a civilized power “legitimately” (Hokanson 2008: 170) determined to expand into its backward periphery. On the other hand, his works illustrate

the brutality of the Empire's campaigns of conquest. *Ammalat-Bek* might be the best example of Bestužev-Marlinskij's duality of the Caucasus, showing a gap between the romance of an empire in the Orient and the brutality accompanying Russia's imperialist endeavors. His *œuvre* also raises the question of the relationship between Russian readers and the native mountaineers, while his simultaneous subversion and reinforcement of imperialism made his contribution to the literary Caucasus a two-sided legacy (Layton 1994: 130–31).

With respect to his portrayal of the region's native population, Bestužev-Marlinskij offered his readers a new quality in information and insight. Being familiar with the region on an entirely other level than Puškin, he offered his audience an ethnographic component comparable only to the very ethnography of his times. Hence, he was able to populate his literary works with more accurate descriptions than his fellow writers, although in fact his characters are very much stereotypically described as culturally inferior but virile, i.e., the noble savage. Furthermore, Bestužev-Marlinskij introduced the emphasis of the Christian-Muslim dichotomy to the literary Caucasus, as his concepts of native alterity are expressed both by an inherent Asian and therefore alien character but also by the Muslim faith of the Caucasus peoples as an integral part of their alleged backwardness. In his works, Bestužev-Marlinskij made the Caucasus a Muslim realm rather than a region distinct due to the other, non-Russian ethnic groups living in it.

LERMONTOV'S "ROMANTIC KILLING FIELDS"

Although Bestužev-Marlinskij's questions remained in limbo, unresolved, they were picked up and elaborated by another Russian poet with strong personal ties to the Empire's southern borderlands—Michail Ju. Lermontov. Having spent time in the region already as a child, he studied oriental languages and philosophy in Moscow and was later exiled to the Caucasus in 1837. Four years later, at the age of 26, he died in a duel, just like Puškin, and followed the destiny of the latter as well as Bestužev-Marlinskij, i.e., as one of the main protagonists in the creation of a romantic Russian Caucasus to die in the region. To Lermontov, the Caucasus served as a major source of inspiration and became the setting of many different (narrative) poems and novels. Thus, Lermontov's Caucasus *œuvre* is enormously rich and among many other titles it includes narrative poems such as "The Circassians" [*Čerkesy*] (1828), "The Captive of the Caucasus" [*Kavkazskij plennik*] (1828), *Kally* [translated as "Assassin" from the Circassian by Lermontov (1989b: 175)] (1830/31), *Izmail-Bej* (1832), *Chadži-Abrek* (1833/34), *Aul-Bastundži* (1832/33), "The Fugitive" [*Beglec*] (1838),

“The Novice” [*Mcyri*; original title in Georgian] (1838/39), and *Demon* (1839), poems such as “A Georgian Song” [*Gruzinskaja pesnja*] (1829), “The Caucasus” [*Kavkaz*] (1830), “To the Caucasus” [*Kavkazu*] (1830), “Gifts of the Terek” [*Dary Tereka*] (1839), “Cossack Lullaby” [*Kazač'ja kolybel'naja pesnja*] (1840), *Valerik* (1840), and *Tamara* (1841), but also his other works such as his most famous novel *A Hero of Our Time* [*Geroi našego vremeni*] (1839), are dominated by the Caucasus as a region and theme (Keijser 2013: 35–36; Vickery 2001).

Lermontov's works exhibit an admiration for the Caucasian landscape and its natural splendor (Keijser 2013: 40). His profound interest in topographical and geographical detail enabled him to describe the region with much more precision than his predecessors and contemporaries so that individual mountains and rivers are named, which often serve as a boundary between Russians and mountaineers. While exercising some caution, it may be stated this interest also found an outlet in Lermontov's attempt to populate his Caucasus works with distinct native protagonists and peoples rather than framing the latter as a unified social group. While some collective designations are still present in his poems and novels, and vague “mountaineers” as well as “wild men” or “savages” appear in the 1828 *The Captive of the Caucasus* and in the 1840 *Valerik*, they are definitely the exception to the rule of Lermontov referring to his characters by their specific ethnicity. Increasingly, “new” peoples appeared on the horizon of Russia's literary Caucasus and poems set in the Caucasus were no longer exclusively populated by Circassians and Chechens or by featureless “mountain dwellers.” Lezgians, Ossetians, and Kabardians, but also Šapsugs, a tribe of the Adyghe branch, joined the Circassians and Chechens, who continued to be the primary personification of the Caucasus. Furthermore, framings of the Caucasus natives as “Muslims” or “Asians” are also dominant in Lermontov's *oeuvre*, and when present, they have an exclusively negative connotation within a larger syntagma.

Even so, Lermontov's appreciation of the Caucasian mountains and the region *per se* collided with his depiction of the region as a contested battleground. Regardless of the exact relationship between the Russian and native protagonists in Lermontov's works, they are always in conflict with one another and as the conflict typically cannot be resolved, it usually ends in casualties. *Izmail-Bej* is certainly the best example of Lermontov's early disapproval of Russia's civilizing ideology in the Caucasus and depicts the Russian presence as one of unjust occupiers. The ambiguity of Lermontov's appreciation for natural beauty and his depiction of stark brutality result in the contradictory character of his literary Caucasus as both a space of retreat and salvation and a killing field. In

Izmail-Bej, the Russian Empire acquired a literary inference of genocidal warfare and slavery (Layton 1994: 134). The narrative poem therefore ends with the note that while two years had passed since the war, the Caucasus had become barren, forcing the native peoples to live from theft and fraud (Lermontov 1955: 222, 33, 2211–13) and implying that the Russian methods of brutally conquering the southern borderlands did not succeed in civilizing them. Lermontov's sympathy for his tribal hero is visible even through the censorship of the time, and with works like *Izmail-Bej* Russian readers were challenged in their perceived superiority over the native Caucasus populations, dismissed as brutal savages.

Lermontov's appreciation of the Caucasian mountains and his accompanying topographical interest furthermore also collided with something else which Layton (1994: 138) called "nonchalance about cultural authenticity." One example is certainly the "Circassian Song" in *Izmail-Bej*, a production derived from 18th-century Russian folk songs and eventually recycled for the Chechen protagonist Kazbič in *A Hero of Our Time*. Lermontov also took liberties with historical accuracy as the protagonist of *Izmail-Bej* is probably based on the Kabardian Izmail-Bej Atažukov, who joined the mountaineers' war against the Russian Empire for whom he had previously fought against the Ottomans (Ibid.). The adaptation of this historical prototype's biography certainly served Lermontov's romantic endeavors to present his hero as an outstanding individual in conflict with the common masses.

While one might argue that Lermontov's sympathy for his native protagonists constitutes a deconstruction of the Puškinian Caucasus, the attributive strategies with respect to the named ethnic groups suggest something else. To use the very same *Izmail-Bej* from 1832, the native population is described as "[...] wild tribes, / liberty is their god, war their law, / they grow up among secret thefts, / cruel fights and extraordinary skirmishes; there, in the mothers' lullabies / they frighten the children with Russian names" (Lermontov 1955: 155, 3, 53–58). Frequently, and regardless of the specific ethnic group in question, the natives are described as the Russian Empire's foes, who had grown up as brigands and combatants. The poem's Lezgian is also described as a bandit, whose "entire family lives off of the booty" and who would pass this lifestyle on to his three sons, who would equally "steal and seize—they don't care at all," pleading with a dagger and being rewarded by their bullets (Ibid.: 169, 24, 495–99). In *A Hero of Our Time*, the Circassians are also described as "a famously thievish people" (Lermontov 2011: 43–44) or plainly called "thieves" (Ibid.: 134). As much as the "mountaineers" are portrayed as brutal, wild and uncivilized, they are also described as "vengeful" (Lermontov 2011: 38). But

the most famous depiction of a Caucasus native as a brutal savage comes from Lermontov's "Cossack Lullaby," where it says that along the roaring Terek "the evil Chechen creeps onto the shore, / and sharpens his dagger [...]" (Lermontov 1989b: 26, 11–12).

Such ascribed savagery is often accompanied by nobility, at least in the literary Caucasus, and indeed, Lermontov did follow well-established images of the natives as exceptionally free and proud peoples. In *Izmail-Bej*, the "wild and simple hearts" (Lermontov 1955: 172, 28, 600) make a "proud wildness visible" (Ibid.: 174, 32, 673). Freedom and pride are considered ontological categories of life in the Caucasus, which however changed due to the arriving Russians. The Circassians in *Izmail-Bej* had therefore been "happy and free" (Ibid.: 156, 6, 108) before they became acquainted with "Russian steel and gold" (Ibid.: 157, 6, 115). The 1829 poem "Circassian Woman" [*Čerkešenka*] also describes the natives as "a happy people" with the "morals of quiet beauty" (Lermontov 1989a: 85, 4–5).

This simplicity is not always positively associated with pride, for it is also equated with stupidity. Lermontov's portrayal of the Ossetians in *A Hero of Our Time* is certainly the prime example of this. Repeatedly, the Russian protagonists refer to them as "an extremely stupid people," who "know nothing, [are] incapable of any education" (Lermontov 2011: 12). This description continues along these lines and eventually contrasts the "idiotic Ossetians" to the Kabardians and Chechens, who may be thieves and scallywags, but at least daredevils as well, while the Ossetians could not even be bothered to draw their weapons (Ibid.). The status of the Ossetians as mere colonial chattel in the eyes of the Russian narrator is furthermore emphasized in his account of "having hired six oxen and a few Ossetians," thereby equating the natives with cattle (Ibid.: 8). Furthermore, the Russian characters in *A Hero of Our Time* constantly refer to the different ethnic groups of the region as, for example, "a lean Georgian" and "unfortunate people" (Ibid.: 12), "dirty Armenians" (Ibid.: 49), or "barefooted Ossetian boys" (Ibid.: 52).

In these attributions, the Caucasus inhabitants are portrayed as culturally inferior societies, who live in savagery and woeful conditions. However, the works of Lermontov do not immediately offer Russian civilization as the solution to all of problems of the colonized peoples. On the contrary, the author openly criticized the effects of the Russian Empire's conquest and hence, most of the conflicts in his Caucasus works between Russians and natives cannot be overcome. The protagonist Pečorin's first adventure in *A Hero of Our Time* with the abduction of the Circassian princess Bela is a case similar to that in *Izmail-Bej*. On the one hand, Lermontov reproduced much of the Orientalizing roman-

ticism typical of the literary Caucasus, but on the other, the story lacks a Russian hero who represents the civilized and civilizing self against “backward Asia.”

Lermontov’s portrayal of the Caucasus as a culturally inferior realm had much to do with the Muslim faith of most of its population. Religion certainly is a “recurring thematic thread” in Lermontov’s Caucasus works (Kejser 2013: 41) and quite often Islam and Christianity are put into direct opposition as in “[...] You are not a damned Chechen but an honest Christ” (Lermontov 1962: 117) or in the poem *Kally*, where the local “cruel mullah” (Lermontov 1989b: 176, 1, 28) plays a destructive role in the conflict. The antagonism between Russian Christianity and Caucasus Islam is also present in *A Hero of Our Time*, where Bèla decides not to convert to Christianity, even if she has to accept not to meet Pečorin as the consequence of her choice (Kejser 2013: 41).

While this episode suggests that the female characters in Lermontov’s literary Caucasus had been emancipated, his other texts do follow similar narratives with respect to “Caucasus women,” as already seen in the contributions to the genre by Puškin and Bestužev-Marlinskij. “Asian beauties,” which once again refers to Circassian women, who would be “entirely different from Georgian women and Transcaucasian Tatar women” as they would have lived by their own rules and would have been raised in a completely different manner (Lermontov 2011: 28), “maids, famous for their beauty even beyond the mountains” (Lermontov 1955: 157, 6, 110), and “tender Lezgian women” (Ibid.: 223, 33, 2222) populate Lermontov’s mountainous hinterlands. In *Aul Bastundži*, the two narratives of positively connoted Christianity and female eros stand together best: “A young Circassian girl / stands in the door, sweet as the Cherubim” (Ibid.: 248, XV, 150–51).

In his late work, he seemed to have further strengthened his will to depict the opposite side of the Caucasus as the killing field it had become during the Caucasus War. Cynicism and irony dominate the narrative patterns, while aggression and brutality became the main themes of his Caucasus literature. The poem *Valerik* is certainly the best example of Lermontov’s efforts to capture the war in the mountains. The poem’s titular Valerik River already sets the tone for Lermontov’s lines as the river’s Chechen name “Valargthe” actually means “river of death,” something indicated by the poem’s narrator near the end of *Valerik*. Of course, it was not the river’s name which inspired Lermontov but rather the Battle of the Valerik River in 1840 (Ryklin 2003: 219). With this poem about relentless mutual slaughter “like beasts,” with gunpowder and rivulets of blood everywhere, Lermontov described the Caucasus as a battleground, dominated by loss and agony. The poem ends on a pensive note, giving the nar-

rator time to reflect on his own atrocities and thereby acknowledging the murderous role of the Russian Empire's army in the Caucasus. However, the big problem in Lermontov's poem and its inherent message of Russian brutality in the Caucasus was its lack of readership and attention, or as Layton (1994: 228) put it, "nineteenth-century readers with faith in the tsarist civilizing mission were completely tone-deaf to Lermontov's song of self-destructive Russian bestiality in the Edenic Caucasus." The perception of such a literary Caucasus, a Caucasus soaked in the blood spilled due to Russian guns and sabers, had not yet emerged in the early 1840s, but the absence of an audience did not prevent other poets from broaching this very matter themselves and continuing the narrative of the Caucasus as a killing field.

THE 50 YEARS OF TOLSTOJ'S LITERARY CAUCASUS

In the first half of the 19th century, the three poets mainly responsible for the dominant narratives in the literary Caucasus were the aforementioned Aleksandr S. Puškin, Aleksandr A. Bestužev-Marlinskij, and Michail Ju. Lermontov. They brought the Caucasus onto Russia's cultural radar and populated the southern frontier with personifications of heroic machismo, instinctual authenticity, simplicity, a love of liberty and an aura of Homeric song (Layton 1994: 192). The fourth great name in the history of Russian literature closely connected to the Caucasus is Lev N. Tolstoj. Of course, there were many more poets who dealt with the Caucasus, but their relevance in terms of the size of their readership can in no way be compared to the works of Puškin, Bestužev-Marlinskij, Lermontov and Tolstoj, whose images of the Caucasus influenced readers throughout the Russian Empire.

Even today, the works of Aleksandr I. Poležaev, Pjotr P. Kamenskij and other poets whom Layton (1994: 156–74) calls "little Orientalizers" are scarcely recited while works like *The Captive of the Caucasus*, *A Hero of Our Time*, or *The Cossacks* are still popular. These "little Orientalizers," however, proved responsible for another side of the literary Caucasus—a side that neglected the romantic attribution of the noble savagery of the mountaineers and their emotional and cultural authenticity, but rather plainly described them as animalistic and backward. Since press coverage of the Caucasus War was minimal, these accounts received greater attention than they deserved given their stylistic shortcomings. They helped reinforce the image of "Muslim wickedness, brutality and fanaticism" that could only be overcome by harsh Russian measures to force through the expansion of Christian civilization (Ibid.: 173–74). Within these mediocre works, Russia's conquest was defined as just while the tribes-

men were considered unworthy and degenerate. These poets drew a rigid dichotomy between themselves and the peoples of the North Caucasus. This dichotomy also led to another depiction of the landscape, which in their works was no longer romanticized but adjusted to the narrative of their backward and primitive inhabitants. Clearly, the mountain range was thereby closely linked to the prevailing Muslim faith of its denizens. While the representation of the Caucasus as “the mountains of Allah” was not exclusively used by the “little Orientalizers”—Lermontov for instance called them “Allah’s eternal throne” and personified Qazbegi as a white-turbaned “sentry of the Orient” (Ibid.: 163)—they changed the notion of the idyllic mountains and added a hostile connotation to their imaginative landscape. The Orientalizing poetry of these today mostly unknown writers portrayed the mountains as the personification of the evil and perfidy they sought to illustrate in their simplistic depiction of the Caucasus Muslim mountaineers as vicious savages, far from the values of their civilizing mission. Also, the scornful othering of the tribesmen in this type of poetry primarily referred to the male opposition, while the compliant Oriental woman was welcomed (Ibid.: 172–73).

Tolstoj’s literary Caucasus on the other hand is much more multidimensional and spans time, form and content. By the time Tolstoj picked up the Caucasus in the 1850s, the literary Caucasus was firmly established and dominated by the writings of Puškin, Bestužev-Marlinskij and Lermontov, whose works also shaped the early conception of the borderlands in young Tolstoj’s writings. But Tolstoj sought for a change in the Caucasus paradigm, as his personal experiences in the region did not match the stories told by the three poets. Having dropped out of studying law and Oriental languages at the University of Kazan’, he briefly held a low-level civil-service job, which however alternated with carousing and gambling. Having amassed heavy gambling debts, he accompanied his brother to the Caucasus where he spent four years in the army as a volunteer/observer and eventually as a commissioned officer (Hammarberg 2005: viii). His efforts on the battlefields were considered outstanding and in an 1851 letter to his older brother Sergej, for instance, he wrote about going on a campaign in which as much as possible he wanted to “assist, with the aid of a cannon, in destroying the predatory and turbulent Asiatics” (cit. in Maude 1917: 65–66). In contrast to such a drastic statement, he remained ambivalent to the Russian war in the Caucasus, which was reflected in his many contributions to the literary Caucasus, beginning with short stories from the early 1850s such as *The Raid* [*Nabeg*; also translated as *The Invaders*] or *The Wood-Felling* [*Rubka Lesa*] spanning to his late works like the famous novella *Chadži-Murat*, which already reaches into the 20th century.

In his Caucasus works, he sought for greater realism and wanted the romantic perception of the region to be replaced by fact-based depictions, obviously strongly motivated by the growing amount of non-fiction and also scholarship that broached the issue of the Caucasus as a region and also of its population. Tolstoj's "revolt against romanticism" (Layton 1994: 233–51) found expression not only in the stories told but also in the form of his works. While Bestužev-Marlinskij, for example, also included considerable factual ethnographic information in works like *Ammalat-Bek*, Tolstoj also made a step forward in the form of his writing. His novella *The Cossacks* [*Kazaki*] includes footnotes which are much more elaborate than the footnotes to Puškin's *The Captive of the Caucasus*, as well as an entire chapter in form of an ethnographic essay discussing the Grebensk Cossacks, parts of which are even reproduced in modern history books on the Caucasus (cf. Forsyth 2013: 283). Tolstoj thereby wanted to capture another dimension of the Caucasus, remote from romanticism's elevation of the region, and demystify the legendary realm at the empire's southern border.

Already Tolstoj's early works, such as *The Raid* or *The Wood-Felling*, follow this narrative. For example, the latter's protagonist Bolchov answers the question of why he would serve in the Caucasus by saying: "On account of tradition. In Russia, you see, there exists a strange tradition about the Caucasus, that it is a sort of promised land for all kinds of unfortunate people," while all of those, who had on account of this tradition come to the Caucasus, were fearfully deceived in their calculations (Tolstoj 1999b: 144). Bolchov rambles on about Russian fantasies of the Caucasus as "something immense—everlasting virgin ice-fields, with impetuous streams, with daggers, cloaks, Circassian girls—all that is wonderful," finally giving the reader the disenchanting conclusion that all these images were far from being true as "in reality there is nothing gay in it at all" and that the Caucasus would "disgust him awfully" due to his own experiences on the battlefields which drove him to fall "morally lower and lower" (Ibid.: 144–45).

Speaking of nominal strategies, the early works of Tolstoj do not reflect any intent to document the region's ethnic diversity; in both *The Wood-Felling* or *The Raid*, the native protagonists are either Chechens or Circassians (while in *The Raid*, the lieutenant's mistress is a Circassian girl—"of course," as Tolstoj (1979a: 14) ironically added in his text) if not referred to as either "Tatars" or "mountaineers," even though the latter designation's frequency in no way compares to earlier works of Russia's literary Caucasus. References to any native character's Muslim denomination are not at all present when the narrator of *The Raid* reports of overhearing a Russian general saying in French: "Vous savez,

que j'ai fait voeu de combattre les infideles; prenez donc garde de le devenir" ["You know that I have vowed to fight the infidels, beware of becoming one"] (Ibid.: 17). Other parts of the short story, though, do not portray Islam as necessarily equivalent to hostile influences, but religion played a minor role in Tolstoj's early work and native Muslims were neutrally or even positively described in following their belief. For example, "[...] a Tatar on a hut's roof was calling the faithful to prayer; the singers poured over in new boldness and energy" (Ibid.). In general, it is interesting to note that Tolstoj's early portrayals of the natives all come from a distance, anonymizing rather than personalizing them, making his literary Caucasus primarily a Caucasus of Russian experiences of themselves in war. Of further interest is Tolstoj's contrast between Russia and the Caucasus, when the narrator of *The Raid* recalls becoming acquainted with the captain in the Caucasus although he had already known him before in Russia—not in St. Petersburg but simply in Russia (Ibid.: 8).

These characteristics and the employed arguments furthermore undergird a very ambivalent depiction of the native groups near the end of the Caucasus War—not the individual protagonists, but rather with regard to their division into good, i.e. collaborating, and hostile, i.e. resisting, natives. *The Raid*, for instance, recounts how the Russian lieutenant frequently heads to the mountains at night, together with "two or three peaceful Tatars," in order to kill "hostile Tatars coming along" (Ibid.: 13). While this implies that these "Tatars" were not to be considered the enemy *per se*, rather those who had aligned themselves with the Russians could be seen as "good natives" in the eyes of the reader, there is no such differentiation for the Chechens, who are exclusively described as "hostile" (Ibid.: 14). This goes hand in hand with the portrayal of native characters as either reckless and devious or elegant and brave. The "noble savage" is thereby often split into either the "noble" or the "savage" as the implied "savagery" is increasingly portrayed as a threat to the lives of the Russian characters rather than romanticized by some sort of idealized authenticity. For example, *The Raid* contains a description of a skirmish with "mountaineers," standing at some little distance and refraining from fire, although as soon as the Russian lieutenant turns his back on them, they fire several shots at him with one bullet grazing the small of his back (Ibid.). This devious act of backstabbing and the "stealthy Tatars" in *The Wood-Felling* (Ibid.: 82) are juxtaposed with several descriptions of the elegant native equestrians, artfully mastering their weapons. The latter are however no unique feature of Russia's opponents in the Caucasus War, as Tolstoj was quick to attribute the Russian Empire's representatives an "especial and lofty character of Russian bravery" (Ibid.: 29).

Ethnographic information about the Caucasus is still very meager in Tolstoj's early short stories. He had not been stationed in the region for long when he wrote the first of his works about his experiences in the Caucasus and therefore it is hardly surprising that his few comments cannot compete with the insights of the experienced Bestužev-Marlinskij at this stage of his literary career. The first attempts to capture some glimpses of the Caucasus can mainly be seen when Tolstoj attempted to illustrate the contrast between the Russian soldiers and their native opponents by their language. When his characters do not simply comment that they would have problems understanding a non-Russian in the Caucasus (Ibid.: 13) or when Tolstoj himself added a footnote with a translation "from that dialect from the Caucasus" (Ibid.: 13; 21), they create an impression of the languages of their opponents. These distorted phrases or single words that constitute an attempt to give a first impression of the non-Russian speaking Caucasus include, for instance, "Iaj gjaur [infidels]! Urus [Russians] iaj!" coming from the forests in *The Raid*, while the captain is tellingly described as piously making the sign of a cross and a few soldiers doing the same (Ibid.: 28).

This lack of ethnographic information was overcome by Tolstoj in his Caucasus novella *The Cossacks*. The intention of presenting Russian experiences in the Caucasus in a new light naturally also influenced the depiction of the Russian protagonist's contact with the native population. Olenin, the protagonist in *The Cossacks*, finds himself caught in Romantic fusion between the mountaineers as both the self and the other, which Layton (1994: 244–45) recognized as a parodic portrayal of how romantic literature wanted to encourage readers to identify themselves with the "savage" in the mountains. The position in the middle, namely between the Russian Olenin and the mountaineers, is assumed by the Cossacks, who function as cultural mediators and bring the Russians closer to local Chechen life. The ethnographically enriched chapter on the Grebensk Cossacks particularly illustrates their role in the Caucasus as an integral part of a culturally mixed zone of Orthodox Russia and Muslim Chechnya (Ibid.). Indeed, they are described as a "warlike, handsome and prosperous Russian population, belonging to the Old Believers" (Tolstoj 1979b: 163). The Cossacks possess the attributed virility and strength of the Caucasus natives, but also belong to the common Russian sphere of cultural influence. Furthermore, Tolstoj described the Grebensk Cossacks as having settled among the Chechens and eventually adopting their customs, way of life and morals while being able to preserve the Russian language and the Old Faith in the purest form. Up to that point, they felt related to the Chechens as they shared the same love for freedom, leisure, plunder and war, which would constitute their primary traits (Ibid.).

While the titular Cossacks stand somewhere in between the Russians and the native peoples in Tolstoj's novella, the latter are again described from a safe distance and often referred to collectively. When writing about the Grebensk Cossacks for instance, Tolstoj localized this "little Christian people" among "semi-wild Mohammedan tribes" (Ibid.: 164). With respect to the ethnic groups named, Tolstoj's 1850s native Caucasus was again primarily populated by Circassians and Chechens, with the occasional Nogaj coachman and the stereotypical Armenian merchant, painting a slightly more colorful picture. Granted, the focus of Tolstoj's novella rests on the Grebensk Cossacks, but this essentialization of Caucasus resistance as exclusively driven by Circassians and Chechens continued to attribute hostility to precisely these two ethnic groups. While extensive descriptions of either Circassians or Chechens are widely left out, the few references and the widely-employed equivalence between them and the term *abrek*, indicating the respective person's inherent violence and hostility towards the Russian units, put them in the position of fundamental opposition to the Russian Empire's conquest. Vladimir Bobrovnikov (2007: 261) stressed that the design of a "traditional culture" of North Caucasus bandits and violence, i.e. the concept of *abreks* roaming the mountains, emerged during the Caucasus War and the last anti-Russian uprisings, which is certainly supported by its extensive use in Tolstoj's *The Cossacks*. Furthermore, in addition to the lack of ethnographic details on the literary Chechens, they increasingly remained in the role of fierce adversaries rather than freedom-loving symbols of manliness. Phrases such as "Trusting—alright, trust, but don't go to sleep without a gun" (Tolstoj 1979b: 212) remained in Russia's literary canon, contributing to an increasingly worsening image of the Caucasus natives and thereby especially of the Chechens, who were the screen onto which such perceived danger was projected.

Another key term when looking at Tolstoj's standpoint towards the mountaineers is mediation. By both resisting romanticism and accepting his own limitations in knowledge and contact with the native population, Tolstoj encouraged a much more realistic understanding of communication in the southern borderlands. While the romanticist poets all ignored the great variety of languages in the Caucasus and equipped their native protagonists with fluency in Russian, with the possible exception of the first words uttered by Lermontov's Bela, Tolstoj let the natives in *The Raid*, *The Cossacks*, and other early pieces of his literary Caucasus speak in pidgin Russian, thus attempting to illustrate cross-cultural communication with greater authenticity, while his Russian protagonists reported of conversations among natives speaking in their native tongue as incomprehensible (cf. for instance Tolstoj 1979b: 277). Also, the very

presence of an interpreter in conversations between a Russian and a mountaineer underlines the importance of language in this respect and points to the need to overcome the prevailing mutual lack of understanding, which in *The Cossacks* is only reinforced by the Russian protagonist Olenin but overcome by the mediating Cossacks (Layton: 248–49).

Driven by the dilemma of how a Russian could be able to adequately write about any Caucasus native group's culture and driven by the motivation to displace the romantic rhetoric of the early literary Caucasus, Tolstoj sought to set the stage for a new role of the Caucasus in Russian culture. These ideas were manifested in Olenin's conclusion that life in the Caucasus was completely different from the expectations he had brought with him and that there would be no "Amalat-beks [sic!], heroes, and villains" while the people could exist as nature does, and without any restrictions other than those imposed by nature itself (Tolstoj 1979b: 251). Even so, while developing the narrative of a positively denoted Caucasus as a free realm in contrast to the prevailing restraints in the Russian Empire, with respect to the described native population the increasingly omitted nobility from the "savage" meant that some people were effectively essentialized as hostile adversaries, which especially colored the Russian perception of the Chechens.

Despite the several new approaches of Tolstoj's depiction of life in the Caucasus, after *The Cossacks* was published in 1863, the novella was widely dismissed as an imitation of the already known literary Caucasus (Ibid.: 249–51). Almost a decade later, Tolstoj responded to this interpretation, going back to the 1820s and Puškin's *The Captive of the Caucasus* and in 1872, produced his own tale of the same name in order to undermine romanticism's poetic Caucasus. Tolstoj's variation of the tale was also the first to give the Russian a name and most importantly, it was the first to make the Russian a soldier, connecting it to Russia's colonial presence in the region (Grant 2005: 43). The native population is almost exclusively referred to as "Tatars" and is extensively imbued with pejorative traits. These "Tatars" mostly go unnamed and are impersonally referred to as, for example, "the red-bearded Tatar" (Tolstoj 1982: 209) or "the red Tatar" (Ibid.: 217). The two "Tatars" who take the Russian protagonist Žilin prisoner are described as "foul-smelling" (Ibid.: 209), who eat with their hands only (Ibid.: 212). The native population in Tolstoj's version of *The Captive of the Caucasus* is continuously portrayed as inferior to the Russians and generally uncivilized. This is juxtaposed with the clever, brave and determined Russian protagonist, who represents his empire, outsmarting the essentialized savages (Michaels 2004: 56). Furthermore, the conflict between Russians and "Tatars" is portrayed as deeply-rooted, most apparent in the description of Žilin's first

encounter with the *aul's* children, who “surrounded Žilin, whistling, rejoicing, and eventually hurling rocks at him” (Tolstoj 1982: 210), an episode whereby the author implied an antipathy based solely on the protagonist’s Russianness. Just as in his early short stories and in *The Cossacks*, Tolstoj gave an account of the Caucasus War that did not question the legitimacy of Russia’s colonial campaign in its southern borderlands. For all of the critical observations about the war’s brutality and all of the implications to readers that they should not forget that it was the Russian troops and not the natives who had destroyed so much of the once romantic idyll of the physical landscape in the Caucasus (Gould 2013: 97), the negative, aggressive connotations are continuously ascribed to the native opponents of the Russian troops and not to the Russians themselves.

Not only did Tolstoj take his time before addressing the southern borderlands again but the end of the Caucasus War in 1864 also resulted in the overall decline of Russia’s literary Caucasus. The end of the Caucasus War furthermore coincided with the emancipation of the serfs and the Polish January Uprising, which certainly contributed to a shift in focus in Russian political discourse away from integration of the mountaineers in favor of other socio-political dilemmas. Thus, Tolstoj’s early works found little or no resonance, as it seemed as though everything important had already been said. The widespread understanding of the Caucasus and its conquest most adequately represented in romanticism’s classics led to a new wave of their appropriation and receptive continuity. New works continued romanticism’s narratives of the noble savage and Russia’s conquest as a civilizing mission in the Caucasus. For example, Vasilij I. Nemirovič-Dančenko (1844/45–1936)—born in Tbilisi, writer of numerous war novels and a war correspondent for the newspaper *Novoe vremja* [The New Times] in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878—broached the matter of Russia’s conquest of the Caucasus in some of his works such as in “The Forgotten Fortress” [*Zabytaja krepost’*], a love story between a Russian commander’s daughter and a “mountaineer” fighting for the Russian cause. Not only does the native protagonist join the Russian army, he also converts to Orthodoxy to marry his love and even ends up with Tsar Nikolaj I being his godfather and matchmaker (Layton 1994: 260–61). Obviously, Nemirovič-Dančenko’s novel patronizes the tribesmen, who are displayed as welcome subjects in the Russian Empire if only they accept Russian values and cease resisting the Tsarist army. As an emblematic work, “The Forgotten Fortress” also encouraged Russian readers to see their own nation as one that brought civilization to the culturally inferior peoples within the empire’s new borders.

“The Forgotten Fortress” was published in 1897 as the turn of the century brought many new Caucasian tales and novels to the market, written by now largely forgotten authors, but all perpetuating well-known patterns and the glorification of Russia’s conquest. “The Forgotten Fortress” also illustrates the turn taken by the literary Caucasus after the end of the Caucasus War. While the new ideas Tolstoj had introduced in works like *The Raid* or *The Cossacks* did not resonate sufficiently and did not inspire other writers to critically address Russia’s conquest of the Caucasus, the stagnation in the literary Caucasus was accompanied or sometimes juxtaposed with a boost in all manner of other publications from the 1860s onward. Collected volumes of documents, ethnographic materials and historiographical works, most often far from any scholarly standards, were published in increasing numbers and often idealized either the mountaineers and their culture in general or their personification in Sheikh Šamil’ (Ibid.: 252–54).

Of course not all publications joined the nostalgic romanticism, and Rostislav Fadeev’s infamous *Šest’desjat let Kavkazskoj vojny* [Sixty Years of War in the Caucasus] (1860) is certainly a good example of Russia’s intelligentsia propagating the Holy Empire’s triumph over Muslim “filth” and tribes marked as “rapacious beasts” (Ibid.: 254–55). However, even Fadeev’s obscure understanding of the Caucasus described the “mountaineers” as redeemable but in need of colonial supervision. In the climate of growing nostalgia and with an increasing number of Caucasus-related publications, the literary Caucasus of romanticism once again dominated public opinion and imagination on the southern borderlands. This new surge of interest led to a Russian perception of the fictional characters of romantic verse as authentic Caucasians, to new poets delivering Puškin’s unacknowledged verse as an “old Kabardinian song,” seen, for instance, in a late edition of Nikolaj I. Zrjachov’s “The Russians’ Battle with the Kabardinians” [*Bitva russkich s kabardincami*], and to popular historiography referring to poetry as non-fiction (Ibid.: 256–61). The result of the new boom of nostalgic Caucasus literature and its enhanced authority was an increasingly blurred line between the historical and the literary Caucasus in popular consciousness after the end of the war.

Against the backdrop of the well-established epic of the Russian Empire civilizing the savage peoples of the Caucasus, Lev N. Tolstoj, who had become one of the leading figures of Russian literature in the meantime (thus ensuring virtually automatic attention to his works), once again addressed the Caucasus War and launched a final assault on its inherent cultural mythology (Ibid.: 262). Written during 1896 and 1904, his final word on the topic was manifested in *Chadži Murat*, which also serves as a suitable closing point in the discussion of

the 19th century literary Caucasus. Based on the life of the titular Avar leader, Tolstoj's late work has a much stronger political message than his previous Caucasus works, as he clearly condemned Russia's war against the native population in *Chadži Murat* and thus stood in strong opposition to the tradition of Russian literature's adoption of the Caucasus after 1864 by challenging its intrinsic assumption of superiority over the native population.

With *Chadži Murat*, Tolstoj sought to illustrate a formerly neglected side of history, the other side of the mountaineers, to whom he was convinced he could give a voice. The result certainly did not match the intention, but what Tolstoj achieved with his late Caucasus work was the exposure of the previous failure by Russian poets to create a dialogue between the two sides. Dialogue, though ultimately unsuccessful, and impeded communication again stand in the center of Tolstoj's historical novel, where the author wanted to depict the distinctive cultural identity of the protagonist and his Chechen and Dagestani surrounding rather than relying on the mountaineer invented in romantic literature and formerly established in Russian culture. However, the lines of conflict in *Chadži Murat* are integrated into a much broader understanding of the empire and show Russia as divided into two cultures, by the gap between the peasantry and the elite. The exclusion of the protagonist Chadži Murat is not, therefore, due solely to a Russo-Caucasian barrier, but also to his illiteracy and the differentiation between oral and print culture, thereby influencing the protagonist's societal position but not necessarily his belonging to a tribal but rather a peasant milieu. Tolstoj, however, attempted to juxtapose the illiteracy of the mountaineers with their songs and poetry as an integral part of folklore, and while the theme of the Caucasian song was not new at the turn of the century and consequently established a link to romantic literature like *The Captive of the Caucasus* or *Amma-lat-Bek*, it was newly deployed against the culture of literacy in *Chadži Murat*. It emphasized the central role of orally transmitted poetry in social and personal life and countered the perceived difference between a Russian culture of literacy and a tribal or peasant oral culture (Ibid.: 267–79; Burkhart 2012: 78).

The novel's outcome shows the intended dialogue's failure and underlines the barriers erected by languages and (il)literacy. Chadži Murat fails to find a basis for communication with the Russians and what remains is the story of a thwarted intercultural encounter. Only the protagonist's death eventually ends up creating the grounds for dialogue, which finds vivid expression in the novel's famous metaphor of a crushed thistle, symbolizing the destruction that went hand in hand with Russia's conquest of the Caucasus. As the plant is destroyed by the narrator, Tolstoj inscribed himself into the story and into the empire's failure to connect and find a *modus vivendi* with the mountaineers, strongly

motivated by the remembrance of his own dismissal of the historical Chadži Murat in the 1850s and his lack of condemnation of the war in the Caucasus (Layton 1994: 283–87). As Tolstoj loosened his binary understanding of poetry and knowledge, his late work is certainly more in the tradition of literature as a vehicle of insight and also another example of the increasingly blurred lines of the historical and literary Caucasus. To be sure, Tolstoj conveyed a very moralizing message to his Russian readership, but as *Chadži Murat* was not published during Tolstoj's lifetime but posthumously in 1912, and in heavily censored form at that, his full message hardly reached a wider audience in Imperial Russia anymore.

The audience, however, was certainly the key to defining the significance of Russia's literary Caucasus throughout the 19th century even beyond the empire's conquest of its southern borderlands. As much as I agree with Etkind's (2007: 619) comments on the reciprocity of cultural traffic between the Russian capital and the colonies, it mainly affected the way Russian poets and writers addressed the Caucasus and the images they created about the southern borderlands and its population. While it does say a great deal about the background of colonial representations and mimicry, it does not change the character of Russia's literary Caucasus as a monologue, thus denying the colonial subjects a voice, participation and first and foremost the possibility of challenging the discourse. While turning away from the glorification of the conquest and pointing to the cultural paradox between the Caucasus as both a space of retreat and salvation and a killing field, the audience remained the Russian readership and most importantly, the author remained Russian, strongly embedded in Russian literary traditions. There are only a few examples of writers from a tribal milieu, with the Ossetian Inal D. Kanukov (1850 or 1851–1899) being one of the more renowned examples, but even these few were hardly perceived as such, and furthermore they often served in the Russian army themselves, thus replicating the same narratives as their more famous colleagues. One can draw many conclusions from the monologic literary Caucasus of the 19th century, and it certainly says much about imperial Russia and its societal structure. However, the images about the mountaineers were more than a byproduct, as the enormous range of the works by famous writers heavily influenced their perception in Russian society, being influential far longer than the lifetimes of their creators.

The military campaigns during the Caucasus War of 1817–1864 were not the only expression of the Russian Empire's endeavors to subdue its southern borderlands. Almost simultaneously, they were transformed into a *topos* by Russian poets, who did nothing short of a literary colonization of the Caucasus.

Since ethnographic knowledge about the territories to be conquered was quite scant, it is hardly surprising that the early literary Caucasus more or less mirrored contemporary Russian information on the region's native population. While Puškin, who had discovered the Caucasus for Russian culture, described the region sight unseen, his successors such as Bestužev-Marlinskij, Lermontov and Tolstoj represented a generation that actually had personal experiences in the field due to their long stays in the Caucasus, and were therefore able to offer their readership a more precise image thereof. Literature became a mirror for the growing Russian interest in the Caucasus natives, and while Žukovskij was able to present his readers with the names of peoples adapted to the needs of his rhyming scheme, the literary Caucasus was soon populated by distinct native characters. Aside from these native protagonists, however, one can hardly speak of any precision when it comes to the portrayal of the region's ethnic plurality. The widely anonymized non-Russians in the literary Caucasus are either referred to by collective designations such as "mountaineers" or are reduced to a handful of ethnic groups, giving the reader the impression that the Russians almost exclusively encountered Circassians and Chechens, which hardly ever changed throughout the 19th century. Furthermore, the exceptional naming of other ethnic groups such as the Lezgians or Ossetians did not suggest a differentiation in attributed qualities and traits to different ethnic groups, as they were predominantly othered by their affiliation to an overarching attributed identity as "mountaineers." At first, the poets imagined the native characters within two dominant parameters, which is their alleged civilizational inferiority on the one hand and an attributed authenticity and liberty on the other. These two parameters led to the narrative of the "noble savage" roaming through the Caucasus.

Over the decades, weariness due to the Caucasus War influenced the literary Caucasus. On the one hand, writers increasingly reflected on Russia's contribution to the bloodshed, which nevertheless did not lead to any widespread questioning or even condemnation of the Russian Empire's conquest, for it was not until the early 20th century and Tolstoj's late work *Čadži-Murat* that criticism of imperialism was clearly articulated. On the other hand, the fantasy of the natives as "noble savages" diminished and they were increasingly reduced to their status as backward and belligerent, with their mere presence signaling a threat to the Russians. The literary Chechens played a special role in this developing perception, for from the earliest works onward, they are primarily portrayed as the incarnation of resistance to the allegedly legitimate Russian mission to civilize the Caucasus. While the Chechens are not entirely exempt from the narrative of the "noble savage" in the romantic Caucasus, the respect uttered by Russian characters towards Chechen bravery and virility increasingly faded

and all that remained of the conveyed image at the end of the Caucasus War were many popular phrases about murderous and devious Chechens, deeply embedded in Russian culture. Tellingly, denominational differences also played a less decisive role in stressing the otherness of the Caucasus. While for instance Puškin imbued his texts with the idea that the Caucasus would await Christian missionaries and Bestužev-Marlinskij and Lermontov often included references to Muslim belief of the people they described and Islam as the reason behind their attributed savagery, this marker is not present at all in Tolstoj's works. The reason is hardly a diminishment of pejorative qualities ascribed to Muslim influences on the Caucasus but rather an indication that "Caucasus" had become a stronger descriptor than "Islam" throughout the Caucasus War, and was therefore more than enough to establish alterity in the latter half of the 19th century.

With respect to the classic question as to whether one can compare Russia's literary image of the North Caucasus to that of the Western Orientalism described by Edward Said, I think it would be interesting to take a closer look at how Georgia was portrayed by Russian poets. Characterized by Layton (1994: 192–211) as an "Oriental woman," one may well argue that it was Georgia rather than the North Caucasus, that was objectified by Russian writers in Orientalizing fashion—not that it had not developed a distinct and active role within that discourse itself (cf. for instance Ram/Shatirishvili 2004). The status of a feminized and—due to the absence of dominant male figures such as Ammalat-Bek or Izmail-Bej—impotent Georgia correlates to the political situation as Georgia was indubitably incorporated into the Russian Empire already early in the 19th century, i.e. before the Caucasus had become a *topos* in Russian culture. Not even the long tradition of Georgian Christianity was emphasized as common ground, rather the country's alleged Asian character was stressed instead.

The North Caucasus was a militarily contested realm and was therefore more suited to be accorded with the attributes of rebellious virility and savagery in contrast to Russian civilization. The conquest allowed Russian writers to reflect on the brutal Russian methods to subdue the Caucasus natives. By establishing narratives of Russians actively intruding on Caucasus life, the literary Caucasus eventually became a highly ambivalent realm. Russian poets increasingly obscured the lines between a Russian "self" and a Caucasus "Other," so that the process of Russians "going native" (Mamedov 2008) was mirrored by hybrid identities of Russians mimicking their native counterparts in the literary Caucasus. Lermontov, for instance, also repeatedly distorted his stories by stressing that all utterances were a product of a Russian character's imagination, refusing to attribute clear identities to either side in the conflict. Due to these

ambivalent narratives and due to these narrative techniques, it is difficult to argue that the peoples of the North Caucasus have always been the opposite pole which reinforced a Russian self-perception though their implied ultimate alterity.

What has been inscribed into the Russian cultural memory were the many popularized syntagmata that did not question any identity and essentialized the “mountaineers” collectively as savages and built a rich canon of pejorative descriptions one could or can retrospectively refer to and then falsely invoke the notion of an eternal Russo-Caucasus and especially Russo-Chechen enmity. Andrea Meyer-Fraatz (2009: 45) illustrated this by noting the “evil Chechen creeping onto the shore” as a component of the Russian educational canon and the Russian collective memory. The fact that the heroic Russian such as Lermontov’s Maksim Maksimych as the epitome of “an imperial representative’s benignity” (Hokanson 2008: 170) was increasingly substituted by the image of a brutal imperialist such as eventually portrayed in Tolstoj’s Chadži-Murat, did not remove the deeply inscribed attributions of antipathy towards anonymous “mountaineers,” who were increasingly portrayed as “savages” rather than “noble savages” and had become a template for the literary “Other” ready to be used when discursively needed.

Alexander Etkind (2007: 619) criticized Susan Layton for her claims—just like Edward Said—of a multidisciplinary approach although her methods and materials were confined to literary scholarship. Indeed, the literary Caucasus has become something of a canon for addressing any questions related to the Russian perception of the region and also of its native population, as if these artistic representations were the only ones to provide insight into the image created in 19th century Russia about the many peoples living in the newly conquered territories. Susanna S. Lim (2013: 12) followed this thought and characterized literature as the canonic group of texts for the Caucasus that facilitated a more or less representative Russian image of the region. It was only due to a lack of such a canonic set of texts for Eastern Asia that she relied on writings about China and Japan from a variety of fields and genres, which obviously raises the question as to why one would not examine this first hand instead of reducing all materials to one particular field, thereby running the risk of significantly narrowing perspectives on the discourse in question.

The literary Caucasus has become the most visible expression of the Russian image of the Caucasus primarily due to the prominence of the writers involved, but the implications of the Russian Empire’s conquest affected many more spheres, such as science for example. Analysis of the literary Caucasus has shown that Russian ethnography on the Caucasus was still in its infancy and

was often driven by a given poet's endeavors to provide their readers with an adequate image of the region described. These endeavors proved to be inadequate to the new demands for knowledge, which developed throughout period when Russia tightened its grip over the newly conquered lands. Hence, analysis of Russian scholarly ethnography on the peoples living in the Caucasus should reinforce claims of assembling a multi-perspective insight into Russian representations of their non-Russian countrymen in the south of their common empire.

4 RESEARCHING THE CAUCASUS

In the present time, one has to imagine the mountaineers in the sense of an awakening from a frightening dream, in the sense of a recovery from a severe illness (Uslar 1870: 1).

The Russian Empire's political annexation of the Northern Caucasus began in the 18th century and lasted until the end of the Caucasus War in 1864. At the beginning of this process, both the territories north and south of the Caucasus mountain range were regions which the Russian considered remote and populated by peoples about whom they knew little to nothing. Knowledge was disseminated and, indeed, sought rather sparingly, and the Russians had little contact and exchange with the Caucasus, especially with the mountaineers of the North Caucasus. Overshadowed by the famed 19th century Russian poets who described the Caucasus and also by the productive field of study that the literary Caucasus has proven to be, one tends to overlook that Russian perceptions of the Caucasus and its inhabitants were not solely influenced by literary works but by other discourses as well. One of these, responsible for creating, establishing and perpetuating stereotypes of the Russian Empire's southern borderlands was certainly the increasing scholarly interest in the newly conquered territories and the emerging field of ethnography.

The period most interesting for analysis of Russian ethnography on the Caucasus is between the last decade of the Caucasus War (1817–1864), when the Russians finally managed to reinforce their position in the North Caucasus, and the last Russo-Ottoman War (1877–1878), wherein the ideological overtones of a “holy war” between the Christian Russian Empire and the Muslim Ottoman Empire once more imposed the othering of the Muslim peoples of the North Caucasus. This was a time when imperialism and nationalism assumed increasing importance and influenced the scholarly research. In the Romantic tradition, scholars imagined the world as divided into distinct and culturally defined nationalities (Tolz 2011: 31). Such thinking provided the ideological underpinnings of their research, which in Russia's case influenced the imagination of the smaller peoples as such distinct and culturally defined nationalities *per se* as well as their integration into a pan-Russian cultural but also political space. The Romantic tradition also meant that at least potentially the empire was home to many peoples. In the early 1840s, Vissarion Belinskij (1954: 622) posited that all peoples and all tribes, even the “wild,” possess folklore and wrote: “When a people becomes acquainted with the culture of literacy, its literature takes on a

new character, depending on the spirit of the people and the stages of its civilization and education” (Ibid.; translated in Jersild 2002: 59). Furthermore, this period is especially promising as ethnographic studies on the Caucasus began to be published with a frequency formerly unknown to Russian academia. Strongly connected to the names Adol’f P. Berže (1828–1886) and Pëtr K. Uslar (1816–1875), many studies aimed to shed some light on the region, which the former still called “a terra incognita to us” in 1857 (Berže 1857: 271) while the latter sought to be the first to furnish the region’s native peoples with written forms of their vernaculars.

Even so, when reading the linguist Uslar’s diagnosis of the natives’ “recovery from a severe illness,” meaning their own history and development independent of Russia, one has to wonder about the intentions underlying such plans to devise alphabets for Caucasus languages, as well as the images of their speakers that were conveyed when doing so. In order to clarify this and to analyze the ethnographic texts, I will again critically scrutinize the nomination and attribution strategies in these texts for the characteristics, qualities and features ascribed to the social actors, i.e. the described inhabitants of the Caucasus region, and ask for the arguments employed in this discourse. These questions are guided by the expectation that increasing Russian interest had manifested itself with an increasing precision in naming and describing the region’s ethnic groups, helping to overcome prevailing generalizations. Against the backdrop of the Caucasus War and also Muridism’s dominant role in the resistance against Russian troops, it is promising to examine the depiction of riots and violence, i.e., whether the “mountaineers” are depicted as brutal savages, and also the depiction of Islam in the Caucasus and what argumentative strategies are employed with respect to the Muslim belief of many ethnic groups in the North Caucasus.

Since it is still unclear as to whence Puškin acquired the knowledge for the ethnographic detail in his work and effectively produced a tribal milieu which relied solely on the monologic power of uncontested imagination (Layton 1994: 91), the present chapter will initially provide an overview of the first stage of (pre-)scholarly Caucasiology. What should have been the source of actual knowledge in the early 1820s and upon what foundation did the work of the first modern Russian Caucasus ethnographers rest? The second sub-chapter will give some insight into the course of institutionalization of Orientology [*Vostokovedenie*] and then Caucasiology [*Kavkazovedenie*] in the Russian Empire’s academia. The rapidly growing interest in ethnographic knowledge of the Caucasus region will be addressed in the third section of this chapter, while the fourth and final part will then illustrate how Russian ethnographers were both

the epitome of their time but also shaped the Russian image of the region's native population between the Caucasus War and the late 1870s.

RUSSIAN PROTO-CAUCASIOLOGY

Older Russian travelogues and chronicles did occasionally contain brief references to the peoples of the Caucasus, such as in Afanasij Nikitin's *A Journey Beyond the Three Seas* [*Choženie za tri morja*], who travelled to India via Derbent and Baku. Until the beginning of the 18th century, accounts of the Caucasus by Western travelers were not the main goal but by-products of diplomatic missions to the courts of the Persian and Russian rulers (Sidorko 2002: 284). One thing these descriptions had in common is that they concentrated on the coastal regions, mostly of the Caspian Sea, as there were no planned routes into the highlands of the Caucasus.

The origins of Russian Oriental Studies and therefore of ethnographic descriptions of the Caucasus are often traced back to the reign of Pëtr I and to his Persian campaign in particular, which triggered a larger-scale Russian focus on the regions south of his empire. Through his educational reforms, he encouraged the development of Oriental language studies. Nevertheless, all through the 18th century there was no institutionalization of Oriental Studies as an academic discipline in Russia. The rulers of Russia rather responded to emerging needs in foreign policy by training a handful of translators and interpreters, but they did not support any projects aimed at establishing centers and societies in the field (Tolz 2011: 7). The same applies to the development of studies of the Caucasus region, since the first scholarly descriptions of the Northeastern Caucasus and the Lower Volga were written in the aftermath of the war between Russia and Persia in 1722/1723. Not at all institutional, this work was associated with individuals, such as the German Johann Gustav Gärber [Johann Gustav Gerber], who, after having served several years in the Russian army as the artillery commander in Dagestan and the Georgian provinces, not only compiled maps of the Caucasus region and the Caspian Sea, but also described the economic development of the region between Astrachan' and the Mtkvari [Kura] River (Babič/Bobrovnikov 2007: 19–20).

At the scholarly and proto-Caucasiological level, a new wave emerged with Ekaterina II, whose military expansion and her related interest in becoming familiar with the regions and native peoples she was about to conquer led to the first systematic research into the Russian Empire's southern borderlands. As the prefix *proto-* already indicates, the first steps towards establishing studies on the Caucasus were far from scientifically sophisticated and were not integrated into

institutionalized academia. An immense lack of knowledge about the region led to assumptions about the Caucasus, often rooted in ethnographic information from sources dating to Antiquity as the basis for the Russian discovery of the Caucasus in the 18th century (Halbach 1991: 56). On this foundation of vague descriptions, the beginnings of the Russian Caucasus-ethnography were mostly pushed forward by foreigners, primarily Germans, in St. Petersburg's service, and strongly associated with the famous expeditions organized by the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences during the 1760s and 1770s. These expeditions must be understood as a part of Ekaterina II's eastern policy, as their organization was not motivated by pure scholarly interest but rather with the aim of determining the economic potential of the country and its borderlands. In order to achieve this, and due to the lack of Russian scholars, foreign scholars were needed and were mostly found at German universities. Explorers from Germany such as Johann Anton GÜldenstädt, Peter Simon Pallas, and Samuel Gottlieb Gmelin were in the forefront when it came to the appointment of expedition leaders and to the new exploration of Russia's frontiers, including the Caucasus.

Johann Anton GÜldenstädt (1745–1781), a Riga-born naturalist and explorer of German descent, had obtained his higher education in Berlin and Frankfurt/Oder before he joined the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences expedition in 1768. The expedition sent by Ekaterina II aimed to explore the Russian Empire's southern frontier and lasted until 1775, which was when GÜldenstädt returned to St. Petersburg, where he eventually died in 1781. The results of the expedition and GÜldenstädt's journal were only posthumously published by Peter Simon Pallas. GÜldenstädt's *Reisen durch Rußland und im Caucasischen Gebürge* [Travels in Russia and the Mountains of the Caucasus] were published in two volumes between 1787 and 1791. The first volume in particular cannot truly be deemed an inspiring work, as Pallas hardly did more than collect GÜldenstädt's notes before publishing them, which makes Pallas' edition a difficult-to-read, virtually endless succession of accounts of topographical, botanical, and other observations (Köhler 2012: 145–46). Another German-speaking scholar, Heinrich Julius von Klaproth, would pick up the disadvantages of the volumes and re-publish parts of GÜldenstädt's records in 1815 under the title *Dr. J.A. GÜldenstädt's Reisen nach Georgien und Imerethi* [Dr. J.A. GÜldenstädt's Travels to Georgia and Imereti], with the indicative subtitle "From his papers fully reworked, edited and improved, and accompanied by explanatory comments" ["Aus seinen Papieren gänzlich umgearbeitet und verbessert herausgegeben, und mit erklärenden Anmerkungen begleitet"].

The expedition's more important contributions are to be found in the fields of biology, botany, geology and geography. The notes by GÜldenstädt constitute

the first large-scale and, more importantly, systematic study of the Caucasus region, which were readily accepted by Russia's academia in the following decades. The same applies to accounts other than the natural descriptions by Güldenstädt, including the reception of his reports on the local peoples and their economic and political status. Since the Academy's expeditions were not conducted for purely scientific reasons but also due to political realism and the related interest in gaining insight into the region, Güldenstädt's elaboration on the Caucasus did have further implications for the Russian Empire's policy in the region. As the Caucasus was vital in the then ongoing Russo-Ottoman War (1768–1774) in which it was a theater of war, with the Georgians a particular point of interest, the Empire's southern border became subject to new scrutiny. By organizing large-scale expeditions to the contested regions, Russia sought to scientifically substantiate its claims to them. Additionally, as the Russians had scarcely any knowledge on the peoples of the Caucasus, these early expeditions by the Russian Academy of Sciences certainly contributed to creating certain types of knowledge and certain images of the mountainous region's inhabitants.

Concerning Güldenstädt's elaborations, what becomes quite clear is that a) he did not have any preliminary studies to base his work upon and that b) an ethnographic approach was not his main concern in any case as he rather favored an exploration of the region's natural features. Thus, his few attempts to provide some ethnographic information must be considered pioneering attempts to scientifically describe the population of the Caucasus and his elaborations on the matter certainly indicate that he stood at the very beginning of ethnographic Caucasiology. Marcus Köhler (2012: 147–51) identified two major *topoi* in Güldenstädt's ethnography: the first consists of his descriptions of the Don Cossacks while the second encompasses his descriptions of the population of the Caucasus in general. As interesting as the Don Cossacks and Güldenstädt's accounts of them most certainly are, for the present study it makes more sense to examine how he portrayed the peoples of the Caucasus during the 1770s and what conclusions can be drawn from them.

Concerning the latter *topos* and keeping in mind that the Northern Caucasus was at least ethnographically speaking virtually a *terra incognita* to the Russians, it should be clear that his accounts on the peoples of the Caucasus were still dominated by over-simplifications and generalizations. Accounts on the multiethnic composition of the region's population read as "the Caucasus mountains contain a high number of smaller and larger excesses and crowds of peoples" (Güldenstädt 1787: 458), who "inhabit almost a countless amount of districts and counties, which partly bear reference to one another" (Ibid.). When generalizing them as "mountain peoples," [*Gebürgvölker*] he described them as

“restless” (Ibid.: 180), with the claim that they knew “neither laws, nor compliance” (Ibid.: 458). Despite the evident scientific shortcomings, Güldenstädt’s efforts during his expedition, lasting from 1768 until 1775, can be considered to have laid the foundation for scholarly research into Russia’s southern borderlands and it also reinforced the Empire’s claims to the contested region, where St. Petersburg’s interests not only clashed with an Ottoman and Persian presence but also with the desire of the local inhabitants to stay clear of Russian influences.

Peter Simon Pallas (1741–1811) not only edited the notes of Güldenstädt, but also organized and undertook expeditions himself on behalf of the Imperial Russian Academy of Sciences. Köhler (2012: 157) went so far as to call him the *spiritus rector* of the Academy’s research activities and indeed, Pallas compiled masses of materials on which he would then publish in several disciplines, thereby contributing significant new insights to the fields of botany, zoology and geography as well as ethnography. Between 1768 and 1774, so simultaneously to Güldenstädt, Pallas led an expedition eastward, reaching as far as Lake Baikal. His reports, which he regularly sent to St. Petersburg, were published under the title *Reise durch verschiedene Provinzen des Rußischen Reichs* [Journey through Various Provinces of the Russian Empire] in three volumes between 1771 and 1776 and covered a wide range of topics, including reports on native populations. With regard to the Russian Empire’s southern realms, he placed particular emphasis on the ethnographic descriptions of Circassia’s peoples (Ibid.: 183–185) and especially on the Kalmyks farther south (Ibid.: 162–63). After publishing Güldenstädt’s Caucasus studies, Pallas led another expedition between 1793 and 1794, but this time his interests took him to southern Russia, namely via Astrachan’ to the Crimea and the Black Sea (Wendland 1992: 271–75). The proceedings of his expedition were published in Leipzig under the title *Bemerkungen auf einer Reise in die südlichen Statthalterschaften des Russischen Reichs in den Jahren 1793 und 1794* between 1799 and 1801 and were eventually re-published in London between 1802 and 1803 in two volumes under the title *Travels through the southern provinces of the Russian Empire, in the years 1793 and 1794*. The framework for the later excursion to Russia’s south in 1793/1794 was a little different in comparison to the Academy’s expeditions from the 1770s, as Pallas did not have an official order to conduct his fieldwork and organized the expedition on his own. He could still rely on Ekaterina II’s support and was supported in administrative questions by the government (Köhler 2012: 181–82). Since the Crimea had been incorporated into the Russian Empire only in 1783, the expedition was of course again of high political and strategic interest to St. Petersburg. Once again, the ethno-

graphic information on the native Caucasus population awash with pejorative attributions and observations, such as when he gave an account on the “Kuban Nogajs, who have remained very predatory, despite having come down due to well-deserved punishments” (Pallas 1799: 406) and described the Chechens as “among of the most restless, hostile, and predatory mountaineers and among the worst neighbors” (Ibid.: 418). Mostly due to his systematic methods, Pallas became one of the main protagonists in proto-scientific endeavors to make the Russian Empire’s periphery understandable and accessible and his works greatly influenced the early Russian perception of the native population in the Caucasus region.

Another scholar who emerged from the Imperial Academy of Sciences expedition was Johann Gottlieb Georgi (1729–1802). Just like Gldenstdt, Klaproth and Pallas, he was of German origin, or rather descent, and he accompanied Pallas on his expedition to Siberia from 1770 onward (Astrina 2006: 179–81). While his ethnographic comments, which can be found in his first work *Bemerkungen einer Reise im Ruischen Reich im Jahre 1772* [Comments on a Journey in the Russian Empire in the Year 1772], focus on the peoples of the Urals and Siberia and were also separately published as a distinct volume a few years later, his second work *Beschreibung aller Nationen des Ruischen Reiches, ihrer Lebensart, Religion, Gebruche, Wohnungen, Kleidungen und brigen Merkwrdigkeiten* [Description of All Nations of the Russian Empire, their Way of Life, Religion, Customs, Dwellings, Attire and other Curiosities], published in St. Petersburg between 1776 and 1780, is of greater interest in the present case. Georgi’s publication can be considered the first volume that aimed to collect and present ethnographic information on all known (or at least identified as such) ethnic groups within the Russian Empire. Despite the travels of his fellow academics leading into the Caucasus, in the second volume, called the “Tatar nations,” he addressed the peoples of that region rather briefly (Georgi 1776: 128–43). With translations into English and French to follow within a decade, Georgi’s work became the standard reference in early Russian ethnography, strongly influencing perceptions of the native populations in these regions.

Such proto-Caucasiological research and travelogues about the Caucasus have to be considered a special source for the region’s history and for its conquest by the Russian Empire. They had an imperial background and the ethnographic components in particular can scarcely be deemed as adhering to any scholarly standards. However, since they were widely disseminated, translated and received, their repercussions should not be underestimated. By becoming the only sources about the composition and the history of the region, the works by Gldenstdt, Pallas and others strongly influenced the picture that both Rus-

sians and Europeans had of the Caucasus. As Sidorko (2002: 283) rightfully stressed, this implied the risk that those parts of their work based on superficial studies would be passed on without further scrutiny, meaning that imprecise and generalizing information was often carried over into contemporary knowledge about the Caucasus.⁴ On the other hand, the different examinations of the Empire's borderlands brought the Caucasus into the focus of Russian academia and laid the foundation for the institutionalization of Oriental studies at Russian universities at the beginning of the 19th century.

INSTITUTIONALIZING ORIENTOLOGY

As knowledge of Russia's frontier to the south and the east became increasingly politically sought-after during Pëtr I's Persian campaign or Ekaterina II's Orient policy, the time had come to move past the primacy of individual efforts to describe these regions and to institutionalize Oriental Studies in Russia. Before automatically linking academic institutionalization with universities and before discussing the introduction of Russian chairs of Oriental Studies, other institutions which may be considered predecessors to Russian Orientalist academia are certainly worth mentioning. The first institution serving the purpose of studying the "East" was the *Kabinet redkостей*, the Cabinet of Oddities—better known as *Kunstkamera*, which was established by Pëtr I and completed in 1727. It also constituted the basis for the *Aziatskij muzej*, opened in 1818 (Frye 1972: 35–36). In the Cabinet, all manner of artifacts, manuscripts, coins and other objects from beyond Russia's borders to the south and east were collected and displayed. Other endeavors to foster knowledge about the peoples and cultures south of the Russian Empire included Pëtr's commissioning of a new translation of the Qur'an into Russian (however, not from the Arabic but rather from a French translation) and sending scholars to Persia to study the Arabic, Persian, and Turkic languages. Valuable Oriental manuscripts were also brought to St. Petersburg in course of Pëtr's Persian campaign, especially after the capture of Derbent in 1721. It was during Pëtr's reign that the first steps were made to study the empire's borderlands and to institutionalize this study (Ibid.). However, these foundations had greater importance in the future than in their own day, as no successor to the throne really assumed Pëtr's interest in the borderlands,

⁴ A good example from the mid-19th century is the case of Friedrich Bodenstedt's *Die Völker des Kaukasus und ihre Freiheitskämpfe gegen die Russen. Ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis des Orients* [The peoples of the Caucasus and their struggles for freedom against the Russians. A contribution to the knowledge of the Orient], published in Frankfurt/Main in 1848. Even though he said his statements should be deemed "stories rather than history," scholars until quite recently cited his book as though it was factually accurate. Cf. also Sidorko 2002: 283; 296. An example from the last two decades is Zelkina 2000: 101–07; 116–19; 153; 165, etc.

and it was only at the turn of the century that progress resumed. Even the famous expeditions during Ekaterina II's rule did not see a corresponding institutionalization of Orientalology. However, the political developments, i.e. first and foremost Russia's wars with the Ottoman and Persian Empires as well as imperial expansion to the east and south, initially culminating in the annexation of the Crimea in 1783, certainly helped to raise further interest in the study of the empire's borderlands.

Institutionalization at the university level did not begin until the onset of the 19th century, when the universities charters of Moscow, Kazan', and Charkiv introduced the teaching of Oriental languages in 1804, while St. Petersburg University established chairs in Arabic and Persian during its reorganization in 1819 (Tolz 2011: 7). In fact, Charkiv was the first university to fill a chair for Oriental Studies and, in 1805, hired a resident Lutheran pastor, Johann-Gottfried Barendt, to teach Hebrew and other Oriental languages. While Barendt can rightly be considered the first professor of Orientalology at a Russian university, Charkiv did not become a center for Oriental Studies nor did that discipline have much of a future at its university. Already in the following year, the chair was not renewed and it was over two decades later, in 1829, that Bernhard Dorn was recruited to read Arabic and Persian for seven years, until he was called to St. Petersburg to the foreign ministry's language school and no successor was named in Charkiv (Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2010: 97).

Kazan', on the other hand, had the potential to become an academic counterpart to Moscow and St. Petersburg in terms of Oriental Studies. The University of Kazan' can be considered a manifestation of the growing will in imperial Russia to have knowledge transported from and to the east and to establish expertise and exchanges with the Asian part of the Russian Empire. Typical of early Orientalology, the studies were strongly driven by the intention to teach foreign languages, which is why Kazan' received a faculty chair for Persian and Arabic already in 1807 and began offering instruction in the Tatar language five years later. In 1828, a regular chair for Tatar and Turkish was added, followed by the first chair for Mongolian anywhere in Europe five years later (Geraci 2001: 160; Sahni 1997: 19). In 1834, the three groups of languages, Arabic-Persian, Tatar-Turkish and Mongolian, were encompassed in the newly founded Department of Oriental Languages, which between 1837 and 1842 was enhanced with chairs in Chinese, Armenian, and Sanskrit. Armenian was the first language from the Caucasus region to gain entrance into Kazan's Orientalology, while further plans had envisioned teaching in Kalmyk in addition to Hebrew and Tibetan, which were never realized, though. On a personal level, the department included not only Russian scholars but also Germans, who taught their

Russian students in their mother tongue and in Latin (Geraci 2001: 161). Other faculty members were also recruited from local minorities, as was the case of Kazan' University's first teacher of Tatar, Ibragim I. Chal'fin (1778–1829), who was a local Muslim Tatar. When the Tatar and Turkic languages became a regular chair, the first professor became Aleksandr K. Kazem-Bek (1802–1870), an Azeri who had converted to Christianity. At his department, instructors in the Turkic languages were usually local Tatars (Ibid.).

The end of the renowned Department of Oriental Languages at Kazan' University is indirectly connected to Russia's war in the Caucasus. In 1854, the department was relocated to St. Petersburg, and most of its faculty and library moved with it. The reason given by the Ministry of Education was the government's desire to establish an Asian institute in St. Petersburg, where representatives of the peoples of the Caucasus, with whom the Russian Empire was currently at war, were supposed to be educated—a plan that never came to fruition. What obviously stood behind these policies and plans was the idea that such students could be supervised and controlled more easily if they resided in St. Petersburg rather than in the more remote city of Kazan'. The movement of the department led to an immediate shift to a dominance by St. Petersburg's academic Orientology. Kazan' University would only retain parts of it, namely teaching in Arabic and Tatar and later Persian, restored at the beginning of the 1860s, but it remained primarily focused on its research into the middle Volga region (Ibid.: 162–63).

While the University of Kazan' certainly continued to be a vital institution in developing Oriental Studies in the Russian Empire, the dominant new projects and ambitions were now articulated in St. Petersburg. In 1819, chairs in Arabic and Persian were created at St. Petersburg University, but only after knowledge from Kazan' had been incorporated into the capital's university and the subsequent foundation of the Faculty of Oriental Languages in 1855 would it become Russia's main center for research and teaching in Oriental Studies (Tolz 2011: 7–8).

In Moscow's case, Arabic and Persian were taught from 1811 until 1837, while an attempt to revive activity in the 1850s was soon abandoned. The most prominent reason for the failure of Oriental Studies in Moscow were the activities of the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages. Established in 1815, it grew out of a private school primarily for Armenians. At first, the main language at the institute was, naturally, Armenian, but over the years other language courses, such as Arabic and Persian, were added. However, despite being called the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages, it remained a secondary school with instruction in Oriental languages, and it furthermore became the main instru-

ment for the government to train officials for their service in the South Caucasus. Other schools teaching officials, mostly for the army, were located in Omsk and Orenburg, where, respectively, Mongolian and Tatar and Arabic, Tatar, and Persian were taught (Frye 1972: 40–43).

However, regardless of whether the initiation of Oriental Studies at the beginning of the 19th century favored research in Kazan' or St. Petersburg, at this stage these academic endeavors could hardly be considered evidence that it was already an institutionalized academic discipline. Indeed, the achievements of individuals only slowly made their way into Russian universities, where they kept working in isolation, for no increases in either interest in the field or in the number of specialists could be seen until the 1840s (Tolz 2011: 7–8). The situation began to change within the broader context of the debate between Slavophiles and Westernizers about the qualities of Russia as a nation and an empire, in which the former attempted to emphasize the uniqueness of Russia. This debate, among others, resulted in a new focus on Oriental Studies. Another boost to the burgeoning discipline was provided by the Russian Empire's defeat in the Crimean War, which led to a rise in anti-Western sentiments in the midst of another period of intense debate over Russian imperial and national identities during the reign of Aleksandr II. Oriental Studies became a welcome academic possibility to define these identities as separate or even opposed to Western Europe. These ideas favored ambitions to gain knowledge about the empire's eastern and southern frontiers, which resulted in the founding of new societies, new branches in existing ones and also to the establishment of researching institutions in these very borderlands (Ibid.: 8).

In the 1840s, such research institutions and organizations outside of Russia's universities contributed to the scientific discovery of the empire's neighbors to the east and south. One such organization was the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, which was established in 1845, and as Mark Bassin (1999: 94–101) explained, one of the major impulses that inspired the organization was the rise of nationalist sentiments under Nikolaj I. Bassin (1983: 241) furthermore stressed the emergence of a messianic vision of Russia's role in the development of its nationalist ideology, closely associated to the growing Pan-Slavic movement. Clearly, the vision of a union of Slavic lands and peoples under the patronage of the Russian Empire influenced the development of Russia's scientific institutions. Such messianic visions were not strictly limited to currently Slavic territories, for the promotion of a break with the West very much led to a growing focus on Russia's neighbors to the east and south (Barsukov 1888–1911, XIII, 16, 37; cit. in Bassin 1983: 241). Asia in its broadest geographical sense, thereby including the Caucasus region, was favorably contrasted to estab-

lished ties with Europe and the conviction developed that Russia's rightful place was to be found there.

The establishment of the Society resulted from both scholarly and civic motivations that accompanied the expansion of Imperial Russia into the Caucasus and Central Asia in the 19th century. As Bassin (1999: 95) underlined, a significant part of its members hoped that their activism would at last lead to the reform and revitalization of the fatherland, the aim they primarily had in mind and intended to achieve by creating a center of research as independent as possible from existing governmental and academic bureaucracies. He (1983: 242) elaborated on the notion held by the scholars that science carried out by Russians inside Russia was explicitly Russian science and as such was understood to be necessarily directed at serving Russia specifically. One of the leading personalities to adopt the nationalist approach to science within the Russian Geographical Society was the Orientologist Vasilij V. Grigor'ev (1816–1881), who strongly propagated the need for Russian science to commit itself to the study of the “fatherland” exclusively and who sought imperial domination via Orientalological knowledge (Etkind 2011: 167). Already in the late 1830s, he had contributed to the debate on establishing chairs for the history of the East not only at the University of St. Petersburg but also at other Russian universities by stressing that it was necessary to study the East in order to be less involved with the West. According to Grigor'ev (cit. in Veselovskij 1887: 33), “The best way to oppose the influence of the West is to become steeped in the study of the East.” For him and other scholars at the time, the East symbolized a redemptive alternative to Russia's relations with Europe. While these sentiments within the Russian Geographical Society indeed manifested themselves as a stronger interest in the Russian Far East, especially in Siberia and the Amur region, they quite nicely reflect the partial aim in mid-19th century Russian science to shift emphasis from the west to the newly acquired or still contested regions adjacent Russia's borders in the east and south.

The Russian Empire had once again first moved to conquer territories before seeking an adequate scientific apprehension of the newly acquired lands. The Russians knew little about the Caucasus region when they had constructed their fortifications at the end of the 18th century, and their knowledge of the peoples they deemed their enemies in the Caucasus War when it began in 1817 was scant. They were forced to rely on the superficial observation made by the scholars of the Catherinian expeditions, which were not even written in Russian. The first Russian-language essays on the Caucasus were written by Stepan D. Burnašev (1743–1824), a Russian commissary with Georgia's King Erekle II, and by Pavel S. Potëmkin (1743–1796), the first head of the Caucasus Viceroy-

alty between 1785 and 1787, who compared the social structures of the Caucasus peoples to ancient Sparta (Halbach 1991: 56). When the Russian Empire was able to widen and tighten its rule over different parts of the Northern and Southern Caucasus, research intensified, although initially it was strongly contingent upon geographical and military-topographic needs.

The first breakthrough in early Russian Caucasus studies was achieved by Semën Bronevskij's *Novejšija geografičeskija i istoričeskija isvestija o Kavkaze* [A New Geography and History of the Caucasus]. Published in 1823, therefore almost simultaneously with Puškin's narrative poem *The Captive of the Caucasus* [*Kavkazskij plennik*], it did not trigger a comparable boom in ethnographic studies on the Caucasus. Bronevskij aimed to juxtapose the mythological perception of the Caucasus and emphasized the need for factual information. This naturally contrasted with Puškin's poetry, which depicted the Caucasus in line with the traditions of Romantic poetry. The latter had one advantage in the struggle for the attention of readers: stylistic excellence. Susan Layton saw Puškin's aesthetic ascendance over Bronevskij's writings as one of the main reasons for the success of *The Captive of the Caucasus*, which led to a widespread knowledge and recitation of the narrative poem, thereby shaping the Russian public's image of its southern borderlands (Layton 1994: 30–34). The readership's acclaim of Puškin's aesthetic excellence gave his works much more ethnographic sway than they should have had based on his actual ignorance of the Caucasus natives, and what effectively fell to the wayside in this boom in Caucasus poetry were the beginnings of a more serious scientific exploration of a region, which was considered by some critics "as unknown and uncharted as deepest Africa" (Ibid.: 52). In hindsight, Bronevskij's endeavors proved to be an early landmark in Russian ethnography on the Caucasus, but the academic response did not lead to an adequate volume of ethnographic studies on the empire's southern borderlands and factual knowledge remained scarce.

At first, this lack of interest in furthering Bronevskij's early insights was met by the military (Halbach 1991: 57). Imperial officers of both Russian and Georgian origin were a serious source of ethnographic descriptions of the Caucasus throughout the 19th century, especially for the more peripheral regions of the Northern Caucasus, since the highlands were not easily accessible and the Russian military had the means to reach these distant villages and settlements as well as every intention of doing so. Even so, the images influencing the early military ethnographers were often those created by the Romantic writers who had been responsible for the "creation of an imaginative Caucasian geography" (Layton 1986). With different experiences, however, they were soon interested in other representations and began to rethink the Romantic tradition that had

initially inspired them (Jersild 2002: 72). Also, high military officers viewed the ethnographic understanding of the region as a necessary instrument to ultimately pacify it and to bring stability to imperial policies in the Caucasus by facilitating—after a fashion—the successful integration of the mountaineers into the Russian Empire. They imagined their empire not necessarily as mono-ethnic but to be populated by many peoples, who should be led by the Russians, as they were supposedly considered more developed. Driven by these ambitions, the military ethnographers tried to paint a picture of clear circumstances in the Caucasus, where the different peoples allegedly were not really so different and where the way was supposedly clear to determine the identities of the mountaineers. Against the backdrop of the long-lasting Caucasus War, the Russian officers liked to think of the Northern Caucasus as inhabited by some clearly identified peoples rather than being populated by a vast number of different tribes within a single people—the situation that usually confronted the Russians within the contested region. As a consequence, early Russian ethnography by military officers aimed to describe the Caucasus region by creating a clear-cut picture of peoples rather than focusing on tribal distinctions (Ibid.: 73–74).

Another indication of the military as a source of ethnographic interest and endeavors can be seen in the evolution of imperial cartography. Maps of the North Caucasus from the mid-18th century lack any kind of information on the region's ethnic composition (Ibid.: 75–76). Early military maps from the times of General Ermolov's command, i.e. 1816–1827, indicate the North Caucasus as the "Land of the Mountain Peoples" without any further notations of ethnicities as culturally or even territorially distinct. If at all, early military maps rather randomly indicated different peoples; something that changed over time when the interest in and knowledge of the region grew in both Russian society and its military. Until the 1870s however, many military maps included a variety of ethnic groups such as the Adyghe, Abkhaz, Chechens, Ossetians, and others, while many tribal distinctions among these peoples were specified. While these maps very often showed major deviations, the general trend in Russian imperial cartography was towards a more precise representation of the Caucasus region's ethnic diversity.

A SIGNIFICANT UPTURN IN CAUCASUS ETHNOGRAPHY

Since academic engagement with the Caucasus did not take off immediately with Bronevskij's 1823 efforts, while the growing preoccupation of the Russians with the otherness of the Caucasus had primarily found its manifestation in literature during the conquest of the region and the Russian Empire's expan-

sion towards the East, it was not until the 1850s and, actually to a much greater extent, the reforms of the 1860s that this preoccupation found a new outlet: ethnography. In the 1850s, the proto-Caucasiological studies of the 18th century were still very influential, but the time had come for other academics to point out how heavily outdated they were. Linguist Anton Schiefner (1817–1879) elucidated the deficiencies of mid-19th century Caucasiology and its continued reliance on research conducted by Güldenstädt, Pallas, and others. According to Schiefner (1842: 402; 1863: III), the works of Klaproth and Güldenstädt had nowhere near the quality to allow one to deduce a satisfying picture of the individual languages. In 1867, the first Russian Ethnographic Exposition opened in Moscow, where the exhibits were supposed to reflect the life of the Russian Empire's peoples (Dowler 2001: 3–4). The exposition's president stated that “the study of our native land” was “a necessity for every educated Russian,” while the exhibition was held under the personal patronage of Tsar Aleksandr II himself (Brower 1997: 123). Events like these created an atmosphere of scholarly curiosity, especially about the peoples of the borderlands. Moreover, since language was deemed the core of national identity and consciousness in the 19th century, eventually the languages of the borderlands sparked the interest of imperial academia. The plurality of languages in the Caucasus, unrivaled by any region in the Russian Empire but also scarcely matched by any other part of the world meant that the southern borderlands soon became fascinating to Russian linguists and ethnographers, who were keen to research the various vernacular languages of the region's native peoples.

The growing interest in the peoples of the borderlands combined with experiences from the arduous war in the Caucasus prompted the Russian administration to adopt new approaches. Austin Jersild (2002: 63–65) attributed this new thinking mainly to Viceroy Michail S. Voroncov (1782–1856), whose vision encompassed Orientologist knowledge and the recognition of the empire's diversity as vital aspects that justified Russia's conquest of the Caucasus. Voroncov's Caucasus Viceroyalty, i.e. the decade between 1844 and 1854, became a starting point for flourishing Oriental Studies and especially Caucasiology with its academic center in Tbilisi. The most important step was taken by the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, when it opened a Caucasus Department in 1851, which began to publish issue *Zapiski Kavkazskogo Otdela Imperatorskogo Geografičeskogo Obščestva* [Notes of the Caucasus Department of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society] only one year later. Another publication that greatly enriched Russian Caucasus literature was the newspaper *Kavkaz* [Caucasus], which was established in 1846 at Voroncov's initiative (Halbach 1991: 58).

Research into the Northern Caucasus was not limited to the endeavors of the Caucasus Department of the Russian Geographical Society however, but manifested itself in several other avenues for research as well (Jersild 2002: 66–67). The Caucasus Society of Agriculture, publishing its own notes between the 1850s and the 1870s, sponsored exhibits and a museum on its own. Other important steps in establishing scholarly research in the Caucasus region include the achievements of the Caucasus Statistical Committee, which published *Sbornik statističeskich svedenii o Kavkaze* [Collection of Statistical Information on the Caucasus] and the Caucasus Mountain Administration, which published *Sbornik svedenii o Kavkazskich gorcach* [Collection of Information on the Caucasus Mountaineers] between 1868 and 1881 in ten volumes. Other state-sponsored institutions picked up this tradition in the 1870s and 1880s and contributed to it with their own publications, such as the Caucasus Education District and its *Sbornik materialov dlja opisanija mestnostej i plemen Kavkaza* [Collection of Materials for the Description of Places and Tribes of the Caucasus], or the Main Staff of the Caucasus Military District, publishing *Kavkazskij sbornik* [Caucasus Collection] (Ibid.).

Furthermore, one should stress the increasing importance of not only written documentation, but also another emerging field: visual ethnography. The first photographs were taken in the mid-19th century, coinciding with the greater involvement of Russian ethnography in the Caucasus and its quest for systematization of data about the native population. Like everywhere else in the world, the first daguerreotypes became immensely popular in Russia, as they were displayed in shop-fronts and piqued the interest of the broadest public. Academic interest in this new method of documentation was also considerable, and the first Russian scientific research using photography was conducted already in 1839 (Barchatowa 1993a; Loginov 2008b: 1227–28). The idea of acquiring objective data seemed intriguing to ethnographers, and soon enough the possibility of visually documenting remote regions was discussed.

The first photographs of the Caucasus were taken by Sergej L. Levickij (1819–1898), who joined a research group investigating the Caucasus' mineral springs in 1843 and, as one of the first series of photographic landscapes taken in Russia, made his famous daguerreotypes of mountain vistas around Pjatigorsk and Kislovodsk (Loginov 2008a: 853). Other than Levickij, who went on to focus on portrait photography and achieve fame well beyond the Russian Empire's borders, the first photographers in the Caucasus had graduated from the Military Topography School and were instructed to document landscape, lives and customs of the native population (Saburova 1993: 32–33; Solovyeva 2010: 63). The names of many of these photographers working in the Caucasus

throughout the 1850s and 1860s remain unknown today as they worked within the framework of military interests rather than artistic inspiration. However, the new documentation technique not only served the military's interests but also suited the demands of academia well. Soon enough, one could point to the face behind the lenses capturing the Caucasus, such as to Andrej I. Den'er (1820–1892), Jean (Ivan) Raoult (?–after 1890) and Dmitrij I. Ermakov (1845–1916).

However, it took a few years for photography to become accepted as a distinct discipline in art with its potential considered in Vladimir V. Stasov's 1856 article "Photography and Engraving" [*Fotografija i gravjura*]. He was convinced that photography could be done by anyone and was not capable of producing a real portrait (Saburova 1993: 33–34). Stasov's writings initiated a debate on the relationship between photography and art, and at the technical level, Levickij's improving work soon proved him wrong. Later, in the 1870s, he also acknowledged photography as an individual and distinct form of art. Intensified ethnographic activity in the 1850s foreshadowed a prominent role for photography as a valued means of documentation even earlier, and the works of Nikolaj I. Vtorov (1818–1865) on the peoples in the Voronež province of 1857 and Anton S. Murenko's (1837–1875) photographs of his travels to Chiva and Buchara in today's Uzbekistan were milestones in the visual ethnography of the Russian Empire (Barchatowa 1993b: 42). Also, his album was awarded a silver medal "for beneficial effort" by the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, thereby constituting the first recognition of the scholarly/scientific value of photography in the Russian Empire's periphery (Solovyeva 2011: 36–37).

A boost to acceptance of photography as a more than suitable medium in academia was provided by the famous Ethnographic Exhibition held in Moscow in 1867. The Russian advance or consolidation in Central Asia and the Caucasus coincided with the advance of ethnographic and anthropological photography in scholarship, and at the exhibition photographic portraits of peoples from the Russian Empire were prominently displayed for the first time. In the spirit of the reforms of the 1860s, the Russian public was confronted with something new, for this exhibition was the first occasion at which it was confronted with the plurality of ethnicities and nationalities living with the Russian Empire's borders (Solovyeva 2010: 64–66.; Loginov 2008b: 1229). At an exhibition featuring more than 2,000 photographs of different nationalities, over 300 photographs of the peoples of the Caucasus were displayed, finally giving the wider audience a view into the narrative of Russia expanding its southern borders. However, it took another 35 years for ethnographic photography to be granted a permanent stage to display its works. In 1902, the Ethnography De-

partment of the Russian Museum, which would become today's Russian Museum of Ethnography, was created and contained among its many documents on the cultures and peoples of Central Asia and the Caucasus a collection of roughly 10,000 photographs (Ibid.).

In the meantime, the Caucasus remained a favored region for documentation by ethnographic photography. Among others, Den'er took photos of the Mingrelians and Khevsur, while Raoult's famous *Types* included peoples from the North Caucasus as well as the South Caucasus (Barchatowa 1993b: 43–44). Since cameras were not mobile at the time, these early ethnographic shots were taken in studios where the subjects dressed in their traditional national attire and simulated moments of their everyday lives, thus following the tradition of portrait photography. One may well debate about Karina Solovyeva's (2011: 38) theory that this early photographic interest in the East should not be understood as interest in a colony but rather in documentary accuracy, artistic expression, and high informational content. There cannot, however, be any doubt that these early works surely merit closer attention as they reflect the Russian ethnographic point of view on the Caucasus region; whether one can truly view them as primarily the expression of artistic aestheticism is open to question. Furthermore, these early attempts at ethnographic photography also helped develop a new realistic tradition, which was first on display during the wartime documentation of the clash between the Russian and Ottoman Empires in 1877–1878 (cf. Chapter 5).

While the photographs were not permanently accessible to wider audiences throughout the latter half of the 19th century, the newly-established exhibitions on the history of the Caucasus were. A particular achievement of the local branch of the Geographical Society led to the opening of the Caucasus Museum of Regional Studies at Tbilisi in 1856 (Jersild 2002: 66–67). The museum ultimately became a repository for the work of collectors all over the region, thereby forming the basis for the *Kavkazskij muzej*, reorganized in 1867 by the German scientist Gustav I. Radde (1831–1903). Radde was primarily a naturalist, and in *Ornis Caucasica* (1884) for instance, he studied the bird-life in the Caucasus. This did not interfere with his ethnographic interests, which are best reflected in his 1878 *Die Chew'suren und ihr Land* [The Khevsur and their Lands]. Addressing the question of the purpose of the Russian Empire's imperial expansion, Austin Jersild (2002: 66–67) quoted Friedrich von Lütke [Fëdor P. Litke] of the Geographical Society, who already in 1846 considered the collection of artifacts and information, “although isolated” as “valuable for that very reason, because after they are gathered into a whole they will serve as important material for knowledge of Russia.” The prospect of provincial support in clari-

fyng the imperial purpose greatly suited collectors in St. Petersburg and their imperial imagining of the Caucasus borderlands, while scholars gathered in Tbilisi, using it as their base camp for visits to smaller cities, villages and forts all over the Caucasus.

Another institution that made a great contribution to the Russian scholarly discovery of the Caucasus was established in 1864: the Caucasus Archaeographic Commission. For example, the Commission, under the editorial direction of Adol'f P. Berže, published archival documents from the Caucasus in the multi-volume *Akty Kavkazskoj archeografičeskoj komissii* [Documents of the Caucasus Archaeographic Commission]. However, Berže did not only contribute to the ethnography of the Caucasus region as the chairman of the Caucasus Archaeographic Commission, for his other scholarly posts in the colonial administration included editor of the *Kavkazskij Kalendar'* [Caucasus Calendar], chargé d'affaires of the Caucasus Department of the Geographic Society and director of the public library in Tbilisi (Ibid.: 67). As part of the delegation that brought back knowledge, artifacts and even four mountaineers, namely one representative each of the Kabardians, Chechens, Abkhaz, and Dagestani, to the Third International Congress of Orientologists in St. Petersburg in 1876, Berže was one of the main driving forces in the Russian scholar discovery of the Caucasus region and its peoples. As the name of the Caucasus Archaeographic Commission already implies, many scholars of the time were largely preoccupied with studying the antique Caucasus. According to Jersild (Ibid.: 68), these scholars were obsessed with antiquity, which led to a vision of a “dormant and degraded land long after its fall from grace,” although strongly colored by a specific Russian and imperial tone. He further emphasized the disturbing ambiguity of the excitement by Russian scholars over the discovery of ancient artifacts in the Caucasus region, given the background of large-scale expulsions and destruction of both Caucasus peoples and their traditions (Ibid.). These consequences of the long-lasting war in the Caucasus were at last legitimized by scholarship, as the present was viewed negatively and with suspicion while genuine culture was located in the past. Such a vision came in handy for colonial Russian ambitions in the Caucasus, as it allegedly aimed to rescue a glorious past buried beneath a lackluster present.

Despite all the interest of leading Caucasiologists like Berže and Uslar in the region's ancient heritage, they very much set the tone in contemporary Russian ethnography on the Caucasus and were responsible for several key texts and projects concerning research into the mountaineers. Berže, for instance, was responsible for the essay “Chechnya and the Chechens” [*Čečnja i Čečency*], which was published in Tbilisi in 1859, and according to Jersild (Ibid.: 69) it

very well reflects the general tone of how Russian ethnographers would have preferred the past over a degraded present. In this view, imperial rule and Russian influence could possibly rescue these people from their savagery, mostly since, according to Berže, Islam was a recent event, historically alien to Chechnya and not a distinctive aspect of Chechen ethnic identity such as Chechen customary law, the *adat*. Berže described the *adat* as a historically grown and indigenous cultural Chechen practice in contrast to with the foreign *sharia*, which like other Muslim traditions threatened the genuine customs of the Chechen people (Ibid.). Michael Kemper (2005: 148) added that the research on the *adat* was driven by the Russian ambitions to incorporate the Caucasus peoples into Russian structures and to push *sharia* from the region in order to reduce the power of local Muslim movements and leaders such as Imam Šamil'. Thus, their attributed primitivism steeped customary law was not considered entirely negative, since it at least included an indigenous facet superior to foreign influences like Islam. According to Jersild (2002: 69), the basis and focus of the Russian scholarly endeavors were therefore research into cultural practices that were believed to be rooted in a distant past rather than research into recent developments. Subsequently, these scholars promoted a solution that would raise their subjects from the status of savagery or at least semi-savagery to civilization and citizenship by guiding them and by exposing them to educated peoples.

The reforms of the 1860s, with the establishment of schools for the minorities and the general increased access to the Empire's higher educational institutions by *inorodcy* also brought representatives of Russia's smaller nationalities into academia (Tolz 2011: 114–16). A significant contribution to this development was made by Russian Oriental Studies and ethnography, whose scholars began to work with *inorodcy* as research assistants and informants in their fieldwork in the respective borderlands. In Russia, the first systematic use of *inorodcy* in a scholarly project was probably Pëtr K. Uslar's ambition to create alphabets for the vernacular languages of the Caucasus region in the 1860s and 1870s. While his assistants and guides often became teachers in the new schools set up after the empire's reforms of the 1860s, their names were neither mentioned in the works of ethnographers nor did they become a part of Russia's academic world (Ibid.). This changed again only in the 1880s, when representatives of Russia's minorities were able to start publishing in major Russian periodicals and thereby setting into motion the process that would transform them from unknown assistants into scholars; which continued far into the 20th century.

Pëtr K. Uslar is rightfully considered one of the most important 19th-century Russian linguists and ethnographers specializing in the Caucasus region. He

served in the military in Dagestan during the 1830s, and returned to the empire's southern borderlands in the 1850s as a member of the Caucasus Department of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, where he then spent most of his life, committed to the research into the indigenous population and especially their vernacular languages. The local languages had become the center of interest for Russian scholars of the Caucasus Department and, since the vast majority of the mountaineers were illiterate, they had yet to be transcribed. UsLAR (1870: 28–29) thereby contested the opinion of the “extreme poverty of these languages,” which could be held only by “people, who have no idea whatsoever” and countered that “these languages, on the contrary, are incredibly rich in their grammatical forms, which make it possible to express the most subtle, nuanced ideas.” UsLAR’s ambition was to equip the peoples of the North Caucasus with their own written languages, and while he was not the first linguist to attempt this, he was certainly the most successful in the 19th century. The basis for the success of his research was his understanding that it would not be enough to use the Russian alphabet, which his predecessors were reluctant to modify, but rather adapt it to the needs of the phonetically diverse languages of the Caucasus (Jersild 2002: 81–82). UsLAR’s “new” alphabet was based on the Cyrillic script but included several additions in order to be able to accommodate the peculiarities of the mountaineer languages. The 1860s saw UsLAR working on Abkhaz, Chechen, Avar, Lak, Dargin [Chjurkilskij jazyk], Lezgian [Kjurinskij jazyk], and other languages of the region, while his alphabets were only published posthumously.⁵ UsLAR’s alphabets, developed to transcribe the Caucasus languages, were assumed by other Russian scholars and institutions, such as the Society for the Restoration of Orthodoxy but also by some mountaineers such as the Ossetians, who used it to publish collected Ossetian folk tales and proverbs (Jersild 2002: 83–84). UsLAR’s extensive elaborations of the respective languages include grammar studies, texts in the original with Russian translations and comments, as well as the first provisional dictionaries, providing Russian translations to a basic vocabulary in the vernacular language of the studies. With UsLAR’s endeavors, Russian Caucasiologists eventually took the first steps

⁵ Pëtr K. UsLAR (1887): *Ètnografija Kavkaza. Jazykoznanie. I. Abchazskij jazyk*. Tiflis: Izdanie upravlenija Kavkazskago učebnago okruga; Pëtr K. UsLAR (1888): *Ètnografija Kavkaza. Jazykoznanie. II. Čečenskij jazyk*. Tiflis: Izdanie upravlenija Kavkazskago učebnago okruga; Pëtr K. UsLAR (1889): *Ètnografija Kavkaza. Jazykoznanie. III. Avarskij jazyk*. Tiflis: Izdanie upravlenija Kavkazskago učebnago okruga; Pëtr K. UsLAR (1890): *Ètnografija Kavkaza. Jazykoznanie. IV. Lakskij jazyk*. Tiflis: Izdanie upravlenija Kavkazskago učebnago okruga; Pëtr K. UsLAR (1892): *Ètnografija Kavkaza. Jazykoznanie. V. Chjurkilinskij jazyk*. Tiflis: Izdanie upravlenija Kavkazskago učebnago okruga; Pëtr K. UsLAR (1896): *Ètnografija Kavkaza. Jazykoznanie. VI. Kjurinskij jazyk*. Tiflis: Izdanie upravlenija Kavkazskago učebnago okruga; Pëtr K. UsLAR (1979): *Ètnografija Kavkaza. Jazykoznanie. VI. Tabasaranskij jazyk*. Tiflis: Mecnereba.

toward their aim to equip the mountaineers with written versions of their spoken vernacular languages.

NAMING AND FRAMING THE CAUCASUS PEOPLES

The intentions of the Russian ethnographers seem noble at a first glance: they sought to include the “mountaineers” in their work and Uslar in particular intended to develop alphabets for the great variety of languages spoken in the region rather than enforcing linguistic Russification. Uslar also attacked the romantic Caucasus concept and broached the issue of the real tension between the intellectual elite and the general population, complaining that the Romantic images spread by Bestužev-Marlinskij’s *Ammalat-Bek* simply could not be dislodged from the minds of most Russians (Layton 1994: 253). However, it has to be clear that the research conducted by ethnographers like Berže, Uslar and others, who were all members of St. Petersburg’s Imperial Academy of Sciences, proceeded in an imperial scholarly network where knowledge and authority were closely interwoven and where scholars also perpetuated images of their study subjects. Their support of schooling the Russian Empire’s minorities in the vernacular languages was therefore not quite motivated by the noble and idealistic desire to foster literacy among them, but rather often stemmed from other considerations. For example, Wayne Dowler (2001: 38–39) stated that Vasilij V. Grigor’ev’s support for schooling the nomads of the Kazakh steppe in their own languages was underpinned by his belief that it would prevent their Tatarization and Islamization, i.e., the advance of “Tatar cultural imperialism.” Tolz (2011: 36–37) believed the long-term goal of Grigor’ev and Il’minskij in teaching the minorities in their vernacular languages was to eventually Christianize and Russify them. Jersild (2002: 88) attributed chauvinistic and Russo-centric ideas to the ethnographers, and viewed the purpose of fostering mountaineer literacy as a way to facilitate their access to the literature of Russia. However, from both the imperialist standpoint and that of the culturally dominant Russian opposition, the *status quo* of minorities lacking literacy in their vernacular languages, particularly widespread in the Caucasus, favored assimilation plans.

For the Caucasus, the words of geographer Peter von Köppen [Pëtr I. Këppen] (1793–1864) (1860: 9) are symptomatic: “The subjugation of the Daghestan latterly has let the civilized world look at the Caucasus, to which—thanks to the courage and insistence of Russian warriors—access gets easier from year to year.” The nomination strategies resulted in a very ambivalent and therefore inconsistent pattern. On the one hand, ethnographic studies do indicate ethnic

groups and subgroups with a previously unknown precision, but on the other hand, one can notice a certain willful ignorance when reading that the entire Western half of the Caucasus was, besides the Adyghe, inhabited by “a few unimportant peoples” (Berže 1866: V) or that the “dialect of the Kistinian language is a coarse and unimportant language” (Berže 1860: 178). It has to be clear that the precision in distinguishing between smaller ethnic groups and their subgroups was far from complete, and Christian Dettmering (2011: 316) illustrated this very well using the example of the Ingush, whom Berže described as one of the many Chechen tribes despite already observing differences between the Chechen and Ingush languages. However, the progress from the knowledge of the 1820s and the ideas dominating Romantic poetry was enormous.

A look at the nomination strategies employed by ethnographers reveals that Russian awareness of ethnic diversity in the Caucasus had increased significantly. Besides all-encompassing denominators such as *gorcy* [mountaineers], *tuzemcy* or *urożency* [natives], one can find geographical specifications such as *adygskie narody* [Adyghe peoples], *Dagestanskie gorcy*, *trans-* or *zakubancy*, but most of the time ethnographers tried to be precise in their descriptions of the peoples they studied. Attempts at precise descriptions were naturally somewhat hampered by the very scant knowledge upon which they could already rely. Berže spoke of Svanetian as a “completely unknown language and that it is difficult to determine the tribe to which they actually belong” (Berže 1860: 168), while his division of all Caucasus peoples into seven groups, speaking dissimilar languages, namely Kartvelian, Abkhaz, Circassian, Ossetian, Ubykh, Lezgian and Chechen (ibid.: 165), can obviously only be considered the very beginning of comparative linguistics in the Caucasus region. Schiefner (1871: 1) called the Dargin language a “dialect of a yet unnamed language.” Uslar (1889: 5) picked this up and explained that his designation “Avar language” would encompass all dialects with the same root, but still precluding him, or others, from speaking of all natives as Avars, comparing the case to the Genevans, who spoke French but were not French.

However, it also has to be clear that in the decades from the 1850s to the 1870s one cannot expect a high level of ethnic or national consciousness among the peoples of the (North) Caucasus. Settlement patterns and tribal structures dominated social organization amongst the Caucasus peoples and identity was primarily sought in and focused on the village, region or clan to which one belonged. Regionalisms were strong everywhere, including Georgia, which was reflected quite well in the ethnographic studies, for the lines between naming ethnic groups as pre-national categories or regional affiliations such as Mtiule-

tians or Gurians were rather vague. Anton Schiefner even avoided speaking of any peoples and mostly referred solely to languages. It is interesting to note that nomination strategies do not contain any wholesale pejoratives. Uslar (1890: 34), writing to Schiefner that he was having “extreme difficulties being compelled a talk to these savages,” was certainly the exception to material that was otherwise very neutrally written.

This, however, does not mean that these ethnographic studies were not rich in affirming and enforcing pejorative stereotypes. What was not reflected in naming can be seen more clearly in attribution. The tone in early ethnography on the Caucasus was certainly set by Semën Bronevskij (1823: 34), who said of the Caucasus natives that “war is a matter of habit and the way of life of all of these peoples.” The attribution of theft and brigandage as deeply-rooted traits in mountain societies was not exclusively connected to resistance in the Caucasus War or the Muslim faith. Berže (1857: 273) wrote of the Samurzakanians that they were not only Christians, but also, despite their bellicose character, completely submissive, even though they had not yet broken with the customs of theft and banditry. The attribution of bellicose character can be considered an important constant in Russian depictions of the Caucasus peoples. For Berže “the Akhchipsou distinguish themselves by their belligerent spirit” (Ibid.: 274), the Ajbuga were “a small society of brigands” (Ibid.), the Šežire “uniformly wild, predatory and poor” (Berže 1860: 168), the Saše “altogether a militant people” (Ibid.: 175), the Machoševcy “militant and devoted to banditry” (Ibid.: 174), the Ičkerincy “predatory and militant” (Ibid.: 180), the Lezgians “blood-thirsty, neighbored by other predatory tribes” (Ibid.: 181) and the Auchovcy had “a predatory and reckless spirit” (Ibid.). As if these attributions of a bellicose and plundering character were not enough, Berže’s depiction of the Chechens speaks for itself:

The Chechens are more alien to civilization than all other mountain peoples and are close to barbarism; in their life the animal customs of a semi-wild people prevail, leaning to banditry, and murder is developed to a high degree among them and this excludes any possibility of trade and other peaceful occupations. Incidentally, there are also exceptions here: The dwellers of localities which gradually come within the borders of our possessions or border the same, realize the irresistible influence of a pleasant civilization and distinguish themselves in more peaceful customs than their distant tribal comrades. (Ibid.: 180)

Christian Dettmering (2014: 345–46) rightfully stressed that no Russian ethnographer ever seemed to distinguish between traditional banditry—an integral part of life and well defined by local customs and rules, where the youth had to prove their bravery by raiding neighbors—and looting tactics in war. When not

directly attributing wildness and thievery to them, Berže did not hesitate to speak of peoples who did “not know any civil order” (Berže 1868: XIV), of the Ubykh “not having an actual government and searching, fostering a deep-seated hatred against us, to keep the hostility of other mountaineers against the Russians upright” (Berže 1860: 174), something they had in common with the Kabardians, also “nurturing concealed but impotent hatred” (Ibid.: 172). Berže was certainly the most productive in attributing to the Caucasus peoples a bellicose and predatory character, but Radde (1878: 77) also implied that the Khevsur were “no tamed people” and Uslar (1870: 1) even wrote: “In the present time, one has to imagine the *gorcy* in the sense of an awakening from a frightening dream, in the sense of a recovery from a severe illness.” On the other hand, the latter wrote about banditry as a phenomenon from the past, asserting that, “it doesn’t happen more often in Dagestan than in today’s Moscow” (Ibid.).

The general attributive tone was certainly very negative. However, from time to time it was counterbalanced by attributions of bravery, modesty and physical strength or beauty. According to Berže (1860: 176–77), the Digor people were “endowed by nature with physical beauty, high stature, providential spiritual capacity and eloquence; they are proud, stay true to their word and oath [...] In general they are shapely, strong and versatile, displaying a bold and noble character.” He then elaborated that one could not say the same of their fellow tribes, although it should be understood that there were individual exceptions. Uslar (1890: 8) had a similar description for the Arči people, whom he described as being “very tall, handsome, blonde with aquiline noses and long faces.” Radde’s image of the Khevsur accorded them with “a high degree of wildness, a shy expression and a self-confident posture” (Radde 1878: 71) and also as “loyal to the government and obedient” (Ibid.: 64–65). Other positive attributes stem from the Russian perception of some people being more loyal to the Russian government than others. Dettmering (2014: 346–47) demonstrated this with the example of the Ingush, who were partly juxtaposed with the Chechens and declared an exception to the rule that mountaineers were all bandits. Perceived as loyal to the government and therefore positively displayed were Georgia’s pre-dominantly Christian groups such as the Tuš and Khevsur, whom Berže (1860: 181) called “a reliable bulwark of Kakheti and partly of the Georgian Military Highway,” “renowned due to their manly boldness and exemplary bravery” and even “heroes in the full meaning of the word.” Furthermore, the Ossetians are equally displayed as peaceful and calm as they wouldn’t participate in the Murid War and would not side with the “desperate Sunni warriors” (Ibid.: 177). So even though negative attributions by far outweighed the positive images of the Caucasus peoples, from time to time one can find the famous

narrative of the “noble savage,” so dominant in Russia’s literary Caucasus, shining through.

While nomination and attribution strategies provide good insight into the depiction of the Caucasus peoples in imperial ethnography, the analysis of argumentation strategies seems to be even more fruitful. One can clearly see Berže’s affinity for imperial Russian narratives when looking at his depiction of the genocide in the Western Caucasus and the related emigration (*Muhajirism*) to the Ottoman Empire. Berže cynically tried to justify the slaughter and the mass expulsions that went hand in hand with the Russian advance into the Western Caucasus. Berže, of course, never used terms like expulsion, but rather referred to it as “relocation” (Berže 1866: X; XX) and “emigration” (Ibid.: XXI), first and foremost aiming to imply the allegedly voluntary character of the many people leaving what had become Russian territories. He designed a counter-narrative to genocidal warfare and wrote of “the relocation’s unforeseeable dimensions” and that “the Russian government would have tried everything to guarantee the mountaineers’ transfer to Turkey by providing financial support to the poorest, chartering merchant vessels, assigned warships to ferry them over [...] and more” (Ibid.: XX). The great number of deceased could, according to Berže (Ibid.: XXI), be explained by famine and epidemics on the one hand and with the unwillingness of the mountaineers themselves to cooperate, as they allegedly preferred the harsh life of nomads, from which the Russians could not have saved them. In the end, the ethnographer did realize that the Western Caucasus was about to be almost entirely depopulated but cynically concluded that relocation would not have “major consequences in the political-economic respect” as “these peoples would not have guaranteed steady economic development” and even more cynically only regretted the—“from a scientific point of view—irrecoverable gap” it left behind.

Closely related to the genocide counter-narrative is the depiction of how the complete submission of the Caucasus had supposedly occurred. Never does one find a word on Russian aggression or the Russian Empire forcefully subjugating the Caucasus peoples. The latter always play the aggressive role, such as when the Russians fortified their position on the Kuban River at the end of the 18th century. According to Berže (Ibid.), it was the mountaineers who “launched a continuous series of raids and plunder while making forays into our territory.” However, he also attested to the fairly large portion of the Transkubanians who wanted peace and healthy relations with the Russians (Ibid.: XIII), serving the narrative of fragmentation among the Caucasus peoples. The warfare could only end when they finally “submitted to General Ermolov” and when they “proclaimed fealty to our government” (Berže 1857: 275)—the Russian Empire

obviously doing the Caucasus peoples a favor, something valid for Georgia as well, which Russia “took under its patronage” (Ibid.: 267). Berže (1866: XV) neglected the intentional genocidal warfare waged by the Russians and declared that the Russian government “had never aimed to exterminate the mountain peoples nor deprive them of the lands of the imperial state.” He did not elaborate on what alternative plans the Russians had foreseen for the native population, but just the fact that called the territories in the West Caucasus “lands of the imperial state,” as though they had not just been conquered, spoke for itself.

There is no doubt that the then prevailing narratives about the ancient heritage of the Caucasus peoples played a major role in how Russian ethnographers attempted to situate the region’s ethnic groups in their understanding of history. Almost every study contained an attempt to create a tie with legendary empires from Antiquity, depicting them as the ancestors of the peoples of the 19th century. In 1857, Berže started his “A short review of the mountain tribes in the Caucasus” [*Kratkij obzor gorskich plemen na Kavkaze*] about the Medes, the Sarmatians and the Alans (Berže 1857: 267) and continued to look for the ancestors of the Ossetians (Berže 1860: 176) and the Lezgians (Ibid.: 181–82) in “The mountain tribes of the Caucasus” [*Die Bergvölker des Kaukasus*]. However, the opposite may have also been the intention of ethnographers, namely by questioning a people’s claim to be the natives in a certain territory. An example is Berže’s (Ibid.: 166) conclusion that with the Abkhaz, there can be hardly any local traditions or historical data available to prove their continuous habitation in the Northwestern Caucasus.

Digging in ancient history of these peoples also served another purpose: to suggest their original belonging to the Christian world. Anton Schiefner wrote about the Udis as being originally Christian and that they could only have converted to Islam during the course of the 18th century (Schiefner 1863: 4–5). Berže (1860: 179) wrote of “the Chechens as Christians based on the traditions prevalent among them” and that “Islam had not made inroads among them until the beginning of the last century,” implying that Islam was a recent, 18th-century phenomenon, and also that traces of Christianity could still be found in their culture or language, such as for instance the Chechen language’s vocabulary for the days of the week deriving from the Georgian. He also emphasized that Abkhaz Christianization had already taken place in the 6th century (Ibid.: 166) while “the initial introduction of the Muslim faith among the Circassians dates back a short time; even now it cannot put down roots” (Ibid.: 171), calling the Muslim religious leaders “lying apostles” (Ibid.).

Another important narrative in Russian endeavors to subjugate the North Caucasus was the region’s socio-political fragmentation. Berže wrote that nei-

ther the Circassians nor the peoples of the Western Caucasus in general ever constituted a coherent political entity (Berže 1866: X). He went on to describe “every single personality as possessed of wanton freedom and capriciousness,” which is why the individual peoples were “always quarreling and feuding among themselves” and could “never constitute an independent political body” (Ibid.: XII). At the linguistic level, Uslar (1890: 25) did not hesitate to approve, seeing in the Avar word *čan* [beast] the roots for the local denotation *čačan* for the Chechens, thereby believing that this proved that all mountain peoples hated each other. Uslar (1889: 3) also attested to the opposite, that the Chechens “consider themselves nobler than the Avars.” However, not only was the North Caucasus in its entirety and its peoples in their mutual relations described as fragmented, but so too are the individual peoples in their overall social and leadership structures. The Samurzakanians are described as “so weak in their authority, they cannot eradicate unrest and inner discord,” while discord, confusion, and banditry were ever-present in Abkhazia, where the local ruler could only pacify them by force of arms (Berže 1860: 167). The “bellicose Šapsugs” did not have any “inner administration and organization,” so even when the Ottomans tried to introduce the *sharia* to them, they were doomed to fail (Ibid.: 173).

Nomination strategies for foreign influences can be put on the same level as nomination strategies for the Ottoman Empire, which is mostly referred to as “Turkey” or “the Turks” and only in a few cases equated with its political leadership, i.e. “the Sultan.” The Ottoman Empire is depicted as an agitator, stirring up unrest among the peoples of the Caucasus. Berže furthermore wrote:

Despite all Russian efforts, relations between the Transkubanian mountain peoples and Turkey did not cease: The Turks supplied the mountaineers with some mass consumption goods and in return received slaves, especially women, filling their harems. They thereby amplified fanaticism and hatred against the Russians (Berže 1866: XIII).

Berže however also emphasized that the Caucasus peoples never fully submitted to the Ottomans and that the latter could maintain their position only along the coastline of the Black Sea, as they had never been able to advance into the hinterland—the same problem long confronting the Russians (Ibid.: XII). He also saw a connection between the resistance of the Caucasus peoples and the Russo-Ottoman Wars of the 19th century and concluded that the Oriental, i.e. Crimean War had given the Ottoman Empire the more reason to exert greater influence on the mountain peoples (Ibid.: XIV). The latter again are described as willing to follow whatever external influence helped them avoid surrendering to the Russian Empire. According to Berže, all mountain peoples would have

accepted the terms of surrender if it had not been for the constant letters and proclamations by foreign powers, agitating them and raising their hopes in foreign aid arriving soon (Ibid.: XIX). He particularly named the Circassians, who had been “stirred up by the Porte,” who rendered “homage to Turkey” and who reacted to the Russian demand of submission and fealty with “constant pillage, brigandage and devastating raids on peaceful farmers settled by us in that area” (Berže 1860: 170). The narrative of the interfering Ottoman Empire was therefore closely intertwined with that of the Caucasus peoples always willing to go behind Russia’s back if given the possibility.

One can hardly separate the arguments concerning the Ottoman Empire and the influence of Islam on the Caucasus peoples. However, the latter is particularly intriguing when considering Uslar’s 1870 essay “On the spread of literacy among the mountaineers” [*O rasprostraneni gramotnosti među gorcami*]. In his ambition to introduce individual alphabets for the Caucasus languages, Uslar assumed anti-Muslim rhetoric, however not addressing Islam *per se* but concentrating on the fight against Arabic. While initially not specifying either Islam or Arabic, he clearly pointed to them when arguing that the consequences of the political change should be the “elimination of the influence of a hostile civilization” and considering the fight against the other civilization’s language easier as it was foreign to the people (Uslar 1870: 2–3). Condemning the fact that education was available to every mountaineer boy but only in Arabic language and only in order to read and understand the Qur’an—not independently, Uslar added, but just like Muḥammad’s first disciples 1,000 years before—his harangue culminated with the point that “the Arabic language comprises in itself all hostile elements in Dagestan” and that the Qur’an would call for irreconcilable war against non-believers (Ibid.: 3–4). In a letter to fellow linguist Schiefner, he furthermore wrote about widespread conspiracies stemming from Qur’anic verses, although not actually providing any detail as to what type of conspiracies (1890: 21). Uslar’s hostility to the Arabic language found approval in the Caucasus administration, which turned down suggestions of promoting the advantages of Russian rule in an Arabic-language newspaper (Dettmering 2014: 357–58).

Despite Uslar’s strong condemnation of the influence of Arabic, hence Islam, in the Caucasus and despite his considerable agitation against its spiritual leadership, he also clearly stated that he did not see proselytism as their business and that he would rather focus on promoting the Russian than Christian language, i.e. that he wanted to focus on establishing Russian-language instead of Arabic-language schools rather than Christian in place of Muslim schools (Uslar 1870: 16). It is clear that the two purposes cannot really be separated, but

in a letter to Anton Schiefner, he again emphasized not wanting to get caught up in missionary work:

So far, I have strongly avoided translations of prayers into the mountain languages, as it would stir up suspicions of religious proselytism among the natives. In this respect, their apprehension goes so far, that many look obliquely at the letter *h*, because there is a cross on its top (Uslar 1890: 40–41).

Radde's (1878: 117) description of the role of the administration in comparison to the church underlines that the ethnographers understood their work as part of a civilizing rather than proselytizing mission: "It almost seems to me that here the court, because it has more weight and proceeds more strictly, guides the wild people far more successfully on their very first path to civilization than the proselytizing church, whose leniency keeps the Khevsur indifferent [...]"

In contrast to Uslar, Schiefner was not in direct contact with the peoples he described. His 1856 "Essay on the Tuš language" [*Versuch über die Thusch-Sprache*], for instance, is based on materials by Marie-Félicité Brosset, brought from his fieldwork to the Imperial Academy of Sciences and stored in its Asiatic Museum. He often complained about this lack of contact in his introductions, but precisely these complaints provide some insight into his understanding of the native population's role in their ethnographic work, as he wrote in the introduction to "An essay on the language of the Udis" [*Versuch über die Sprache der Uden*] that he hoped to be able to "use an indigenous Udi" (Schiefner 1863: 2), degrading the native population to a mere instrument of his work. The result of Schiefner's distance from the field was that he incorporated virtually no ethnographic information in his linguistic analysis, as he concentrated very much on the structure of the Caucasus peoples' grammar and avoided getting mired in socio-political remarks, very much in contrast to his famous colleague Pëtr Uslar, who regularly reported his impressions to Schiefner in extensive letters. Another scholar very much in contact with the peoples he aimed to describe was Gustav Radde, but his elaborations are also a proof of the dubious "scientific" approaches the 19th century also entailed, as Radde (1878: 78) did not hesitate to express his wish for craniological and bodily measurements for the Khevsur.

Interesting in that regard are the endeavors to derive the endo- and exonyms of the people, often hinting at some pejorative origin. Schiefner (1872: 1) wrote that the Avars were not familiar with their exonym but continued to analyze the appellation's Turkish origin, allegedly meaning unsettled, or vagrant. Uslar also had his own thoughts on the Caucasus names and appellations. He considered them quite unsatisfactory for all peoples being discussed and elaborated how the exonym "Lezgian" could have allegedly derived from the translation of the

word “bandit,” although from which language was not clear, and thought that the theory of it stemming from Arabic, meaning “not very clean” or “unclean” would make more sense, as the mountaineers had long resisted Islam (Uslar 1889: 4; Uslar 1890: 25). Uslar concluded that Caucasus ethnography would have profited a great deal if one would refer to the names peoples used for themselves, but in the end decided to refrain from doing so, for he believed that even if he had used their endonyms they would not have become commonly used and only cause confusion (Uslar 1890: 2). Furthermore, he also stated that one should not believe the natives’ stories about the local languages and that one could only find the truth by direct studies (Ibid.). Schiefner (1871: 4), despite having no experience in the field, agreed with Uslar and called the natives “poor judges in terms of comparative linguistics.”

So if such little credence was given to the point of view of its peoples, how can one interpret the ambitions of Russian ethnographers to learn more about the Caucasus region? First and foremost, these scholarly endeavors have to be understood in the context of the Russian Empire’s academic structure. In service of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, Russian ethnographers must be considered part of a system which primarily aimed at incorporating its newly acquired territories, where it was only useful to know more about its population. Ethnographers were therefore already influenced by a certain image of the Caucasus region which had been established throughout the first half of the 19th century or even earlier. This, however, does not mean that scholars like Berže and Uslar only rehashed existing narratives. In fact, Russian ethnography did its fair share to develop the Caucasus discourse and influence it significantly.

Until the latter half of the 19th century, the field of Caucasiology was hardly developed, and early Russian descriptions of the peoples of the Caucasus region were based on short and superficial contacts and resulted in highly inaccurate accounts of the region’s ethnic and linguistic diversity. Scientific endeavors to adequately map and describe the region moved away from individual efforts only gradually, and Oriental Studies and thereby also Caucasiology were institutionalized in the Russian Empire step by step. This was mostly a response on its imperial expansion and tightening grip on the Caucasus, and it was the long and demanding Caucasus War that brought an intensification of Russian research into the Caucasus because the geopolitical situation required the Empire to become more acquainted with the region’s resisting peoples. What followed was a first boom in publications, foundations of new organizations dealing with the Caucasus, as well as a first wave of visualizing the Caucasus region.

Until the end of the Caucasus War in 1864, Russian endeavors to collect precise ethnographic descriptions had only modest success, but its outcomes can and should be considered within a framework of questions related to representation and authority. When addressing the questions posed at the very beginning, one can say that the nomination strategies were fairly neutral and do reflect increasing Russian knowledge of its southern borderlands. On a predicative level however, the descriptions were far from neutral and draw an image of the Caucasus peoples as savages, whose main attributed characteristics are ‘wild,’ ‘bellicose,’ ‘predatory’ and so forth. Far from romanticizing the native population, the Caucasus peoples were depicted as semi-civilized and culturally inferior to the Russians able to study them—a conclusion that comports with Yuri Slezkine’s (1994: 125) analysis of relations between Russia and the Siberian “small peoples of the North.”

Of the highest interest are certainly the arguments employed. The justification for forced migration, the othering of the Ottoman Empire and the Arabic language as well as the narrative of the fragmented Caucasus have to be understood in the framework of the Russian Empire’s ambition to subdue the region as a component of its own civilizing mission. In this regard, ethnographic studies effectively served the concept of legitimation on a civilizing rather than proselytizing level. As a result, the othering of the Caucasus native population was scarcely achieved by stressing denominational differences or the role of Islam in the region. Ethnography primarily helped the Russian Empire present itself as both the restorer and bearer of true culture, implying that the Caucasus peoples needed their Russian masters to do just that. These Russian representations of the Caucasus were backed by their imperial authority and therefore not only had widespread implications but also proved to be quite durable. Thus, stereotypical descriptions were well established even in the Russian academic discourse of 19th century ethnography. While these stereotypes were certainly subject to alterations in changing sociopolitical frameworks, they illustrate how imperial ethnography did its fair share to make sure that Russia’s political annexation of the North Caucasus did not go hand in hand with the immediate integration of its new citizens into a Russian common place but rather reinforced their status as the “Other.” It also shows the affinity of ethnographer to Russian imperial academia, in which they created, established, and perpetuated stereotypical descriptions and narratives about the region’s native population, thus affirming Russian authority over the Caucasus.

Only at the turn of the 20th century and against the backdrop of an intellectual and cultural shift in the two preceding decades did these considerations eventually vanish, to be replaced by the idea that fostering non-Russian nationalism

amongst the Russian Empire's minorities could help strengthen or at least preserve the multi-ethnic state at a time when imperial states were threatened by sub-state nationalisms (Tolz 2011: 43–46). Until then, ethnography did not challenge the Russian Empire's cultural hierarchies and certainly not the primacy of Russian culture over the frontier's smaller peoples. The next major test for the ideological background of Russian representations of the Caucasus and its inhabitants came at the end of the 1870s, when the highly ideologized war against the Ottoman Empire kept the empire's public wondering about the fortunes of their own troops at the frontlines in Southeastern Europe and the Caucasus.

5 FRAMING THE RUSSO-OTTOMAN WAR OF 1877–1878

“It’s war! War has been declared!” Such were the shouts we heard two weeks ago. [...] Everyone senses that something decisive has begun, that there is somehow going to be a resolution of an issue from the past—a long, drawn-out issue from the past—and that a step is being taken toward something quite new, toward something that means a sharp break with the past, that will renew and resurrect the thins of the past for a new life and ... that it is Russia who is taking this step (Dostoevsky 1994b: 929)!

In *A Writer’s Diary* [*Dnevnik pisatelja*], Fëdor M. Dostoevskij (1821–1881) found his ideal platform to comment on social and political issues, thereby forcefully influencing the Russian Empire’s public opinion. Initially the famous writer’s diary began as a column in the political and literary magazine *Graždanin* [The Citizen], established in 1872 and (co-)edited by Prince Vladimir P. Meščerskij (1839–1914)—a name that was gaining considerable importance with respect to Russian reports on the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. As the magazine’s editors, Meščerskij and Dostoevskij found themselves in frequent disagreements, with the latter eventually resigning after little more than a year. But by 1876, Dostoevskij was able to establish it as his own monthly publication, with himself being the sole contributor, editor and publisher. In 1876, each issue initially had a circulation of 2,000 copies, though some required one or two reprints. A year later, each issue had a print-run of 3,000 copies for subscribers and another 3,000 for retail—these numbers were quite extraordinary, given that periodicals such as *Delo* [The Cause] did not exceed 5,500 copies and the most popular magazine of the 1870s, *Otečestvennye zapiski* [Notes of the Fatherland], had about 8,100 subscribers (Vassena 2007: 95–96). One reason for the wide readership of his diary was certainly the low price, whereby Dostoevskij intended to reach a wider audience, including students and the unemployed. A one-year subscription to *A Writer’s Diary* cost two rubles, i.e. less than a seventh of what one had to pay for *Otečestvennye zapiski* (Ibid.: 98–99).

The diary reflects the enormous range of his interests and opinions, included in both his fictional and non-fictional texts. Historical observations and predictions play prominent roles in Dostoevskij’s diary and for the years from 1876 to 1878 large sections were devoted to the so-called Eastern Question and the Russo-Ottoman War as soon as it broke out in April 1877. The declaration of war, strongly driven by pan-Slav ambitions, was welcomed by Dostoevskij and an

oft-cited (cf., for instance Lantz 2004: xxxi; Pamuk 2006: 124–25) anecdote comes from the notes of the writer's wife, who said that when he learned about it, he immediately took his family to St. Petersburg's Kazan' Cathedral and spent half an hour in prayer (Dostoevskaja 1981: 321). For Dostoevskij, pan-Slavism had to be understood as a moral obligation for the Russian Empire and its people rather than a political ambition. For him, Russia was supposed to "illuminate the world with a great, selfless, and pure idea; to realize and ultimately create a great and mighty organism of a brotherly union of peoples" (Dostoevsky 1994b: 1204). Even though this same passage goes on to say that this idea should not be achieved "by the sword, but by conviction, example, love, selflessness, and light" (Ibid.), Dostoevskij at other opportunities also expressed his conviction that war should be an option for the Russian Empire to solve the Eastern Question:

We also need this war for ourselves; we rise up not only for our "brother Slavs" who have been suffering at the hands of the Turks but for our own salvation as well: war will clear the air we breathe and in which we have been suffocating, helplessly decaying within our narrow spiritual horizons (Dostoevsky 1994b: 930).

Since his writings were enormously popular at the time, he was able to reach a wide readership and disseminate the "heavily apocalyptic overtones" of his understanding of the war as a fateful moment in history (Lantz 2004: 370). While Dostoevskij relied on his writings to express his opinion about his idea of the Russian Empire's policy in Southeastern Europe, other public figures became active in other ways. The poet and publicist Ivan Aksakov (1823–1886) became chairman of the Moscow Slavic Benevolent Committee in 1875 and did not hesitate to use his position to lobby for a more active Russian role in Southeastern Europe. As another strong advocate of pan-Slavism, he also led a campaign to raise money to send Russian volunteers to join the Serbs in their struggle against Ottoman rule (Lantz 2004: 8). Furthermore, artists like Vasilij Vereščagin or Pavel Kovalevskij actively participated in the war and documented actions at the frontlines in their paintings.

All of these famous public figures did their part to make the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 an omnipresent facet of the Russian Empire's public sphere during the war years and beyond, giving it time to reflect upon its stance on Europe, as for instance in Dostoevskij's (1994b: 830) famous "We are but useless wretches in Europe," and upon the values in which they imagined the Russian Empire was rooted. These reflections subsequently influenced the position in which the Caucasus found itself: between the two opponents on the battlefield. On the one hand, the different parts of the Caucasus had now been part of

the Russian Empire for at least thirteen years, but on the other the Muslim majority of the region's native population found itself on the wrong side of the othering process of the war which increasingly placed the Christian-Muslim dichotomy in the forefront of the ideological interpretation of political ambitions. Again, Dostoevskij's writings delivered the message to his readership about how to understand the reasons for the war in the first place.

But one in many thousands, perhaps, had happened to hear anything about some Serbs, Montenegrins and Bulgarians over there who shared our Orthodox faith. Yet our People, almost entirely or in their overwhelming majority, have heard and know that there are Orthodox Christians under the Mohammedan yoke, that they suffer and are tormented [...] (Dostoevsky 1994b: 1090).

This citation also serves as an example that the lion's share of public attention was directed to the frontlines in the Balkans, with the Caucasus being a mere footnote. This chapter will help shed light on the role, perception, and interpretation of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 inside the Russian Empire, and it will emphasize the implications for the Caucasus itself. The first sub-chapter will provide insight into the ideological connotations of the war and how it assumed such an important role for the parties involved beyond the war's end in 1878, showing why it makes perfect sense to address the war when analyzing the Russian othering of the Caucasus and/or Islam. The second part will focus on the Russian public sphere and show what manner of images of the war and the Caucasus were conveyed by figures of high public interest and impact. The third sub-chapter will then examine the political implications of the war for the Caucasus peoples and analyze their role in it, asking how they were caught in the middle of two competing empires and demonstrating that they eventually found themselves on opposite sides of the frontlines, supporting either the Russian or Ottoman authorities.

THE RUSSO-OTTOMAN WAR OF 1877–1878

Thirteen years after the Caucasus War had come to an end, the region was again ravaged by a military conflict. This time, however, the conflict was not limited to the realms of the Russian Empire and its borderlands, rather it had an impact on almost all of Southeastern Europe and the Caucasus. The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 emerged as a conflict between an Eastern Orthodox coalition led by the Russian Empire on the one side and the Ottoman Empire on the other. With the frontlines running through the Balkans and the Caucasus, the war's origins were twofold: Firstly, nationalism in the Ottoman Balkans was increasing and seeking a military outlet, and secondly, Russia was eager to find com-

compensation for its territorial and moral losses in the Crimean War and also to re-establish its dominant position in the Black Sea region while affirming its dominant role in the Caucasus.⁶

In Southeastern Europe, following the uprisings in Bosnia (1875) and Bulgaria (1876) against Ottoman rule, Serbia and Montenegro declared war on that empire, which eventually led to the defeat of the Balkan states. The harsh suppression of the Balkan uprisings influenced Russian public opinion, where the voices of Pan-Slavs agitating for the tsar's intervention became louder and louder and eventually made an impact on the hitherto reluctant tsarist policy. Soon the Russian Empire entered the stage, which initially altered the balance in the confrontation in favor of the Balkan states, so that ultimately the political map in Southeastern Europe was redrawn. In Chişinău on 12 (24) April 1877, Tsar Aleksandr II signed a declaration of war against the Sublime Porte and emphasized Russia's will to avenge the discrimination against Christians in the Ottoman Empire. At first, the outcome of the war was far from obvious as both the Russian-led troops and the Ottoman army had certain advantages on the frontlines: the former were numerically superior but the latter were already fortified and had naval command of the Black Sea. The initial Ottoman passivity, however, allowed Russian and Romanian troops to initiate a military advance and capture the redoubts protecting the Ottoman-Bulgarian city of Pleven. These allied troops were able to advance further and take the passes at Stara Planina, a strategically important location for further attacks in the summer of 1877. The following months saw the two sides clash in a series of battles for the vital Šipka Pass. After several attacks, the Russian-led troops eventually secured it and all Ottoman efforts to recapture it failed, just as the Ottoman defense of Pleven resulted in a decisive victory for the alliance of the Russian and Roma-

⁶ Due to its massive geopolitical implications and also due to its prominent role in the memory cultures of many nations, there is a vast literature in numerous languages about the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, documenting and discussing the course of the war and its consequences for Southeastern Europe and the Caucasus. For the following section, cf. for example William E.D. Allen; Paul Muratoff (1953): *Caucasian Battlefields. A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border 1828–1921*. Cambridge: University Press; 105–217; Nikolaj I. Beljaev (1956): *Russko-tureckaja vojna 1877–1878 gg.* Moscow: Voenizdat; Conko Genov (1978): *Osvoboditel'nata vojna 1877–1878*. Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo; Barbara Jelavich; Charles Jelavich (1977): *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804–1920*. Seattle: University of Washington Press [= History of East Central Europe; 8]; Shamshe Megrelidze (1955): *Gruzija v rusko-tureckoj vojne 1877–1878 gg.* Batumi: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo; Peter Sluglett; M. Hakan Yavuz (eds.) (2011): *War and Diplomacy. The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 and the Treaty of Berlin*. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press; Vladimir A. Zolotarev (1983): *Rossija i Turcija. Vojna 1877–1878 gg. (Osnovnye problemy vojny v rosskom istočnikovedenii i istoriografii)*. Moscow: Nauka.

nian armies as well as the Bulgarian *opālčenie* (volunteer troops) and numerous irregular detachments. The Russian-led victories in Ottoman Bulgaria opened the way to Thrace and subsequently to the Ottoman capital of Istanbul.

In February 1878, Russian troops reached the outskirts of Istanbul, where a preliminary peace treaty was signed in San Stefano (today's Yeşilköy) on 19 February (3 March) 1878. As in the previous Russo-Ottoman War (1828–1829), the Ottoman capital was ripe for the taking. However, international intervention, especially by the British, who were able to back their veto with the presence of their navy in nearby waters, prevented Russian troops from continuing their advance, and the latter had to settle for a treaty at the gates of Istanbul. The treaty nevertheless reflected the utter defeat of the Ottomans, as Romania, Serbia and Montenegro formally proclaimed independence from Ottoman rule, while the Treaty of San Stefano also stipulated the creation of an extended principality of Bulgaria. This treaty was never fully implemented, as it failed to satisfy the Western European powers and their interests in Southeastern Europe. The establishment of a large Bulgarian state in particular was a thorn in the side of both London and Vienna, as these governments feared that a Russian satellite state in the Balkans would diminish their own influence. Reconsideration of the San Stefano terms took the form of the Treaty of Berlin, which was signed more than four months later, dispelling British and Austro-Hungarian fears over a pro-Russian shift in the region's balance of power. It effectively redrew the region's map—very much to the chagrin of St. Petersburg. Furthermore, 1878 saw the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina as well as the British takeover of Cyprus.

The vast majority of the literature on the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 focuses on these events and therefore excludes the fact that the opponents fought fiercely on another front: the Caucasus. Although the main military campaigns taking place in Southeastern Europe drew the most attention in international politics, the front in the Caucasus nevertheless also had great importance both in influencing the outcome of the war and the fate of the region and its inhabitant for decades to come. The background for the Russian campaign against the Ottoman Empire was of course quite different when compared to the Balkans, where segments of the local population had already expressed the will to resist the Ottomans in uprisings, e.g. in Bosnia (1875) or Bulgaria (1876) in the years preceding the outbreak of the last Russo-Ottoman War, and where Pan-Slavism did its fair share to promote belief in the Russian Empire as a natural ally in the common struggle against the Sublime Porte. In the (North) Caucasus however, the signals were different. Since the Caucasus War had finally ended only thirteen years before this major confrontation between the Russian

and Ottoman Empires and the local population's memories of mass expulsions and excessive use of force to subdue and annex the region were all too fresh, there was widespread reluctance to side with their new masters, leading to uprisings against the tsarist authorities and the formation of Caucasus divisions within the Ottoman army. The latter indeed consisted of recruits from the vast number of Caucasus refugees who came to the Ottoman Empire during and immediately after the Caucasus War. The ambivalent situation of the region's population, standing between two large empires, one that wanted to stabilize the region while the other wanted to destabilize it, explains the paramount importance of the Caucasus front for both the Russian and Ottoman Empires.

On the Caucasus front, things looked rather favorable for Russian troops. Memories of General Ivan Paskevič's successful campaigns in Anatolia during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1828–1829 and of Mehmet Ali Paşa's Egyptian army of advancing into Anatolia with ease in the 1830s led to a Russian belief that the Ottoman Empire was most vulnerable on the Caucasus front, where the first battles eventually took place in April 1877. Besides this conclusion, the Russian general staff was certainly eager to concentrate on land battles, as it feared Ottoman maritime dominance and did not want to risk a confrontation with the opponent's superior naval forces. This Ottoman control of the Black Sea made it impractical to establish communications and transfers between harbors in the North and South Caucasus, i.e., the harbor of Poti, and forced the Russian Caucasus army to rely on the Georgian Military Road connecting Vladikavkaz and Tbilisi and the Caspian Sea route from Astrachan' to Baku (Allen/Muratoff 1953: 109–10). However, Russia's policy of where to post which divisions was not only dominated by fears of Ottoman naval capability, rather it was also strongly influenced by anxiety over insurgency among the Caucasus peoples. In fact, approximately half of the forces available were retained for coastal defense and internal security, illustrating the Russian Empire's misgivings about its newly annexed territories (Ibid.). These precautionary measures combined with concentration on the Balkan front meant that offensives on the Caucasus front remained limited. Under the command of generals like Michail Loris-Melikov and Aršak Ter-Gukasov, Russian forces did cross the Ottoman border already in April 1877, but the active advance was limited to the harbor of Batumi and Ardahan, where work on Ottoman fortifications was known to be incomplete. However, in the following weeks the Russian army also marched farther to take the fortress of Beyazit and to besiege and block Kars. At the end of June 1877 and after the battle of Zivin- Dağ, in which the Russian troops sustained heavy losses, Russian forces were repelled and suddenly faced a counter-attack by the Ottomans, with a stand by the numerically inferior Russian troops

at Beyazıt garnering the most attention in Russian coverage of the war (Ibid.: 133–51).

Several battles near Kars were fought (e.g. Kızıltepe, Yahni), but only the mid-October battle of Alaca Dağ eventually changed the course of events on the Caucasus front and brought a great success to Russian troops (Ibid.: 170–88). With the successful halt of the Ottoman advance at hand and winter approaching, Loris-Melikov decided to release all the Muslim irregulars (with the exception of the Third Dagestani Horse Regiment), who were mostly sent home to the North Caucasus to spread word of their contribution to the Russian victory over the Ottoman army. The campaign on the Caucasus front was then supposed to be concluded with the conquest of the fortresses at Kars and Erzurum and, if possible, also the city of Batumi on the Black Sea coast. However, after another victory at Deve Boyun, the subsequent attempt to capture Erzurum in early November failed. Little more than a week after the failure at Erzurum, Russian troops were breaking through at Kars and took the city by storm. Kars was given to the Russian Empire under the treaties of San Stefano and Berlin and would remain in Russia's possession until the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which ended Russia's participation in World War I. The capture of Kars meant that two objectives remained: Erzurum and Batumi. However, the Russian breakthrough on the Balkan front and the subsequent armistice came too early for the Russian army to accomplish the seizure of these two cities, and while Erzurum eventually remained a part of the Ottoman Empire, Batumi with its potentially valuable harbor passed to the Russian Empire only after the Congress of Berlin (cf. *ibid.*: 189–217).

The results of the war and the treaties of San Stefano and Berlin proved especially favorable to the Russian Empire. Despite St. Petersburg's frustration over the successful Western European interventions against the Treaty of San Stefano and the remodeled political landscape in Southeastern Europe after the Congress of Berlin, it succeeded in claiming several provinces in the Caucasus, incorporating Kars and the vital Black Sea harbor of Batumi into its territory, all at the expense of the Ottoman Empire, which was significantly weakened in its position. Thus, the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 was obviously a major historical event, which led to a new political order in both Southeastern Europe and the Caucasus. However, the war not only redrew borders and triggered waves of migration to and from the Ottoman and Russian Empires, it considerably influenced the region's long-term development, for the deeply rooted understanding and memory of the war and its consequences by its inhabitants led to crucial reinterpretations of national narratives.

From the 19th century until the present, the politics of memory of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 has played a major role in the formation of national narratives in Southeastern Europe and in the Caucasus. The great significance of the war as a major historical event but also as the starting or turning point in many nation-building processes, the war itself and the ensuing peace treaties led to many interpretations, all of which agree that the war and its treaties played a crucial role, but are otherwise quite often completely at odds and contradictory. In all nations and countries, different overriding national narratives related to the war emerged, giving the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 the power to serve national ideologues as the basis for enhanced national identities long after the last battle was fought. In Bulgaria for instance, the Treaty of San Stefano was celebrated as a national holiday and the date of the treaty's signing (March 3) is still Bulgaria's national day. In Bulgaria's southern neighbor Greece on the other hand, the dominant perception and interpretation of the same treaty was that of the conclusion of a traumatic conflict with an even more traumatic outcome, as it stipulated the integration of most of Macedonia into Bulgaria (Kaser 2013: 11).

Just as cultural memories of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 are politically active and deeply ensconced narratives in all participating states, naturally this is also the case in Russia. Historical memory of the war is one of the cornerstones of the ideological-political discourse about Russia playing the leading role in the Slavic world. Russia's memory cultures concerning the Russo-Ottoman War are also an excellent example of their dependence on political conjunctures (Chernyshova; Kondrasheva 2013). New research interests and also a new plurality of theoretical concepts were established in Russian humanities, and with theoretical considerations placing a strong emphasis on the concepts of memory, remembrance and oblivion, the role of firmly established narratives was scrutinized and new questions were asked. In the course of this paradigm shift, the participation of the North Caucasus peoples in the war became subject to renewed attention.

This new-found interest in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 also reveals that it was not only a crucial event in its aftermath, but also very much a matter of heated debate in the Russian public sphere for its contemporaries. The war had already given Pan-Slav proponents an ideal stage to express their ideas and to put pressure on Tsar Aleksandr II by agitating for military support for the Orthodox Ottoman subjects. In the lead-up to the war and its eventual outbreak, the Christian-Muslim dichotomy became increasingly important. By 1877, the war was framed as a "holy war," in which the Russian Empire was morally

obligated to intervene in the Balkans, while the Caucasus front was seen as the war's side-effect.

VISUALIZING THE WAR

One central element of the Russian interpretation of the war was the concept of it as a war to free Orthodox Christians from Ottoman rule, often called the Ottoman or Turkish “yoke.” The narrative of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 as a “holy war” was immediately embraced by Russian popular culture and gained wide currency in the Empire. The visualization of the war played a major role in spreading this narrative. War has always been one of the most common subjects of visual representation and the technological developments in the latter half of the 19th century, with the advent of the illustrated press as mass medium, favored the increasing use of images as a part of modern warfare. Martina Baleva (2012) argued that the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 was an especially good example to illustrate the tactics and strategies used on the visual frontline running between the Russian and Ottoman Empires. The visual war was fought by all participants, meaning that Western European powers, such as Great Britain and its media, picked up the topic and made use of explicit depictions of Russian massacres—a strategy that conformed to British political ambitions to preserve the *status quo* with the Ottoman Empire.

At that time, hardly any photographs were used in mass media for the simple reason that photography was still an expensive medium and despite its high commercial potential, it was not yet established as the main medium for visualization in newspapers at the time of the war. Even so, this does not mean that early Russian photographers had not been interested in the war or even that Russian photography had not had the technical capability at the time. In fact, the war of 1877–1878 coincided with considerable progress in the development of (documentary) photography, namely the emergence of dry bromine-gelatine plates and a simplification of the photography process (Loginov 2008b: 1229–30). Also there were enough photo-journals already in publication in Russia such as *Svetopis'* [Photography, although the word can be literally translated as ‘light-writing,’ 1858–1859], *Fotograf* [Photographer, 1864–1866], or *Fotografičeskoe obozrenie* [Photography Review, 1865–1870], which not only unified the Russian photographic scene but also informed society at large on specific cultural issues (Ibid.: 1231). However, photography was not actively used by periodicals until the 1890s, and while the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 was indeed immortalized in the photographs of several Russian photographers,

the case study of one particular name shows exceptionally well why the visualization of the war did not have a very broad societal impact.

Dmitrij I. Ermakov (1845–1916) received training at the Military Topographic Academy at Ananuri, located at the foot of the Caucasus Mountains and approximately 100 kilometers north of Tbilisi on the Georgian Military Highway (De Herder 2008: 494–95). As every military academy in Europe had a photographic department to serve cartographic needs and the production of maps and topographic files by that time, it is highly likely that Ermakov made his first steps towards becoming a photographer while studying at this academy. However, his diverse photographic legacy includes more than mere military pragmatism, but also landscapes, architectural monuments and scenes of life from the Russian Empire’s remotest locations and also neighboring countries such as the Persian and Ottoman Empires. After leaving the academy, he opened his own photographic studio in Tbilisi at around 1870—a studio which Loginov (2008b: 1230) called “a prototype of a photo-agency of today.” Throughout the 1870s, he received several distinctions at photography exhibitions in the Russian Empire and abroad and became a member of the prestigious *Société française de photographie*.

The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 brought another exceptional commission for Ermakov, as he was added to the Caucasus army’s General Staff and ordered to record the war’s military movements. Given that Ermakov was an extremely productive photographer (he himself boasted that his “collection contains 25,000 views and types of the Caucasus, European and Asian Turkey and Persia” (Ermakov 1901) while 25,000 negatives were found in his estate alone) and the task’s importance, it seems odd that De Herder (2008: 495) concluded that “none of the photographs he produced for this purpose have been located.” The efforts of Rolf Gross (2010) and Tamás Sajó (2010) show that this is not true, for they managed to put together websites and blogs with an exceptionally insightful view into Ermakov’s work, including some of the shots taken by him during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. What is indeed true is that the dissemination and accessibility of Ermakov’s work does not correspond to his importance in the history of Russian photography, which is particularly true of his snapshots of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. This is likely because his photos were considered military documentation, so they were kept confidential and eventually forgotten. Only in the late 1990s did the National Archives of Georgia bother to publish a few of them, indicating that they were no longer inaccessible. Figure 7 shows the Russian army’s 41st Artillery Brigade at Cichisdziri in one of Ermakov’s works during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878.



Figure 7: Dmitrij I. Ermakov – “The Russian 41st Artillery Brigade at Cichisdziri” [*41. Russkaja artillerijskaja brigada pri Cichisdziri, 1877/1878*]

Despite the relevance of Ermakov in Russian contemporary photography, despite the official order to record the war, and despite the fact that Caucasus photography was a lucrative line of business at the end of the 19th century, his wartime-photos did not have a great impact on perceptions of the war, nor did they even garner posthumous attention. One should also emphasize that just like with the Crimean War of the 1850s and the American Civil War of the 1860s, photographs of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 included scenes of the troops themselves before and after battles, as well as their camps, but not during actual combat, as technology did not allow for that until the early 1880s (Elliott 1993: 17–19).

Of course, Ermakov was not the only photographer who accompanied the Russian Empire’s troops and documented the fronts in Southeastern Europe or in the Caucasus. Several other photographers such as Dmitrij A. Nikitin (?–after 1881), Jean Xavier Raoult (Ivan P. Raul’) (?–after 1890), Vladimir V. Barkanov (1826–1892) and Aleksandr D. Ivanov (?–after 1878), about whose lives relatively little is known, served in the war as correspondents and took their photographs in line with a new realism in photography stemming from ethnographic endeavors to document the life of the Russian Empire’s peoples (Barchatowa 1993b: 48). Nikitin, for instance, had been an expert in ethnographic photography before, and as a war correspondent he took photos of the front itself, of

the bivouacs and field hospitals, but also of different ethnic groups participating in the war, among whom some were also from the Caucasus. Barkanov had visited various places in the Caucasus before and now served in the army as a photographer, Raoult followed the military campaigns of Russian forces in Bulgaria and Romania with his camera and Ivanov's album *Zabalkanskij pochod 1877–1878 gg.* [The march across the Balkans from 1877 to 1878] shows the Russian army's advance into Southeastern Europe as well as the Caucasus front (cf. Fig.8), with the work culminating in the military's heroic return.



Figure 8: Dmitrij A. Nikitin – “Russian Army Sentries on the Caucasus Front”
[*Provodniki russkich vojsk na Kavkazskom fronte, 1877/1878*]

The still developing technology, the relatively high cost, and the fact that newspapers did not make use of photos yet lead to the conclusion that photography was not an adequate mass medium during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 and therefore hardly had any impact on public perceptions of the war and its participants. While there were a considerable number of Russian photographers documenting the fronts, their photographs were never displayed in a broader public context and even today these photographs are not an important facet of Russian memory culture of the war. An exhibition by Moscow's State Historical Museum in 2012 called “*Balkanskij triumph: Stranicy geroičeskoj istorii Russko-turečkoj vojny 1877–1878*” [Balkan Triumph: Pages from the Heroic History of the Russo-Turkish War 1877–1878] did not include

any photographs by Ermakov or Nikitin, even though its main aim was visualization of the war on its 135th anniversary.

However, since the Russian Empire not only claimed victory at the frontlines but also extolled it as a moral triumph over an infidel opponent, the visualization of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 still strongly reverberated in Russian culture, only it had to rely on other channels of visual conveyance.⁷ The military clash with the Ottoman Empire was immediately picked up by Russian culture and found its main manifestations mostly in two different forms of artistic expression: in *lubki*, popular prints, and in the fine arts. While the latter, strongly associated with the names of artists like Vasilij V. Vereščagin or Pavel O. Kovalevskij, also shows the pensive and bleak notes of the other side of war, not always dominated by a heroic and propagandistic tone, the popular prints did just that.

The tsarist wartime *lubok* dates back to the 17th century, and over time it became the primary visual source in the Russian Empire (Sokolov 1999: 10–13). While early examples had been woodcuts, by the mid-19th century the typical *lubki* were lithographs. These images were suitable for articulating national identity and they played a major role in the development of Russian visual culture. A *lubok* is a lively illustration and usually carries a short text or a slogan at the very bottom. Already from their earliest usage, the *lubki* always had a propagandistic function in Russian culture, rooted in their initial role, when they were manufactured to help city dwellers understand their Orthodox faith. Linked to Orthodox Christianity at an early stage and favored by its pictorial affinity, the *lubki* and Russian visual culture in general concentrated on the depiction of religious piety, which also led to extensive use of icons in Russian everyday life. The demand for religious images helped the production and distribution of popular prints flourish, and soon they acquired political connotations, especially during years of Russian warfare. While the wartime *lubok* first appeared during the Seven Years' War of 1756–1763 and while the Napoleonic Wars, especially the invasion of Russia in 1812, led to the first mass production of such prints, the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 proved particularly suitable for the spread of war prints within the framework of the new visual warfare in the illustrated mass media (Norris 2006: 3–5).

The reason why the war of 1877–1878 was so suitable is because it was tied to the initial purpose of the *lubki*: the war had a propagandistic religious conno-

⁷ For a more thorough analysis of Russian visualization of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, both at times of the war and its sustained role in Russian popular culture, cf. Dominik Gutmeyr (2014): “Visualizing a Heroic Past – The Russo-Ottoman War in Russian Popular Culture,” in: *Balkanistic Forum*, 2014/1–2–3; 118–40.

tation and was understood as a “holy war” in Russia. Victory over the Ottoman Empire was considered a triumph of Orthodox Christianity under Russian leadership over a Muslim opponent and was prominently celebrated in Russian popular culture. The concept of Russian Orthodoxy freeing fellow Christians in the Balkans and the Caucasus continued to be a part of popular culture in the Russian Empire for a considerable time afterward. The popular prints were ideal for visualizing the Russian understanding of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 as proof of Orthodoxy’s superiority over Islam, reinforcing faith as an element of Russian patriotism and nationhood (Norris 2006: 83). Besides the *lubki*’s preoccupation with the Muslim-Christian dichotomy, they also visualized another important source of patriotism: heroism and its personification. The images helped create new heroes and it was especially “The White General” Michail Skobelev who was present in numerous prints of the time and whose leadership was taken as a central theme by the Russian press. The visualization of Skobelev’s triumph in the Balkans made him one of the most popular figures in imperial Russia and the popular prints about the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 were merely the starting point of a “Skobelev phenomenon,” which remained vivid even after his death and well into the First World War (Ibid.: 83). In his first appearance in a *lubok* during the summer of 1877, Skobelev was portrayed together with Romanian Prince Karl (Carol) I and five other Russian generals (Ibid.: 220–21). Soon enough, and closely tied to the successful siege of Pleven, Michail Skobelev appeared in a number of prints and most importantly, the prominent visualization of his figure and his campaigns made him one of the most celebrated military leaders in Russian history.

The popular print *Raz! Dva! Tri!* [One! Two! Three!] (cf. Fig.9) illustrates Russian confidence during the war and especially after the capture of Pleven, showing a Russian peasant joyously celebrating Russia’s victory over the Ottoman Empire (Ibid.: 89–91). The print is dominated by a larger-than-life peasant, a theme evoking the enormous size of the Russian Empire, defining its identity, who easily hops over the Danube River. Behind the peasant, one can see the three captured fortresses of Pleven, Kars and Ardahan labeled as such from left to right, and the three cities to which the title equally alludes, marked in the distance as Sofia, Adrianople and Constantinople. In contrast to the mighty Russian giant, the Ottoman population is depicted as small and cowed. To the left of the peasant, a small man fearfully indicates the advancing and conquering Russian to an Ottoman woman. The clothing and especially the headgear intimates that these small people in the picture are Ottoman, but typically for the Russian popular prints, the opponents are clearly not in the middle of the view-

er's attention. Personified Russian heroism takes center, while the illustrated "Ottoman cowardice" is to be found somewhere in the background of the print.



Figure 9: *Raz! Dva! Tri!* [One! Two! Three!]

The mass production of images served another important purpose: they reached the peasantry in the countryside at a time of high illiteracy and propagandistically spread news on the progress of the war on both frontlines in the Balkans and the Caucasus. The Russian historian Aleksandr V. Buganov (1992; cit. in Norris 2006: 97) has argued that it were indeed the *lubki* which created a feeling of national consciousness among the Russian peasantry. Reaching the illiterate component of the Russian Empire's population, the staging of the Russo-Ottoman War as a holy war promoted the narrative among the masses of Russian nationhood and patriotism based on Orthodoxy, eventually leaving out the many minorities of different faiths or, as in the case of many peoples in the North Caucasus, of Islam, which served as the constitutive other in that very narrative.

The Russo-Ottoman War proved to be particularly conducive to its visualization in *lubki*, because their initial purpose matched the war's propagandistic religious connotation. The interpretation of the Russian Empire as the leader of a Christian alliance to triumph over a Muslim opponent was prominently celebrated in Russian popular culture, strengthening faith as an element of Russian patriotism and nationhood. This narrative certainly put the many Muslim peoples of the North Caucasus in the odd position of Russia trying to bolster its rule in the region after the end of the Caucasus War little more than a decade before

and finding itself face to face with a new Muslim-Christian confrontation in the Russian interpretation of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878.

The second platform for the war's visualization was the fine arts. Even before the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, new heights in Orientalist painting had emerged as a by-product of the Russian Empire's increasing grip on Central Asia, especially on the three khanates of Buchara, Kokand and Chiva (cf. Chapter 2). The first and most popular artistic product of Russia conquering this region could be seen in the works of Vereščagin (1842–1904) with which, as Kouteinikova (2010: 87) pointed out: "The visual record of *Turkestanomania* was born." Even though Vereščagin was most fascinated by the colonial aspirations of the Russian Empire toward Central Asia, he did not hesitate to search for other places that represented exoticism to him. In an artistic life full of travel, the first place he had visited was the Caucasus in 1863, and in the following decades, he kept coming back for inspiration. The early 1860s saw Vereščagin going back and forth from the Caucasus to Paris, where he studied with the famous Orientalist painter Jean-Léon Gérôme. Soon enough, his œuvre developed from ethnographic scenes to reflections on military actions in the framework of Russia's expansion to the east. The brutality of the warfare in Central Asia inspired Vereščagin to paint his *Barbarians* series with its famous culminating piece "The Apotheosis of War" [*Apofoeoz vojny*] (cf. Fig. 10). The center of the painting is dominated by a pyramid of human skulls—a monument attributed to the Central Asian 14th–15th century conqueror Timur. Vereščagin, however, did not adhere to his initial plan to name the painting after Timur, preferring the broader significance of giving it the title we know today, and adding "dedicated to all conquerors, past, present and to come" (Kouteinikova 2010: 91).

The outbreak of the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877 led many famed painters to move from Central Asia and focus on the clash with the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasus, but first and foremost in Southeastern Europe. Artists like Vereščagin, Pavel O. Kovalevskij (1843–1903), Vasilij D. Polenov (1844–1927) and many others actively participated in the war and documented its progress in their paintings. It would exceed both the present limitations and intentions to discuss Russian art on the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 in any depth, but the name of Vereščagin certainly comes to mind when one attempts to determine the artist responsible for the most influential paintings of the war. His oeuvre prominently contains depictions from the war on the Southeastern European front and his "Balkan Collection" [*Balkanskaja serija*] in particular, including famous paintings like "Before the Attack. At Pleven" [*Pered atakoj. Pod Plevnoj*] and "Šipka-Šejново. Skobelev at Šipka" [*Šipka-Šejново. Skobelev*

pod Šipkoj], immensely influenced perceptions of the war in Russia. When examining the latter painting, one can again see General Skobelev on his white horse in the foreground and his soldiers triumphantly celebrating with him, while a good part of the picture is filled with slain victims of the war—interestingly in both Russian and Ottoman uniforms. Even though Russian art at the end of the 19th century traditionally emphasized success and victory over unworthy enemies and a focus on depictions of parades and military maneuvers, Vereščagin’s work nonetheless also presented war as the tragedy it actually was. The painting “The Defeated. Memorial Service” [*Pobežděnnnye. Panichida*] (cf. Fig. 11) illustrates the experiences Vereščagin had during the war very well, and it shows a personal note alongside the heroic narratives conveyed in the *lubki*. Loneliness and death dominate the painting, in which a lone military officer and an Orthodox priest stand in front of a seemingly vast field, which on closer inspection turns out to be a mass grave with the priest apparently reciting a funeral prayer for the dead soldiers and appealing for their salvation.

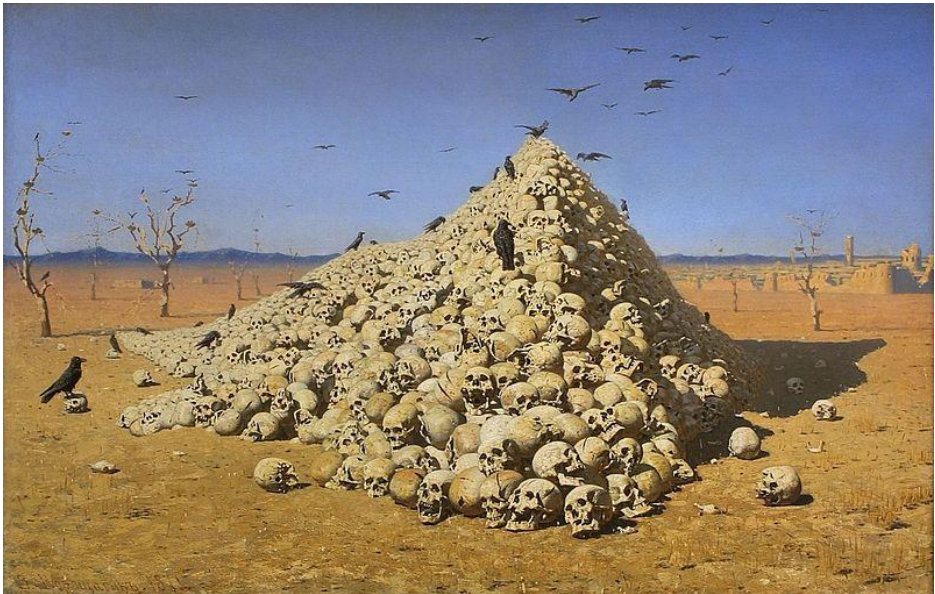


Figure 10: Vasilij V. Vereščagin – “The Apotheosis of War”
[*Apofeoz vojny*, 1871]

With many painters taking part in the war at higher ranks than common soldiers—Vereščagin for instance accompanied Skobelev as his personal secretary—they were expected to produce paintings that supported the war’s official line of heroism and justice. On the other hand, they also experienced the horrors of the war either by seeing it with their own eyes or by getting seriously injured, as Vereščagin did, which influenced their work. Because they served a propa-

gandistic function, the widespread *lubki* do not show the other side of the war, a side not imbued with victorious heroism but rather steeped in death and hardship. The latter view of the war can be found in some of the works of the aforementioned artists. There is no doubt that the Russian fine arts predominantly depicts the war in a similar tone as the popular prints and emphasizes the Russian army's greatness, but the personal experiences of the artists added a contemplative and dismal note to some of their paintings.



Figure 11: Vasilij V. Vereščagin – “The Defeated. Memorial Service”
[*Pobežděnyye. Panichida*, 1877]

THE LITERARY FRONT

Visualization certainly helped popularize the war among the empire's common people and spread the narrative of Russia's “holy war” exceptionally well. However, public attention to the war was not only amplified by the many paintings of Vereščagin and others but also by many writers. Some of the most famous on Russia's literary scene, such as Fëdor Dostoevskij, Lev Tolstoj or Ivan Turgenev, expressed their opinions on the war. They did so in many different ways: in their works *per se*, or in newspaper columns or in private letters to their friends and fellow poets. The use of different channels led to different outcomes, but they all had one thing in common—they all had an impact on how the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 was perceived in the Russian Empire, both during and after the war and even prior to its outbreak. A strong link between a certain political event in literature is certainly not a particularly Rus-

sian feat, nor is the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 the first or most striking example of Russian writers immortalizing an historical episode far more effectively than any history book could do (a better example is certainly Lev Tolstoj's depiction of the Napoleonic Wars in *War and Peace* [*Vojna i mir*]). However, the War of 1877–1878 had the potential to summon all manner of voices from opposing factions who supported the war for different reasons. Slavophiles like Dostoevskij emphasized their sympathy for the Slavic population of South-eastern Europe and pushed St. Petersburg to go into war with the Ottoman Empire in order to support and rescue the rebellions of their fellow Slavs.

However, even a non-Pan-Slavist like Ivan Turgenev, who categorically rejected their views throughout his life, was influenced by events in Southeastern Europe and in 1876 he expressed his opinions in the rather politically-charged poem "Croquet at Windsor" [*Kroket v Vindzore*]. Thus, a writer who had until then preferred to subordinate politics to his art and did not share the Pan-Slav ideas in particular, ironically received rapturous acclamation by the latter (Žekulin 1983: 85). Turgenev was driven by a motivation other than pan-Slavist emotion, as his patriotism was fed by his increasing outrage over the Ottoman suppression of the revolts in Southeastern Europe. Hence, he also warmly approved of the declaration of war in 1877. Turgenev's "Croquet at Windsor" reflects his resentment of Great Britain's support for the Ottoman Empire and the British inability to put an end to the bloody suppression of the Bosnian and Bulgarian uprisings (Schapiro 1982: 272). In the 40-line poem, Queen Victoria is depicted as watching a croquet game at Windsor when she has a vision of the balls as the severed heads of women, maidens and children. She calls for her doctor who explains to her that it must have been reading the depictions of "the Bulgarian people who have become victim to Turkish wrath" in *The Times* that upset her and put these images into her head. After being prescribed some medicine, the queen returns to her castle and has another vision of her dress soaked in blood and calls on Britain's rivers to clean it. The final two lines deny her this wish with a nameless voice telling her that she will never be cleansed of that innocent blood. Both the plot and the background of that particular poem are telling. First, it means that an author who until then had not excelled in commenting on European politics was inspired by a European topic and it also means that the role of the popular press cannot be overestimated. "Croquet at Windsor" was inspired by newspaper accounts of the suppression of uprisings in Southeastern Europe in 1875–1876; something that Dostoevskij would use in the years to come to sway public opinion in Russia. Yet in 1876, Turgenev was eager to spread the word and sought to have his poem published in the newspaper *Novoe vremja*. The poem's publication failed, but as Tedford (1980: 257)

assumed on the basis of Turgenev's notes to the poem in a letter to Henry James, probably not due to censorship but rather due to the editors' fear of provoking the displeasure of Great Britain and, especially, Queen Victoria. This meant that the poem was not published in Russia until 1881, but the interest in Turgenev's depiction was so high that it was widely circulated in handwritten copies, even at parties given by the heir to the throne (Ibid.). The example of Turgenev's poem shows just how high reader interest in Southeastern Europe and the fate of the Bosnian or Bulgarian peoples was, regardless of whether they supported pan-Slavism or not. However, Turgenev's criticism of British policy on the so-called "Eastern Question" without directly addressing the role of either the Russian or Ottoman Empire in it can be considered an exception.

Before coming back to Dostoevskij's literary/publicistic support of the war, one should note that as the theme of Balkan Slavs allegedly living under Ottoman repression and begging for a Russian-led intervention became so dominant in public discourse, it is only natural that there were other opinions on that cause as well. Lev N. Tolstoj (1828–1910) is one of the opposing voices and especially with respect to the "Eastern Question" and the question of Russian military intervention in Southeastern Europe, the two giants of Russian realism may be considered "natural antipodes" (Bartlett 2011: 249). Since Tolstoj was hesitant to publicly comment on daily politics, he let his works speak for him and since *War and Peace* had already been published almost a decade earlier, by the time the status of the Slavic population in the Ottoman Empire became topical, he was a dominant figure in public life even without constant commentaries like those written by Dostoevskij.

His most recent novel, *Anna Karenina*, emerged as Tolstoj's public voice, for it was published in installments from 1875 to 1877 in the magazine *Russkij Vestnik* [Russian Herald], "in which Tolstoj threw down the gauntlet to Pan-Slavists" (Ibid.: 246). However, Tolstoj clashed with Michail N. Katkov over the novel's epilogue and its political implications, because Katkov, an advocate of Pan-Slavism and the editor of a conservative magazine, demanded that Tolstoj revise his manuscript because he thought that the epilogue contained disparaging views on the "Eastern Question." Katkov even published a statement in the *Russkij Vestnik*, saying that the words "to be concluded" in the previous issue were misleading and that the novel really had ended with the death of the heroine while the author's plans for a short epilogue would perhaps develop for a separate edition of the novel (Ibid.: 248). Understandably, Tolstoj refused to make any changes to his manuscript and only in 1878 was *Anna Karenina* first published as a complete book. What exactly did the planned epilogue, i.e., this eighth chapter, say about the war and why did it become so contested? Mainly,

Tolstoj did not join the approval of war as an adequate means to answer the “Eastern Question.” He had his protagonists argue about the sense of the war, voicing doubts and perplexity: “I was living abroad and read the papers, and must own that I could not at all understand why, even before the Bulgarian atrocities, all Russians suddenly grew so fond their Slavonic brothers, while I don’t feel any love for them” (Tolstoy 1999a: 794). Furthermore, Tolstoj held up a mirror to the Russian society of the late 1870s when he described the discussions about the war in Southeastern Europe as a passing fad, soon to be replaced by some other topic suited to divert the masses:

Among the people to whom he belonged, nothing was written or talked about at that time except the Serbian war. Everything that the idle crowd usually does to kill time, it now did for the benefit of the Slavs: balls, concerts, dinners, speeches, ladies’ dresses, beer, restaurants—all bore witness to our sympathy with the Slavs. [...] He saw that the Slav question had become one of those fashionable diversions which, ever succeeding one another, serve to occupy Society; he saw that too many people took up the question from interested motives (Tolstoy 1999a: 760).

Tolstoj’s firm rejection of another war with the Ottoman Empire may have stemmed from his own experiences during the Crimean War or from his Christian pacifism, but what it certainly led to was a fierce debate on Tolstoj’s opinion about the volunteer movement for the Slavs being a “desertion of the Russian cause” (Vassena 2007: 72). While Dostoevskij had praised Tolstoj’s latest novel in his *A Writer’s Diary* in February 1877, he revisited *Anna Karenina* in the July-August 1877 issue to openly criticize and counter Tolstoj’s opinion of war as a political statement by saying an intervention in Southeastern Europe was a human cause rather than a political one.

However, the literary consideration of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 was not simply a debate between Dostoevskij and Tolstoj as other than these two, a younger generation of Russian writers, such as Gleb I. Uspenskij (1843–1902) and Vsevolod M. Garšin (1855–1888) volunteered to support the Serbs in 1876 or to serve in the army as soon as the Russo-Ottoman War broke out in 1877, and they had a say in this public discourse as well. The descriptions of their wartime experiences, which were notably the personal experiences of these writers, can be compared to those of the Russian painters who served at the front and they were similarly reflected in their works. Pre-war poems such as Garšin’s 1876 “Friends, we have gathered before parting” [*Druz’ja, my sobralis’ pered razlukoj*] became a part of the public euphoria over the upcoming war, something that changed quickly for Garšin as soon as he came to Bulgaria and was wounded after only a few days at the front. Garšin’s urge to write about his disillusionment led to his short story “Four Days” [*Četyre dnja*] which gave

readers an entirely different impression of the war and, not least due to great interest in the war, and its publication in *Otečestvennye zapiski* made Garšin famous overnight (Lempa 2003: 32–34; 109–12). The short story made the Russian public aware of the war's atrocities in contrast to public euphoria, ending with the protagonist narrowly escaping and with an amputated leg, and it also countered the contemporary propagandistic image of the ruthless Ottoman Turks. Garšin's 1877 short story "Four Days" portrays the Ottoman soldiers as poor souls equally uprooted and tormented by war, whose deaths their families equally mourn:

Yes, it is a Turk, a corpse. What a big man! I recognize him. It is the very one whom... Before me lies the man whom I had killed. Why did I kill him? He lies there dead, blood-stained. Why did Fate bring him here? Who was he? Perhaps he, like myself, had an aged mother. Long will she sit each afternoon by the door of her wretched hut and gaze out into the far-off North. Her darling son, her supporter, her bread-winner, will not come (Garšin 1891: 301–02).

His following short stories such as "A Very Short Romance" [*Očen' koroten'kij roman*], "The Coward" [*Trus*], or "From the Reminiscences of Private Ivanov" [*Iz vospominanij rjadovogo Ivanova*] assumed a similar tone and provided an alternative narrative to the euphoria and justifications for war.

Dostoevskij on the other hand did not want to simply insert his opinions on the war with the Ottoman Empire in his short stories or novels, rather he expressed them in so many of the entries of his diary, or rather column. Unlike Turgenev, he also did not hesitate to publicly reflect on Russia's role in that question or to add extensive illustrations of his view of the Ottomans. Already in the issues of *A Writer's Diary* for July-August and September 1876, Dostoevskij reflected on the situation in Serbia, praising Michail G. Černjaev (1828–1898), the Russian commander-in-chief in Serbia and contrasting St. Petersburg's idealistic policies to the selfish approach of the Western European states to the Eastern Question. He envisioned a Russian victory over the Ottomans leading to a mass celebrated in the then newly-consecrated Hagia Sophia (Vassena 2007: 173). With respect to this image of the Ottomans, Dostoevskij did not hesitate to provide explicit details in order to underscore their allegedly inherent and extraordinary brutality. During the summer months of 1877, Dostoevskij gave the readership of *A Writer's Diary* insight into how the opponent would subjugate and slaughter the civilian population in Southeastern Europe:

The skin is stripped from living people while their children watch; children are tossed in the air and caught on the point of a bayonet while their mothers watch; women are raped, and during the act the woman is

stabbed with a dagger; worst of all, infants are tortured and abused (Dostoevsky 1994b: 1095).

[...] two paces away a Turk is voluptuously holding a needle, ready to pierce the eyes of the child already in his arms (Ibid.: 1096).

Specialists in the extermination of nursing infants have appeared among them, experts who seize the child by both legs and at once tear it in half, to the amusement and laughter of their comrades, the bashibazouks. This nation, steeped in lies and villainy, denies the atrocities it has committed. The Sultan's ministers assure us that there can be no slaughter of prisoners since "the Koran forbids it" (Ibid.: 1097).

And if we do not take away their weapons and—so as to avoid killing them—simply go away, then they will at once begin again to cut off women's breasts and poke out children's eyes. What's to be done? (Ibid.: 1099).

His depictions noticeably focus on all manner of atrocities against women and children rather than on actual combat, i.e., events in the main battles in Southeastern Europe or the Caucasus itself. These stereotypical images of the "savage Turks" who do not hesitate to torture and murder helpless civilians were typical of Russian portrayals of the Ottomans that circulated during the war and helped to further ideologize the war, as the Russian writer Pëtr Boborykin commented: "[...] the Turkish executions in Bulgaria caused an explosion of indignation even among our ordinary people" (Cimbaev 1982: 158; cit. in Kočukov 2011: 112). As Dostoevskij's later works like *The Brothers Karamazov* [*Brat'ja Karamazovy*] show, they did not exactly change even years after the war and were repeated over and over again:

"By the way, a Bulgarian I met lately in Moscow," Ivan went on, seeming not to hear his brother's words, "told me about the crimes committed by Turks and Circassians in all parts of Bulgaria through fear of a general uprising of the Slavs. They burn villages, murder, outrage women and children, they nail their prisoners by the ears to the fences, leave them so till morning, and in the morning they hang them—all sorts of things you can't imagine. [...] These Turks took a pleasure in torturing children, too; cutting the unborn child from the mother's womb, and tossing babies up in the air and catching them on the points of their bayonets before their mothers' eyes. Doing it before the mothers' eyes was what gave zest to the amusement" (Dostoevsky 2007: 260–61).

The latter quote seems to indicate that Dostoevskij not only attributed ruthlessness to the Ottomans, or “Turks,” but also to the “Circassians.” While most of these irregulars had a migratory background from the North Caucasus, they did not necessarily have to have any actual ethnic roots in the Adyghe community to be called a “Circassian.” However, lumping all of these combatants under the term “Circassians” and condemning them wholesale as responsible for war crimes certainly did influence the image of the Adyghe population still living in the Russian Empire at the time. Dostoevskij’s portrayals of the “Circassian” contribution to the atrocities in Southeastern Europe are thereby very similar to his descriptions of the “Turks,” as the following passage from the February 1877 entry in his *A Writer’s Diary* shows:

She faints because of her recollections: last summer, with her own eyes, she watched a group of Circassians flay the skin from her father, and do it completely (Dostoevsky 1994b: 859).

However, the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 was just another example of how North Caucasus émigrés were portrayed just like the Ottoman enemy and how “Circassians” and “Turks” were treated as equally despicable. As the following quote from Dostoevskij’s diary from June 1876 shows, the generalized depiction of “Circassians” as murderous gangs in the Ottoman service was not a by-product of the war itself but already in use in the years before:

The indecisiveness and delay of the major powers, England’s diplomatic eccentricity in refusing to agree to the conclusions of the Berlin conferences, the revolution in Constantinople and outburst of Moslem fanaticism that followed suddenly thereafter, and, finally, the terrible massacre by bashibazouks and Circassians of sixty thousand peaceful Bulgarians, including old men, women, and children—all this at once set things ablaze and led to war (Dostoevsky 1994a: 523).

One can again see the semantic juxtaposition of the “terrible massacre” by both Başıbozüks and “Circassians” on the one hand with the “peaceful Bulgarians,” with emphasis on “old men, women, and children,” i.e. the helpless civilian population of Southeastern Europe. Certainly interesting is Dostoevskij’s remark that an outburst of Muslim fanaticism was also responsible for the outbreak of war. Based on the portrayal of the enemy in Dostoevskij’s *A Writer’s Diary*, it is fair to conclude that the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 was an ideal platform to express the opinion that the Russian Empire’s moral obligation to intervene in Southeastern Europe could be found in the atrocities committed by the Ottomans. However, the wholesale condemnation of the other was not solely based on the ethnic identification of the other as “Turks,” but rather brought another group, namely the “Circassians” into the narrative. The latter were thereby caught in the middle of an othering process that aimed at essential-

izing the Ottoman Empire as the Muslim opposition to the Christian Russian Empire and in place of many of the Caucasus native peoples the “Circassians” were subsumed or equated with them. Faced with the threat of a merger between public opinion on the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 in “one of the most ideologized wars of Russia” (Kočukov 2011: 112) and the Russian image of the Caucasus and its population, what actual options were open to the Caucasus peoples, both those living in the Russian Empire and in the diaspora, to deal with the war as it broke out?

THE CAUCASUS BETWEEN THE LINES

When the Russo-Ottoman War finally broke out in 1877, the Caucasus region’s inhabitants mainly had four options for how to deal with it: they could either passively or actively refuse to become a part of the conflict between the two empires, i.e. on the one hand by trying to avoid any recruitment and by withdrawing to the most remote parts of the mountain range, or, on the other, by resisting the Russian authorities and by organizing uprisings (cf. Chapter 7); or they could join the forces of one of the opponents and become a part of the opposing armies on the frontlines on either the Russian or Ottoman sides. All four options had their fair share of supporters among the Caucasus natives, meaning that they could eventually be found in the military forces of both empires.

For the Russian imperial army, North Caucasus natives served in both major theatres of war: Southeastern Europe and the Caucasus itself. On the former front, a notable unit was the “Caucasus Cossack Brigade,” consisting of Terek and Kuban Cossacks as well as 200 Ossetians (Akiev 1980: 74–76). This unit played an important role in achieving the objectives of the Russian Empire’s army, as it was, for instance, included in General Skobelev’s units on the left flank during the second attack on Plevna and in the battle for Loveč. The latter battle’s Russian cavalry furthermore included approximately 250 Ossetians, Ingush and other Caucasus natives. The battles for Gorni Dăbnik, Dolni Dăbnik and Teliš saw 50 Caucasus participants serving shoulder to shoulder with 200 from the Terek-Mountaineer Irregular Horse Regiment’s Ossetian division, and their military accomplishments earned them a high reputation among the Russian generals of the Russo-Ottoman War (Ibid.: 76–78).

Concerning the military campaigns, a specific feature of the Caucasus front was the extensive use of irregular troops to support the main army. These incorporated local inhabitants, from whom many contingents were formed. A stand-out ethnic group with respect to the numbers in which they participated was the Ossetians, who were involved in active combat in the Second and Third Dage-

stani Regiments, the Circassian Regiment and in the Kabardino-Kumyk Irregular Horse Regiment (Sanakoev 1987: 108; cit. in Sotničenko 2011: 140). They were also members of several divisions formed in the South Caucasus, such as the Georgian Infantry Brigade or the Aleksandropol'-, Akhaltsikhe- and further irregular horse regiments. Since Ossetia had already been a part of the Russian Empire for many decades by that time, its nobility had had the opportunity to acquire military training in St. Petersburg, which is why the Ossetians not only contributed foot soldiers but also highly decorated officers. The enhanced role of Ossetian participation is reflected quite well in the works of contemporary Ossetian historians who address this period. Èlvira Gutieva's (2013) short article "Ossetians – Participants in the Russo-Turkish War 1877–1878" [*Osetiny – učastniki rusko-tureckoj vojny 1877–1878 gg.*] is an excellent example of the narrative of brave and faithful Ossetia. For example, she wrote that aside from their sworn fealty and the fact that Ossetians had been aware of their duties as citizens of Russia, this prestigious military service has been of great importance to the mountaineers and that they saw participation as an opportunity to demonstrate their courage, patriotism and loyalty to their fatherland (Gutieva 2013: 232). This narrative of the Russo-Ottoman War as an ideal platform to express allegiance is widespread, at least in contemporary Ossetian historiography. However, it is certainly not the only contemporary regional historiography which contains attempts to highlight a certain ethnic group's contribution to imperial Russia's wars, as elsewhere one can, for instance, read of analogous achievements by the Karačaj people, who had "contributed their share to the victorious outcome of the war in 1877–1878" (Batčaev 2003: 61). The following two chapters will examine whether Russian contemporaries also emphasized this ethnic group's roles to the extent that this can be discerned in retrospective assessments of the war.

What can be stated here is that it is difficult to consider the Ossetians as typical of the entire population of the North Caucasus. Although the Ossetians are not a religiously homogenous group, the prevailing perception of them in the Russian Empire was that of a Christian people, and this narrative of loyal and cooperative Christian Ossetians may thus overshadow the fact the various military units were composed of people from many different ethnic groups in the North Caucasus. For example, the Terek-Mountaineers Regiment was recruited from Chechens, Georgians, Ingush, Kumyks, Ossetians, Russians and other ethnic groups. Equally heterogeneous was the Kabardino-Kumyk Regiment, with participants of Avar, Balkar, Kabardian, Karačaj, Kumyk, Ossetian Russian or Ukrainian origin, while the Chechen division also included members of the Tat people (Dzidzoev 2009: 18; cit. in: Sotničenko 2011: 140–41). A fact

that must not be overlooked is that ideas of ethnic or even national consciousness among the peoples of the (North) Caucasus had scarcely developed yet, so that tribal structures and settlement patterns dominated social organization, while identity was sought and found in the respective *aul*, region or clan to which one belonged. However, it should also be clear that the Russian Empire's units were neither ethnically Russian nor religiously Christian, and included participants from all over the North Caucasus who were often of Muslim (or Jewish) faith.

While many North Caucasus peoples contributed to the Russian Empire's warfare and sent their own men to the frontlines, other ethnic groups still living under Russian rule decided to side with the Empire's adversary and to support Ottoman troops in the war. Of the North Caucasus' peoples, this was notably the case with the region's Turkic peoples and especially the Karapapaks, but the Ottoman army also recruited irregular troops in Abkhazia, Ajara, Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia (Akiev 1980: 25–39). These parts of the North Caucasus population may have sided with the Ottoman army from the very beginning, i.e., after the Russian authorities had crushed uprisings in Chechnya or Dagestan, or even after having been recruited to the Russian military, where they would eventually refuse to take part in active warfare. No matter who, when and how, the Russo-Ottoman War again alienated the Caucasus peoples in the Russian Empire and at least partly sharpened anti-Russian sentiments among them.

The Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, did well in playing its main trump card: the polarization of the Russo-Ottoman War as a war between Christianity and Islam. Since the Russian Empire was also emotionalizing the conflict as a “holy war” for Christianity and simultaneously enforcing the latter as the empire's primary religion, it was only logical for the Ottoman Empire to exploit growing alienation at the confessional level, propagate Pan-Islamist ideas and plead for a Muslim alliance between the North Caucasus Muslim peoples and the Sublime Porte. In general, the native population was a welcome aspect of Ottoman endeavors to destabilize the Russian frontlines in the Caucasus. As the uprisings against Russian rule and the formation of Caucasus divisions within the Ottoman army during the war prove, this policy proved effective, at least at the local level, helping to strengthen ties between the Ottoman Empire and the North Caucasus beyond 1878 and having its strongest manifestation in the migratory waves into the Ottoman Empire even in subsequent years. With robust Caucasus communities living in the Ottoman Empire, military defeat did not signify an end to Ottoman influence on the North Caucasus, and it was often driven by Pan-Islamic (Jersild 1997: 102; Karpát 2001, 34–41) or Pan-Turkic (Landau 1995: 7–28; Sotničenko 2011: 147–66) ideologies. These occasional ties between the Ottoman authorities and Caucasus natives, however, fostered

general suspicions of collaboration with the enemy, not only during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 but well beyond it, which additionally contributed to the difficult situation in the North Caucasus.

During the war, the Ottoman Empire had a particular interest in the eastern Black Sea coast. Backed by their naval dominance over the Russian Empire, Ottoman troops launched an operation that included possibly 3,000 Adyghe and Abkhaz and aimed at retaking certain strategic ports (Henze 1990: 56; Forsyth (2013: 295) estimated the number of “Circassians” landing at the Abkhaz coast at 1,000). In Abkhazia, harsh measures by the Russian authorities attempting to reinforce their position led to a new insurrection in early 1877, and with these uprisings evidently closely linked to events in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, an Ottoman intervention followed in May 1877. An Ottoman squadron subjected Abkhazia’s main town and port Sukhumi to bombardment and eventually landed a party which consisted to a great extent of the mentioned Circassian and Abkhaz emigrants (Lak’oba 1999: 83). The Russian command had to withdraw its troops, not only giving the Ottomans the opportunity to capture Sukhumi and its surroundings but also to land more similarly manned contingents farther north along the coast over the ensuing weeks. Russian fears of exacerbating the situation on the coast and spurring revolts to spread to the eastern Caucasus made Russian commanders reluctant to immediately intervene and quell the Ottoman advance along the Black Sea coast (Henze 1990: 56–57). However, after a great deal of indecisive warfare during the summer months and more Ottoman landings, in which many Caucasus natives participated with the desire to fight the Russian army, the Russian counteroffensive eventually forced Ottoman troops to withdraw from Sukhumi and then from the entire coastline.

Similar to the Ottoman invasion of the Black Sea coast during the final year of the Crimean War, the Ottoman Empire’s operation in 1877 had no impact on the overall outcome of the Russo-Ottoman War and it did little to halt the Russian advance into the Caucasus. However, it did greatly influence Abkhazia’s local population, as the Russian authorities responded to the Abkhazian support for the Ottoman Empire with harsh political repression. As the Abkhaz historian and politician Stanislav Lak’oba (1999: 83–86) stated, virtually the entire Abkhaz population was declared guilty—a stigma that would remain attached to them for three decades, when Tsar Nikolaj signed a proclamation in 1907 on the dismissal of the older charges, highlighting their newly expressed loyalty during the revolution of 1905. This stigma was accompanied by a new wave of expulsions, driving up to 50,000 people out of the eastern Caucasus and forcing them to settle in the Ottoman Empire. Parts of central Abkhazia were almost com-

pletely depopulated and only regions which were heavily garrisoned by Russian forces remained untouched (Ibid.: 83).

In 1877, there were 470,000 emigrants from the North Caucasus in Ottoman territory (Saydam 1997: 53; cit. in Sotničenko 2011: 144). These emigrants were mostly settled along the Ottoman-Russian border, thereby forming a buffer zone between the two opponents. The emigrants or so-called *Muhajirs* played a huge role in struggles against the Russian Empire during the war years. Emigration waves under differing circumstances had forced Caucasus natives to also leave their homelands during the 1860s and 1870s, meaning that their experiences of expulsion were not only defining but also recent. The outbreak of the war in 1877 gave many former inhabitants of these now Russian lands in the Caucasus the opportunity to express their resentment against the manner in which they were driven from their homes by Russian rule. While the international and Russian focus rested on Southeastern Europe, the Ottoman Empire was at least equally interested in restoring its former influence in the Caucasus region and the many emigrants from that region which had found a new home in the Empire were ideal for the enhancement of its army. Thousands of Caucasus natives were ready to take up arms against Russian troops themselves and also to arm their compatriots still living in the Caucasus. Thus, approximately 30,000 rifles were carried there by Caucasus migrants (Henze 1990: 56).

The decision of which side to join before or during the Russo-Ottoman War was not, however, irrevocable, and it was quite common for someone from a Caucasus native community to initially have a promising career in the Russian Empire only to get frustrated over its Caucasus policy and then seek an alternative in Ottoman exile. The extent to which the Caucasus region as such and, even more so, its native population had come between the two opposing poles was reflected in the Russo-Ottoman War and, especially, in the biographies of some of the native population's nobles. The lines between the Russian authorities in which they eventually sought to make a career and their own peoples were blurred, and despite occasionally close relations and the fact that Caucasus natives were integrated into the Russian Empire's educational and military systems, they also preserved their native identities. Even though they were initially educated in Russia and then returned to the North Caucasus to serve Russian interests among their respective peoples, their loyalties remained in doubt and sometimes even decades of completed service in the Russian Empire's army did not prevent them from eventually returning to their native roots once they realized that they were being used by the state to channel information in only one direction rather than actually being able to foster communication between the

Russian authorities and the native populations (Khodarkovsky 2011: 4; 169–70).

With respect to the Caucasus War, Michael Khodarkovsky (2011) has masterfully shown this in the biography of Semën S. Atarščikov—a Cossack officer in the imperial service fluent in Russian, Arabic, Chechen, and Kumyk—who had made an impressive career in the Russian army's campaigns against Šamil'. By 1841 however, he chose to quit the service only to join the Adyghe's struggle against imperial Russia in the Northwestern Caucasus. Intriguingly, he then returned to Russia to ask for a pardon, but after Nikolaj I agreed to sign it, he once again fled into the mountains and actively participated in raids across the Russian frontier, when he was shot during one of them in 1845 (Ibid.: 2–3). Other Russian military men of Caucasus native origin decided to leave Russia for the Ottoman Empire already during the Caucasus War and seek for assistance against the Russians. An example for the latter is the case of Zan Sefer-Bej Zano (1789–1859). Some of these former Russian military men who had joined the Ottoman army came back to the region in course of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, when the prospects for joining the opposing side seemed even more promising.

One name in particular is frequently cited (Degoev 2003; Forsyth 2013: 295; Ibragimova 2009: 310–13; Khodarkovsky 2011: 139–140; Perović 2015: 101–18) to illustrate this phenomenon: Musa Kunduchov. Born to a Muslim Ossetian noble family at around 1818/1820, he was educated at St. Petersburg's prestigious Pavlovsk Military School and eventually joined the Russian army. He soon became an important figure in the Russian Empire's Caucasus policy, as he was entrusted with diplomatic missions to engage in negotiations with Šamil' and to broker a ceasefire. While the negotiations did not lead to the desired result, Kunduchov continued his rise within the Russian army and commanded a special unit in the Crimean War, consisting of exponents of many North Caucasus peoples. After the war, he returned to the Caucasus and was assigned administrative duties and posts as he continued to rise in the military hierarchy, eventually becoming head of the Chechen Military District (Perović 2015: 103–06). Due to his background from a Muslim family and his opposition to Orthodox proselytism, he did make many friends during his time in Russian service, but the fact that he was able to keep the Vladikavkaz district calm surely helped enhance his reputation with the army command (Ganič 2008: 112–14). After Šamil' surrendered in 1859, Kunduchov was transferred to Chechnya, where he was supposed to fight those groups not willing to follow Šamil's capitulation who had therefore began gathering around the Imam's former *naibs*, such as Bajsungur Benoevskij (1794–1861), Atabi-Mulla Ataev (Atabaj Ataev)

Zumsoevski, about whom there is little biographical data, or Uma-Hajji (Uma-Chadži) Duev (1808–1878). Kunduchov's operation was successful and he was able to prevent the spread of any further uprisings until the Caucasus War finally came to an end in 1864. He was nevertheless unable to avoid bloodshed in battles between Russian troops and local insurgents, as the followers of the *naibs* were killed and many *auls* were set ablaze, while some of the resistance leaders were exiled and others executed. Furthermore, the climate in the region did not improve at all and the situation in the North Caucasus was, as ever, characterized by alienation between the Russians and the native population (Gammer 2006: 69–70; Perović 2015: 107–10).

After many years in Russian service and after rising through the ranks to become a highly decorated Major-General, following the end of the Caucasus War, Kunduchov became exasperated with Russia's Caucasus policy based on his own experiences in the stifling of native resistance, but especially because the latter endured flagrant discrimination in the distribution of land. Furthermore, he complained about the forced conversion of Ossetians or the Aršte to Christianity. Increasingly, his own Muslim identity and his membership in the imperial army became contradictory, and the latter's harsh measures made it difficult for him to maintain the trust of the native population. He began to organize the emigration of several thousand people, the majority of whom were Chechens, to the Ottoman Empire, as he convinced them that they had hardly any future in the Caucasus, where they could only expect poverty and Orthodox proselytism to continue to make their lives miserable (Khodarkovsky 2011: 4; Perović 2015: 113–18). Already in 1865, his ship with hundreds of Caucasus natives aboard docked at an Ottoman Black Sea port and a total of over 23,000 people followed him into Ottoman emigration (Jersild 1997: 104).

While poverty and the lack of religious freedom were certainly important arguments, another thing which surely helped to convince Caucasus natives to leave their home countries was his promise to come back to the North Caucasus and drive the Russians out together with the Ottomans. Bribing influential figures among the Chechens might have done the rest (Ibid.). While one may debate about how Kunduchov's experiences with the repression of the Caucasus region's native population had influenced his attitude towards his former home country, his reputation certainly helped him make a rapid and impressive career in the Ottoman army. Twelve years after his emigration project, Musa Kunduchov was leading a Caucasus contingent against the Russian Empire, and he eventually led the entire Anatolian army and was awarded orders of distinction for his service against the enemy (Olejnikov 2001). After the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, he continued to serve the Ottoman army in Erzurum and

how much he and his family had actually become a part of the Ottoman elite may best be seen best in the example of his son Bekir Sami Kunduh (1865/7–1933), who would become Turkey’s first Minister of Foreign Affairs (Perović 2015: 117). As both his career and those of his family members were impressive in both the Russian and the Ottoman Empires, his example is representative of the difficulties of assigning the Caucasus native population to one side during the Russo-Ottoman War.

Another family which illustrates this “in-between” phenomenon of the Caucasus region is that of Sheikh Šamil' himself. While his second-oldest son Gha-zi-Muhammad (1833–1902) left for the Ottoman Empire and returned to the Caucasus just like Musa Kunduchov to fight Russian troops in 1877–1878 (Jersild 2002: 115), his fourth son Muhammad-Šefi (1840–1906) had a respectable career in the Russian Empire. He rose to the rank of a General-Major and eventually served as the Governor-General of the Kazan-Province (Ibid.: 123).

As it happened, the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 dominated Russian public life. This conflict fought on two fronts, in Southeastern Europe and in the Caucasus, cast a spell over virtually everybody who was able to make him- or herself heard in the Russian Empire of the late 1870s. Dostoevskij, Tolstoj, Turgenjev—they all wished to express their point of view on the war in either their works or their newspaper columns, thereby massively influencing the Russian public with respect to their understanding of what was going on in contemporary foreign policy. But it was not only writers who immortalized the war with their works, for the enormous interest in the war could be seen at all levels, with the continuous efforts to visualize it standing out in particular. While Russian photographers had already become quite skilled by the 1870s and were very active in taking photographs on the front, the medium itself was not yet ready for mass production and therefore hardly a factor in terms of mass appeal. Another source of visualization was the many famous paintings, especially by Vasilij V. Vereščagin, which capture the war and illustrate the confrontation’s appeal to many painters, who moved from other areas like Central Asia and focused on events in the Caucasus and, first and foremost, Southeastern Europe. The most influential source of visualization, however, were the so-called *lubki*, cheap popular prints and drawings, which were ready for mass production, and effectively also reached the illiterate masses in the Russian Empire’s countryside. These *lubki* were especially suitable for conveying messages during the war, as the image’s initial purpose to help city dwellers understand their Orthodox faith correlated with the war’s propagandistic religious connotations.

A dominant constant in the Russian interpretation of the war was its framing as a “holy war” between an Orthodox coalition, led by Russia, and the Muslim “Other”—the Ottoman Empire. This interpretation of the Russian Empire as the leader of a Christian alliance to triumph over a Muslim opponent was prominently celebrated in Russian popular culture, reinforcing faith as an element of Russian patriotism and nationhood. This approach, however, put the many Muslim peoples in the Russian Empire and especially in the Caucasus in the odd position of experiencing the Russian intent to bolster its rule in the region while simultaneously framing the Russo-Ottoman War as a Muslim-Christian confrontation—a narrative widely applicable to the Caucasus as well.

With all of this new focus on Russia’s endeavors to defeat the Ottoman Empire on both fronts and the mass ideologization of the war, the years 1877–1878 were characterized by far more than foreign politics, as they had deep significance to the inhabitants of the Caucasus region and their status in the Russian Empire. It is fair to say that representatives of different ethnic groups in the North Caucasus were involved on both the Russian side and that of its adversary, and they cannot be clearly identified with either party in their entirety. Any ethnic group suspected of collaboration with the Ottoman Empire was nevertheless subjected to harsh retaliation by the Russian authorities during the war and they were forced to resettle inside the Ottoman Empire’s borders, leading to yet another wave of emigration in 1877–1878. The examples of Musa Kunduchov and his son or the story of Šamil’s sons effectively serving opposing empires demonstrate on the small scale just how complex the question of affiliation had become in the Caucasus. The options of assimilation, internal exile and resistance and emigration formed a complex picture of a region and its inhabitants standing between different political ambitions. Furthermore—and again, the short stories by Vsevolod M. Garšin are the exception that prove the rule—the war was not exactly accompanied by enormous differentiations in public discourse, rather it demanded simple answers given the prevailing polarization. With the Caucasus region situated right in the focus of Ottoman and Russian interests, the question remains as to how the Russian public perceived the role of the inhabitants of its newly acquired territories and whether any kind of differentiation was present with respect to the very different contributions of the many ethnic groups living in the region. The following two chapters will address these questions through an examination of military documents from the Caucasus front as well as the Russian Empire’s (illustrated) mass media during the war.

6 MILITARY WRITING ON THE CAUCASUS FRONT

Already familiar with the character of Asian campaigns, I also wanted to get to know European wars, and since my friend [Aleksiej M.] Kumani, former Consul General in Paris, in time exchanged letters via our mutual acquaintance Baron Osten-Sa[c]ken with the command staff for the army gathered in Bessarabia, I was nominated to be attached to the commander-in-chief (Vereščagin 2007: 25).

Russian interest in its newest confrontation with the Ottoman Empire in 1877 was high. It was not only a matter of military and strategic importance, for the war became an issue of public relevance, encouraging everyone who had the possibility to express himself publicly to do so. Some writers, correspondents, and artists additionally even felt the urge to accompany the Russian army to the frontlines, primarily those in Southeastern Europe, and document their impressions. The famous Russian artist Vasilij V. Vereščagin (1842–1904), for instance, saw the outbreak of the war as an opportunity to see how wars would be fought on the European continent. Painters and poets were not the only ones who committed their observations to paper. Several of the Russian military's leaders kept their own diaries or corresponded with someone, to whom they would report from the front about what was happening in both the theaters of war and in their own minds. The role of the military in producing this kind of memoirist literature about the war cannot be overestimated, so when trying to gain an insight into how the war influenced the development of Russian perceptions of the Caucasus, it makes sense to take a closer look at the widely neglected military documents, for they reflect the Russian mindset on their southern borderlands exceptionally well due to their involvement in the field.

The genre of Russian military memoirs has proven quite rich, and the memories of every important figure of the late 19th-century Russian army seem to revolve around this particular war. But in a war so strongly focused on the European front and in an empire exhausted with having to deal with resistance movements in the Caucasus, how much of an interest did the military still show in writing about the local population? How far along had the integration of the Caucasus peoples into the Russian Empire and its army progressed and in that regard, how well did they come off in accounts written by those who fiercely fought against them only 13 years prior? Furthermore, the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 was a new chance for the Caucasus native population, many of whom were of Muslim faith and now found themselves at the wrong end of an

othering process with strong religious overtones, to express their unwillingness to stay under Russian rule and to actively mount resistance little more than a decade after the Caucasus War had finally come to its bloody conclusion. So how did the Russian exhaustion over struggling to control its southern borderlands comport with the widespread call for Russian intervention against the Ottoman Empire and the subsequently opened frontline in the Caucasus?

When reading the memoirs of Russian officer Vasilij V. Voejkov (2008: 9), one finds an enormous light-heartedness with respect to the upcoming war, as, for instance, when he wrote: “The joy was indescribable. ‘I’m going to war!’—I shouted to a friend, who was wishing the same no less than me.” However, Voejkov recounted this euphoria over two decades after the war had ended, while Vereščagin eventually found the time to reflect on the war only three years afterward. It is less relevant that the latter’s accounts may well be the most famous and widespread, as both texts immediately raise two questions: first, one has to ask how accurate these insights into the Russian military’s view of the Caucasus and its peoples during the war actually are, given the possibility of significant distortions caused by the delay in writing it all down. Both Voejkov and Vereščagin were able to include considerable retrospective assessments to their accounts, adding a more thoughtful rather than euphoric note, which was especially the case in the latter’s works and reminiscences. Second, these memoirs hardly speak of the Caucasus and its population. Is it because the Caucasus front played such a minor role in the war or is it because the Caucasus did not have the same internal importance at the time when the two authors wrote the memoirs? It is difficult to tell, but one would do well to assume that the accounts say as much about the time in which they were actually written as about the time they attempted to recapitulate. This is why the current chapter will be based on an analysis of only those documents written during the months of war and will focus on diaries and letters rather than memoirs. Furthermore, it should be noted that this analysis is not meant to question the military and strategic information given by the authors, as the focus clearly rests on the descriptions of the Caucasus peoples and not the war *per se*.

The wide societal range of Russians participating in the war resulted in a broad spectrum of descriptions. One can find accounts by military leaders, nurses, and writers and other public figures, while the latter may have either passively travelled with the troops or actively took up arms. Some works were immediately published as they were written by an individual with wider societal prestige and importance. A good example is certainly Prince Vladimir P. Meščerskij (1839–1914), who was well established as both a famed writer and journalist in the Russian Empire’s public sphere who, by frequently publishing

contributions in contemporary periodicals such as *Severnaja pčela* [Northern Bee], *Moskovskie vedomosti* [Moscow News], *Russkij Vestnik* [Russian Herald] and others, he was able to influence his readership's opinion of the Russo-Ottoman War (Sotničenko 2011: 137). The most productive source for his thoughts on the region is his most oft-cited work, *Kavkazskij putevoj dnevnik* [Caucasus Travelogue], where one can find his impressions and descriptions while touring the Caucasus front during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. Of similar interest to a wider audience was the coverage by the war correspondents Grigorij K. Gradovskij (1842–1915), Vasilij I. Nemirovič-Dančenko (1844/45–1936) and Aleksej N. Maslov (1853–1922), who was also admitted to the active army so that he did more than simply travel alongside the troops. They all were able to publish their collected impressions in the immediate aftermath of the war and they found a wide readership for their books. The impressions of Ekaterina M. Bakunina (1810–1894) exemplify the view of the many nurses who served in the Russian army.

Bakunina's observations were printed in the *Sbornik voennykh razskazov* (SVR) [Collection of War Stories], published by Meščerskij in St. Petersburg in 1879. In this collection there was an attempt to give a voice to many Russian participants in the war, and this type of publication typified the new quantity of materials made available after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. Even though the Russian reading public constantly received commentary on the war by dominant public figures such as Fëdor M. Dostoevskij (cf. Chapter 5), and despite the many monographs published right after the war, a vast amount of Russian documents were published in collected volumes—some immediately after the war, others decades later. Some of the more notable multi-volume publications are the already mentioned Collection of War Stories but also *Materialy dlja opisanija russko-tureckoj vojny 1877–1878 g.g.* [Materials for the Description of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878], which were published separately for both fronts. The materials for the “theater in the Caucasus and Minor Asia,” were published between 1904 and 1911, first in St. Petersburg and then in Tbilisi. These publications were under the purview of the Military History Commission, which had a monopoly on the publication of any war-related information and which also made some correspondence by Russian generals serving on the Caucasus front available to public. Furthermore, one can find the forgotten diaries of Russian participants in the war in the region's archives, and these also provide an accurate insight into the Russian military's mindset when serving on the Caucasus front.

Considering this new quality of quantity with respect to wartime documentation, I have opted to compare a cross-section of different types of texts written

by authors with different ranks in the army and its supporting services. Despite their heterogeneous backgrounds, all of these documents have something in common: very high subjectivity when it comes to the portrayal of the Caucasus. All of these authors were part of the Russian Empire's system which deemed the Caucasus a legitimately acquired territory and its native population as subjects of St. Petersburg. It is precisely this subjectivity that makes a critical discourse analysis of these types of texts enormously promising in finding an answer to the question of how the image of the Caucasus had altered up to and during the latest war with the Ottoman Empire. The military's accounts will again give some indication of which groups and persons are mentioned, of attribution processes and of the arguments employed in the discourse in question. These materials will also shed light on why certain things were possibly excluded from the descriptions and explain the role of the Caucasus at the time of the Russian Empire's first major war after the Caucasus War had ended in 1864.

THE MILITARY AND THE CAUCASUS

Before taking into consideration how the population of the Caucasus was referred to in military documents and descriptions, it would certainly be worthwhile to more closely examine how the Caucasus was perceived as a region and especially as a living space. Did the Russian military perceive it as an equal part of the Russian Empire for which they served? Do the descriptions give the reader the impression of the writer portraying the Russian-controlled Caucasus in contrast to the Ottoman Caucasus? It is fair to say that both questions must be answered negatively, and with respect to the contrast given, the Russian military viewed the Caucasus, both the Russian or Ottoman parts of it, as the exact opposite of the cultivated Russian Empire which had its apex in Moscow and, especially, in St. Petersburg. The latter cities were the materialization of the Russian understanding of being European and to all authors they serve as the antithesis of the supposed Asian nature of the Caucasus and its cities.

After having spent two days there, Meščerskij (1878: 56) wrote that Tiflis [Tbilisi] was a city of pure chaos—a city without municipality and without police, something simply impossible to establish in any Asian city. He reached this conclusion on the basis of the lack of public hygiene he observed in Tiflis and his disgust over carcasses lying for days even in the city's main street (Ibid.). According to him, the city's Asian character made it impossible to keep it clean, and he was mostly appalled by the conditions of the Kura River running through the city, which contained the "full reservoir of the entire city's sewage," and since people drank from the river, diseases like typhus, tuberculo-

sis, scarlet fever and others were ever-present (Ibid.: 56–57). Observations of low hygienic standards and “the heavy stench in the air” that created the “unpleasant smell of musk by which the Orient in general and the Tartar tribes in particular distinguished themselves” (Maslov 1879: 97) are the general tone in Russian descriptions of both cities in the Russian and the Ottoman Caucasus. Maslov (1879: 98), for instance, referred to a city’s bazaar as its “filthiest place” and described the contested Northeastern Anatolian city of Kars thusly: “The city, just like other Asian cities, carries a general oriental imprint: the same narrow, skew and smelly streets, filled with packs of dead or living dogs [...]” (Maslov 1879: 157). Pavel D. Zotov (2001: 110) chimed in when describing Tärnovo in 6 (18) December 1877, ascribing to the city a “entirely Asian character: dirt and a remarkably foul stench [...]” Meščerskij’s conclusion that “Tiflis, due to its hygienic conditions, belongs among the most miasmatic and unhealthy cities in Europe” is interesting, as elsewhere he and also other contemporaries usually refer to the South Caucasus as being a part of Asia in contrast to European Russia. Bakunina (1879: 420–21) described Tiflis as “a blend of Asia and Europe” and complained that in the “magnificent, Asian mansion” in which she was accommodated, “there was no European comfort at all.” For the nurse, everything south of the Caucasus Mountains seemed to be Asian—“in Asia, behind the Caucasus” (Ibid.: 456)—i.e., fundamentally different from the Russian Empire and in her letters she did not hesitate to include her observations on camels being used for transportation with the words: “Now this is already Asia!” (Ibid.: 434). Seeing bullock carts with Ottoman officers wearing red fezzes somewhere near the Armenian town of Diližan prompted her to state: “That’s how you feel what Asia is” (Ibid.: 441). The military descriptions portray the Caucasus as a region significantly different from Russia, something particularly interesting with respect to Russian discourses over the empire’s position between Europe and Asia.

The perception of the Caucasus as the Russian Empire’s outermost periphery was thereby widespread and this is especially true of the perception of the Caucasus front in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. The Russian military was convinced that the main front was still in Southeastern Europe, while the battles in the Caucasus were of somewhat minor importance. Butovskij (1879: 519) wrote that the war’s eastern front did not receive much attention and that the present units could act just as they pleased:

In the Caucasus army, armed clashes at small outposts aren’t even considered events, they happen almost every night and without the participation of higher authorities. [...] In every other army, I’d say, it would be considered criminal if the chief of the outpost decided to send out a group of hunters without the permission of the authorities.

The peripheral meaning of the Caucasus front is also inherent in the notes of another Russian officer whose name is unknown (SEA f1087/op1/588: 10) and who stated that the main front was in the Balkans and that the Caucasus front had been opened only for two reasons: 1.) To conquer Batumi, Kars, or even Erzurum, and 2.) To draw Ottoman troops from the front in Southeastern Europe. This perception of the reasons for the clashes in Anatolia seemed to be common ground as the nurse Bakunina (1879: 441), writing on 22 October (3 November) 1877 also noted the necessity of conquering the same three cities, with special emphasis on Batumi, as it would be a strategically important harbor, unique in the Caucasus, helping business in the region to flourish. The military campaigns at “the remote outskirts” (*Geroi i dejateli* 1878: 2), i.e., in the Caucasus region, also occurred in an information vacuum—at least in the perceptions of low-ranking participants. In her wartime letters, the nurse Ekaterina Bakunina repeatedly complains about a lack of information. In the entries from 9 (21) August 1877, she wrote that she could not know anything positive about the warfare and could only report that “the word is, the Turks stand on the mountains while Ter-Gukasov wants to entice them into the valleys” (Bakunina 1879: 425). She was able to comment on the news of the final capture of Plevna on 11 (23) December 1877, so only a day after it happened, but all circumstances were unclear to her and in her letter she asked for any details (Ibid.: 451). Already after the Treaty of San Stefano (19 February (3 March) 1878), she wrote on 12 (24) April 1878 that the post and therefore the newspapers had not come and they would know nothing at all about further developments (Ibid.: 467). Meščerskij (1878: 13) took the same line when he wrote: “Strange, the farther away from Moscow, the nearer to the Caucasus, the less everybody knows about operations in the theaters of war. Our train brings newspapers and with them the news.” With respect to the newspapers however, Bakunina (1879: 470) expressed her doubts and asked the addressee of her letters: “Again I repeat, please, do not believe the rumors, nor even the newspapers; I read yesterday in “Kavkaz” that in Erzerum there were 9,000 patients while General Meščenko told me now it’s only 4,000.”

PEOPLING THE FRONTLINES AND THE HINTERLAND

With respect to the characterization of the Caucasus as peripheral, the military agreed and before even taking a closer look at the portrayal of the Caucasus population, one does get a Russian impression of a remote and underdeveloped region, part of an “Asian” other with nothing in common with the rest of the Empire. However, this remote periphery is not a vast grassland—it was popu-

lated by a high number of ethnic groups who have all shaped the Caucasus for centuries and most importantly well before the Russian advance to its recently incorporated southern borderlands. As elaborated before, the Russo-Caucasus relationship in the preceding centuries was dominated by ignorance, but the 19th century brought huge progress in Russian knowledge about the region due to scientific interest but even more so due to the military experiences in the almost fifty-year Caucasus War and the years of established Russian rule. Therefore one should assume that on the nominative level, i.e. which groups and persons are mentioned and how they are named and referred to, a step forward in terms of a greater Russian awareness of the region's ethnic diversity was reflected in military descriptions of the Caucasus front in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. The analysis of the many diaries and letters written by Russian participants during the war has shown that in strictly quantitative terms this assumption can be confirmed. Compared to texts from earlier in the 19th century, these documents no longer portray the Caucasus as merely populated by an anonymous group of highlanders but rather by a variety of ethnic groups who are precisely named with distinct designations. In Meščerskij's (1878) notes, one can read not only about the Georgians and Armenians of the South Caucasus but about Chechens, Ossetians, Lezgians, Circassians, Karapapaks and Kurds. Maslov (1879) described Armenian and Tatar villages and mentioned Greeks, Circassians, Laz, Karapapaks, Ossetians, Kabardians and Kurds populating the Caucasus. Tutojamin's (1879) accounts additionally mention the Ingush.

Other than in these diaries, the correspondence of various military personnel provides an even more detailed account of the Caucasus ethnic map. Major-General Aleksej M. Smekalov (1838–1890), in a report from 19 (31) October 1877 on events in the Dagestan province gave an update on how to handle the resistance of the Didoi (or Cez people), while Major-General Komarov, in a letter from 15 (27) October 1877 wrote about Tabasarans and Kjurins living in southern Derbent (Tomkeev 1910: 24–25; 41–43). The latter example already indicates a major problem with the different groups mentioned: their designation very often referred to a geographical feature rather than to Russian awareness of an ethnic group of the same name. So when Major-General Komarov described the population of southern Derbent, he may well have meant the Tabasaran people, a predominantly Sunni Muslim ethnic group and speakers of a Northeast Caucasus language which was the last to be described in Pëtr Uslar's endeavors to map the Caucasus languages (cf. Chapter 4). However, it is very likely that Major-General Komarov was actually simply referring to the inhabitants of the Tabasaranskij District in terms of its administrative function. In the case of the Tabasarans, this may have overlapped, as the majority of the

district was indeed of Tabasaran ethnicity while with other names this was certainly not the case. Therefore, one should not overestimate the higher frequency of named groups and one should certainly not conclude that by the late 1870s, Russian knowledge of the variety of ethnic groups in the Caucasus had already been firmly fixed and attracted enough interest that the military would naturally incorporate it into its communications. Topographical descriptions are therefore just as common as actual references to social groups on the basis of their ethnic affiliation and it is impossible to draw any further conclusions out of context. Furthermore, the lines between naming ethnic groups in a pre-national framework or regional affiliations are rather vague. In the periphery of the Caucasus region, modern nation building processes had not even begun, and while settlement patterns and tribal structures dominated the social organization, identity was sought and derived from smaller societal parameters, such as the clan, village or one's native region. This is also reflected in the Russian military descriptions, for one can read about Karakajtagcy, Madžaliscy and Bašlyncy (Tomkeev 1910: 41), Dagestancy (Meščerskij 1878: 69; 101; 108; 146), or Imeretincy (Ibid.: 108). Another factor complicating the inference of any conclusions when considering the mentioned groups is that the Russian military often referred to its sub-units by their place of origin. Therefore, one cannot distinguish between a reference to the Abkhazian ethnic groups from a reference to the Russian army's Abkhazian Regiment, as they were both called "the Abkhazians." The same may be true for the Dagestani Regiment or the Mingrelian Regiment (Maslov 1879: 23; 35), and more obviously the Apšeronskian Regiment (Tomkeev 1910: 27), which is why the mention of any of these given groups may actually refer to one of three things: 1.) the ethnic group, 2.) merely the geographical origin of the respective group, or 3.) a military unit in the Russian army.

Another problem is certainly the question of the Russian selectivity when it comes to the various peoples of the Caucasus. As Christian Dettmering (2011: 316–18) has shown citing the example of the Ingush people, awareness of linguistic diversity among the Chechens and Ingush, as elaborated by Adolf Berže, did not automatically mean that military personnel nor even ethnographers demonstrated a desire to differentiate between them. The linguist Leonard P. Zagurskij (1880: 9–10; cit. in Dettmering 2011: 317), for instance, tried to prove in 1888 that the Ingush were not a distinct ethnic group but rather a sub-group of the Chechens, such as the Kists, Aršte (referred to as Karabulaks), or the Bacbi were believed to be. These unclear classifications therefore make it difficult to deduct on the basis of the different groups whose names were specified or omitted whether there was any awareness of their existence and their

participation in the war between the Russian and Ottoman Empires. However, if such an ethnic “subgroup” is indeed separately specified, it occurs for a reason and within a larger framework. Since in Russian eyes, the population west of the Terek River was considered more peaceful throughout the last years of the Caucasus War, it made sense to highlight their submission in contrast to the rebellious population east of the river. Obviously, the Ingush were deemed a part of the cooperative Caucasus (a narrative that would again change later) and were therefore named more often than previously in order to put an emphasis on that narrative’s antipode: the “rebellious and murderous Chechens.”

Subsuming different ethnic groups under the umbrella of another with whom they are associated is one thing, while generalizations are another. A greater awareness of ethnic diversity in the Caucasus and the increasing experience of Russians in that region did not necessarily lead the latter to cease using blanket designations for the entire region’s population. The quality of these designations was divergent and does not necessarily need to be analyzed within its attributing contexts. Fairly neutral terms such as *tuzemcy* [natives] (Maslov 1879: 6; Meščerskij 1878: 19; Tomkeev 1910: 37) and *gorcy* [mountaineers] (cf., for example, Maslov 1879: 57; Meščerskij 1878: 17; Tomkeev 1910: 36; Tutojamin 1879: 4) appear frequently and seem to be the main term of reference even in unpublished notes during the war (SEA f1087/op1/588). The term *kavkazcy*, though, does not refer to the native population of the Caucasus but rather to Russian veterans of the Caucasus War of 1817–1864. Other designations, mostly in a narrower but not exactly specific context, include a pejorative connotation such as in *mjatežniki* [rebels] (Tomkeev 1910: 23–28) or even *chiščniki* [beasts of prey] (Gradovskij 1878: n. pag.; Meščerskij 1878: 15). The latter terminology was nonetheless rarely used, for which there are several reasons. A closer look at the attributional strategies, i.e. an analysis of the characteristics, qualities, and features attributed to the non-Russian population of the Caucasus, as well as at the arguments employed with respect to the discourse on its role in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 will help foster a better understanding of the Russian military’s perception of the region and its inhabitants.

SEEKING THE “NOBLE SAVAGES”

So what happened to the image of the “noble savage,” that was so prominent in Romantic literature? What happened to the portrayals of the Caucasus natives as virile and sophisticated warriors and where are their positive attributes? After analyzing the documents written on the front, it is fair to conclude that the image of the “noble savage” faded away after the Caucasus War came to an end

and after the Russian Empire established control in an area it got to know better and better as the years passed. As Russian ethnographers began describing the region more precisely and as the mysteries of native life in the Caucasus diminished, the narrative of wild and noble purity persisting in the mountains simply seems to have lost importance in a Russian mindset focused on a war rooted in ideological dichotomy. There can be no doubt that the stories and legends of the myth-enshrined Caucasus were still very much present, and obviously the Russian military was an important part of Russian society and therefore biased by the prevailing images of the Caucasus from preceding years and decades, regardless of whether or not they had personally served in the Caucasus. Russian education had made them familiar with the poems and novels by Puškin, Lermontov, Tolstoj and others and they had learnt passages by heart which they now recalled when serving on the Caucasus front. Meščerskij (1878: 38–39) thus wrote about the moment in which he had “first read Lermontov and shed tears over Tamara” and seeing Anton Rubinštejn’s opera *Demon*, based on the poem of the same name by Lermontov, in St. Petersburg’s Mariinskij Theatre, which had surely cemented his image of Russia’s southern borderlands. Nevertheless, the Romantic representation of the Caucasus was no longer the only source of representation and with war and death being stronger narratives than exile and inspiration, descriptions of the region’s native population had changed significantly. Therefore, accounts of the “attractive type of a belligerent brave Caucasian” (Meščerskij 1878: 25) had changed by the late 1870s and now indicated the Caucasus War as a source of Russian bravery and distinction with “Caucasian” referring to a Russian veteran of the Caucasus War of 1817–1864.

If idealized virility, strength and manhood could no longer be found when examining military descriptions of the Caucasus native population in the late 1870s, what were the main traits attributed to it? First and foremost, it was described as wild, chaotic, restless, rebellious and semi- or even uncivilized. Meščerskij (1878: 17–18) recounted stories of local resistance in the Terek Province and by association he cited some keywords which seem to have colored his perception of that part of the Caucasus, i.e. “with the Vedeno Gorge, with the mountaineers, Chechnya, native land and traditions of Šamil’; short, with all the elements of an only recently pacified region, with the wild natives.” The frequently attributed wildness and rebellious character of the Caucasus population also served as a justification for all manner of Russian measures and campaigns. On 23 October (4 November) 1877, Major-General Smekalov (Tomkeev 1910: 27) reported on the storming of the *aul* Tilitl’ and the beginning of warfare against the local population. He did so by immediately designating the inhabitants of the *aul* as rebellious, something which can be observed

very often in Russian descriptions of Russo-Caucasus conflicts. The cynical conclusions of such operations read as follows: “All measures will be taken, so that any bloodshed is avoided and the peaceful declaration of unconditional obedience by the inhabitants of the rebellious aul is achieved” (Ibid.). This narrative of an uncooperative and unreasonably defiant native population continually dominated military communication and observations, and dictums such as “the perpetrators of the rebellion” (Tomkeev 1910: 29) or “the capture of a rebellious village” (Ibid.: 30) are the primary descriptive terms for Russian advances into the mountains, while opposing forces are simply referred to as “gangs” (Ibid.: 32; Gradovskij 1878: n. pag.; Meščerskij 1878: 18).

Descriptions of Caucasus life constantly revolving around turmoil, warfare and violence, as well as willful avoidance of seizing the opportunity for Russian stability and pacification, are common themes in the writings of Russian contemporaries. The outbreak of the war in 1877 and the local rebellions that flared up in Dagestan and Chechnya further reinforced this narrative. While Meščerskij (1878: 18) wrote that one could consider Dagestan the most trustworthy province, where only recently peace and quiet had reigned, the course of events in 1877–1878 prompted him and other authors to soon draw other conclusions about the situation in the eastern Caucasus. In a letter from 30 October (11 November) 1877, Major-General Smekalov (Tomkeev 1910: 33) reported that one could not imagine how chaotic the situation in Dagestan was and that it was sufficient to say that in Middle Dagestan, with the exception of conquered Sogratl', there was no administration, i.e. no normal circumstances at all.

These attributions of anarchic savagery were not necessarily limited to conflict and violence and neither were they used exclusively for the regions north of the Caucasus mountain range. The nurse Ekaterina Bakunina (1879: 422) thus described the Armenian town of Diližan with the following words: “Here is an Armenian village in all of its wildness, with shops and work in the streets, with buffalos crowded together with their legs bound so they can be shod.” This and similar descriptions imply Russian superiority over the alleged backwardness of the savage Caucasus, reflected in numerous descriptions of local individuals or groups.

This imputed backwardness can be seen in other attributions as well, and one of the other traits that can be found in military descriptions of the Caucasus population is certainly their alleged lack of intelligence. Meščerskij (1878: 36) quoted a coachman calling the Ossetians a “stupid people” and Bakunina (1879: 455) also referred to the widow of an Armenian as a “stupid and confused” woman. Where generalizing descriptions of stupidity can be found, other superficial categories are not far off, and thus it comes as no surprise that Meščerskij

(1878: 278–79) described a group of Karapapaks, accompanying Prince Mirskij and a group of Cossacks, as hideous.

However, to the Russian military other qualities were certainly more important than a lack of intellect or comeliness and therefore these characterizations serve as a side note. Therefore, an integral trope is the narrative of the Caucasus region's native population as an extraordinary threat to the Russian subjects serving and living in the region. While simultaneously praising Russian civilizing achievements, Meščerskij (1878: 15–19) spoke of places where it was as “dangerous to pass by the Ossetian beasts of prey's *auls*,” and of “the mountains giving the mountaineers the capability of attacking villages, stealing and taking away the cattle.” He described the Dagestan province as having high potential for misfortune because, among other things, of the many robberies that occurred there. In his diary entry of 7 (19) December 1877, Meščerskij (1877: 20) also mentioned rumors that the next Bayram, i.e. the Muslim feast of breaking the fast, would become a large-scale revolt at Vladikavkaz with the ensuing slaughter of Christians.

When reading Maslov's view of the proceedings at the Caucasus front, it becomes clear that this attributed threat was not limited to Caucasus natives being the enemy *per se*—that being actually the case within the framework of the Russo-Ottoman War and the related local uprisings against Russian rule or simply due to ideological othering—but also to Caucasus natives who already had been integrated into the Russian Empire's administrative machinery. With regard to the formation of regiments which also included representatives of Caucasus peoples, Maslov (1879: 48–49) considered the Russian army as consisting of harmful elements within its own ranks, and as he obviously did intend for readers to speculate as to where and who, he clarified: “I am talking about the Muslims.” Not only did Maslov imply that the only peril is posed by the Caucasus population, but he also explicitly attributed the danger to the region's Muslim peoples.

That it did not necessarily have to be a Muslim group which was perceived as a threat to Russian safety and order can be seen in the elaborations of General Ivan F. Tutojamin (1837–1908). He wrote of a Russian officer who was concerned about an Ossetian regiment unable to maintain their cool during the war due to their natural hot-bloodedness, so he could not therefore give them orders to fire (Tutojamin 1879: 112). On the other hand, he later acknowledged that he was assuaged by the demonstrated sangfroid of the Ossetians. Even so, these encounters often did not lead to endearment but rather to further estrangement. Thus, Maslov (1879: 49) went on to describe the Kabardians as the “most desperate and ruthless cutthroats,” again not only implying wildness but also an

actual threat to the Russians who had to cooperate with units formed from Caucasus natives. To be sure, this was not a specific Kabardian quality in Maslov's descriptions (Ibid.), for he did not have very pleasant things to say about the Karapapaks either, whom he called a "plundering tribe" and "cowardly jackals." According to him, they spent their entire lives in skirmishes and chose their side based on whoever appeared stronger, not promising that they would not easily change sides if the balance of power shifted. Also, they had no sense of honor, as they ruthlessly looted from the injured and dead on the battlefields as soon as the fighting ceased. Maslov assumed that the change of sides by several hundred Karapapaks on the day when war was declared, subsequently forming the Šuragelian regiment, had occurred because they heard about the possibility of rich booty, which, as he argued extensively, had to be carefully monitored. He also reported about a case of Kabardians already joining the enemy side at Kars, and referred to the Karapapaks as a "burden not only for us but even for the Turkish government" (Ibid.). Gradovskij (1878: n. pag.) also had only the worst to say about the Karapapaks: "It is necessary to note, that the Karapapaks do not represent any kind of nationality. They are a rabble of all kinds of scum, not wanting to work and living at the expense of others, for the most part by violence and theft."

In his coverage, Maslov did not seem to see anything positive in the integration of Caucasus natives into the Russian army, for he criticized all of these irregular detachments, *inorodcy* regiments, as for some reason costing a great deal of money and not being of any use at all (Maslov 1879: 49). All these observations about the wild and uncivilized peoples in the Caucasus, whom one simply could not trust and who would not only endanger Russians *per se* but also the success of the Russian army on the battlefields against the Ottoman Empire lead to the question of whether they were perceived by the Russians as Ottoman accomplices, a fifth column in service of the enemy in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. Theoretically, this could go either way, as participants, from all manner of peoples had participated in the war on both sides, not making it possible to draw a line between pro-Russian and pro-Ottoman Caucasus peoples (cf. Chapter 5), but practically, i.e. due to the much higher frequency of emphasis on Ottoman-Caucasus collaborations, it does bring me to one of the most prominent arguments employed in the military discourse: that one could not trust the natives because they had either already joined or potentially would at some point join the enemy side to take revenge for the repression endured during and after the Caucasus War of 1817–1864.

THE CAUCASUS PEOPLES BETWEEN TWO EMPIRES

The belief that Caucasus emigrants extensively supported any enemy fighting the Russians was widespread, and Maslov (1879: 47–49) rhetorically asked his readers “who isn’t in the Turkish armies” before answering in the form of a list of several peoples including the Laz, Kurds and Karapapaks and before referring to the already quoted incident of Kabardians and Dagestani peoples switching sides at Kars. This narrative of Ottoman-Caucasus collaboration was noticeably driven by a personification of the links between the Ottoman Empire and its ambitions to influence the Caucasus and the latter’s population which sought assistance from Istanbul. The myth of Imam Šamil’ was still swirling around in the heads of the Russian troops, and references to his movement were quite commonly made in the military observations, reflecting a certain respect or even admiration, as is apparent in the following: “Already in the 1850s, in the period of Šamil’'s fame and power[...]” (SEA, f1087/op1/588: 50).

However, more than the legends surrounding him, Šamil’'s legacy continued to exert influence in the physical form of his son, Ghazi-Muhammad (1833–1902). Lieutenant-Colonel Tomkeev (SEA f1087/op1/587: 37), for example, wrote that: “The turncoats from the Circassians and Dagestani [...] come here every day and say that they are only waiting for the arrival of Šamil’'s son so they can unite with the Turkish forces and work against the Russians.” Other references to Ghazi-Muhammad are similar, presenting “the son of the well-known and famous Imam of Chechnya and Dagestan, Šamil’,” as a military leader on the battlefield, who had already “gathered tens of hundreds of mountaineers” for the fight against the Yerevan detachment of General Ter-Gukasov (SEA, f1087/op1/588: 50). As in other documents, Ghazi-Muhammad is often simply called “the son of Šamil’,” who “had fled alongside Muhtar[-pašaj]” (Meščerskij 1878: 69), “had several times turned up at the fortress alongside the Turks” (Geroi i dejateli 1878: 8), or “had formerly been in our service” (Maslov 1879: 38). For all of these authors, it seems that they placed considerable importance on portraying Šamil’'s son Ghazi-Muhammad as a link to the Ottomans, i.e., on establishing a connection between the Caucasus resistance and an external factor negatively impacting the Russian Empire’s ability to impose stability in the Caucasus.

Thus, Meščerskij believed that the primary impetus behind the Caucasus resistance came from its leaders living in Ottoman exile, secretly pulling strings from a safe distance. In this view, the leader of the Chechen-Dagestani rebellions during the Russo-Ottoman War, Albik-Hajji, met with Ghazi-Muhammad in Istanbul on his way back to the Caucasus from a pilgrimage to Mecca and received the entire plan on how to have Chechnya and the region as a whole rise

up simultaneously with the disembarkation of Ottoman troops. Gradovskij (1878: n. pag.) recounted the very same story, adding that it was this visit which made Albik-Hajji such an influential man when he returned home. However, Meščerskij does emphasize that the plan did not work because the masses of Caucasus natives did not fall for Ottoman promises, although they henceforth lived with the vague expectations of Ottoman assistance, causing restlessness among the local population, something the Russian military linked to certain mountaineers selling their horses and cattle (Meščerskij 1878: 18–19). Furthermore, Meščerskij (Ibid.: 21) referred to some local rumors when he wrote about Albik-Hajji receiving a golden saber from the Sultan as a sign of alleged gratitude for the Chechen-Dagestani uprising detaining two Russian divisions. Again, he found it important to stress possible ties between the Ottoman Empire and the Caucasus native population, because it served the military well as a justification for harsh measures to restore Russian rule in the region.

Slightly less prominent but still pertinent to the overall point is the story of the native Ossetian Musa Kunduchov, who had once served in the Russian army, but after emigrating to the Ottoman Empire after the end of the Caucasus War in 1864, he in turn commanded his own division in the next conflict between the Ottoman and Russian Empires. This episode is commonly stressed by Russian military men and most references to Kunduchov are accompanied by an added notation, such as “former general in the Russian service” (SEA, f1087/op1/588: 48), “Mussa-paša, i.e. the former general in Russian service Kunduchov” (Gradovskij 1878: n. pag.) or “formerly in our service” (Maslov 1879: 38). Kunduchov’s unit was similarly portrayed as according to the Russian military it was a “Circassian cavalry of our migrants” (SEA, f1087/op1/588: 49). According to Russian agents however, Kunduchov did not have the support of all Caucasus migrants to the Ottoman Empire, as they could not trust him due to his history in the Russian army, which is why he could only recruit not more than 5,000 of them—a sixth of what he had hoped for (Ibid.). One can see that Caucasus support for Ottoman units, even under someone whom the *Muhajirs* would have considered a fellow countryman, was far from guaranteed, and there were in fact sufficient Caucasus natives willing to join the Russian side. The questions are if and how the Russians perceived such a closing of ranks and whether they attributed it to certain peoples only.

Two groups which were certainly portrayed as Russian allies in the (southern) Caucasus were the Duchobor and Molokan sectarians. The latter were formed in the 18th century and reject the church as an institution as well as its hierarchy. As of the early 19th century, the Russian government began to relocate sectarians such as the Molokans to its peripheries, i.e. for instance to the

southern Caucasus, where they were allowed to settle in the Tiflis, Yerevan, Elizavetpol', and Baku provinces (Haytian 2007: 33–35). There they gradually adapted to their new conditions and acquired new occupations, such as livestock husbandry and handicrafts, to their traditional agriculture. The Duchobors additionally reject the doctrine of the Divine Trinity and deny the church's sacraments. In contrast to the Molokans, their ideology is based on revelation rather than Scripture. Because the Duchobors and Molokans were Russian by origin, the military did perceive these two groups as suitable for any kind of cooperation, thereby attributing all kinds of positive characteristics to them. In his memoirs, Vereščagin recalled his experiences travelling throughout the Caucasus, and contrasted the background of the Duchobor presence in the region to that of the Armenians and Tatars, who received them with hostility and made life for the sectarians harsher than necessary (Vereščagin 2014: 29). During the war of 1877–1878, Bakunina (1879: 432) described the Molokans as “a quiet people,” and wrote that “they very much live in order.” But she also stated that: “The magistrates’ court says that Tatars reconcile with each other often, Armenians sometimes but Molokans never.” In Meščerskij’s diary (1878: 144), one can read about “Diližan, where our Molokans live.” The use of the possessive pronoun “our” suggests his perception of the Molokans as Russian allies. Maslov’s accounts (1879: 148–49) are similar and in his description of both Molokans and Duchobors, his initial emphasis was placed on the fact that they were originally migrants from Russia, having mainly received lands at the Ottoman and Persian borders where they would live in “extraordinary wealth and in contentment.” Exempt from military service, each Duchobor and Molokan village had to supply a certain amount of covered wagons with four horses each, for which they would receive 160 rubles to cover the costs, especially for the necessary fodder. But Maslov stressed that this sum was quite often not enough as prices had increased, which meant that of these 160 rubles nothing remained and the Duchobors and Molokans had to pay the rest themselves. This episode and other stories and comments on the Duchobors and Molokans supporting the Russian army in transportation with their covered wagons (cf. for instance Gradvorskij 1878: n. pag.; Maslov 1879: 148) are a good example of a group considered helpful for the ambitions of the Russian military, but can one find other cases of similar attributions and arguments with respect to ethnic groups which cannot be so easily incorporated into a national narrative of Russian heroism?

Tellingly, there are hardly any positively-intoned accounts of Caucasus natives fighting in the Russian army, or if there are they are mostly concealed in general praise for a certain detachment which was known to have partially consisted of representatives of various Caucasus peoples. While the Russian mili-

tary was quick to point out certain ethnic groups collaborating with the Ottoman army, a comparable identification of peoples either allied or perfectly integrated into military service was not pursued. Different regiments were compared to each other by the different writers, and Smekalov (Tomkeev 1910: 16–24) repeatedly praised the efforts of the Kurinskij regiment and contrasted their contribution to that of the Dagestani troops, saying that “our Kurincy should not even be compared” to the latter. The Derbent regiment was portrayed in a similarly anonymous manner, except for one case where the nurse Bakunina described the injury of an officer, adding that he was of Muslim faith without specifying his ethnicity (Bakunina 1879: 460). An exemption to this absent focus on cooperative or fully integrated peoples into the Russian army may be the group of one hundred Ossetians who formed the Vladikavkaz regiment’s vanguard (cf., for example, Tutojamin 1879: 54). An interesting comment is made by Major-General Smekalov in a letter from 23 November (5 December) 1877 (Tomkeev 1910: 39–40) when describing the advance of the Russian army’s units into Chechnya and, in particular, toward the villages of Tilitl’ and Sogratl’. There he did in fact praise the participation of the “Içkerincy,” which is in fact not an ethnic designation but a reference to southern Chechnya, i.e., the mountainous hinterland of the northern Chechen plains. Smekalov wrote that this group “has proven itself as an extraordinarily useful and good people,” a highly unusual comment, especially with regard to Chechnya, where the Russian Empire predominantly emphasized a societal division of cooperative Chechens in the plains versus rebellious and hostile Chechens living in the southern mountains. Tutojamin (1879: 55) had similar things to report, only not in Chechnya but a little farther to the west. He reflected on experiences with the Kabardians and concluded from it that “one could suggest, that we had advantageous affairs” with them.

Aside from the question of whether collaborative peoples were Christian or Muslim, Smekalov also referred to another denominational group living in the Caucasus, namely to the Mountain Jews who mostly lived in the northeastern Caucasus, especially in Dagestan. The Russian Major-General extolled their bravery and especially highlighted the contribution of one of the Third Sunženskij Regiment’s Mountain Jewish commanders, Aaron Izmajlov (Tomkeev 1910: 25–26). Even so, the Mountain Jews’ participation and, indeed, their very existence seems to be a footnote in Russian stories on the Caucasus Front, and nowhere else can one read of Izmajlov’s troops and their participation with the rest of the Russian army during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. This episode of “brave Jews” participating in the Russian Empire’s war in no way means that anti-Semitism cannot be found in the military correspondence. Thus,

Zotov (2001: 128) complained about the Bulgarians “exploiting” the Russians, asserting that they had the same roots in commerce as the Jews.

Similar prejudices were present in the Russian military’s perception of a Caucasus ethnic group with a Christian and literary tradition dating back to the early 4th and 5th century: the Armenians. At the nominative level, the Armenians were prominently represented and it is interesting to analyze the Russian perception of the Armenian role in the Caucasus and the Russo-Ottoman War 1877–1878, for theoretically speaking they could have served as something of an anti-thesis to the peoples of the North Caucasus because of their of Christianity and literacy. Prince Meščerskij (1878: 56) did in fact highlight the significant role of the Armenian community in Tiflis and said that if one wanted to understand the strength and prestige of the Armenians and their political importance, one had to visit Tiflis. Many told him that this city was not only the capital city of the Caucasus but also of the Armenian Empire. He went on to describe the Tiflis Armenians as the local elite who formed a rich community in a city which otherwise lacked much prosperity (Ibid.: 57). According to Meščerskij (1878: 108), the Armenians of Tiflis held all spheres of social and political life in their hands.

However, one does not have to go far to quickly notice the otherwise extremely one-sided and negative portrayals of the Armenian people in Russian military documents. A strong focus was placed on the Armenian contribution to commerce in the Caucasus, as “all trade is in their hands here” (Meščerskij 1878: 183), while Prince Meščerskij’s (1878: 120–22) descriptions of Armenian merchants can be compared to Zotov’s anti-Semitic prejudice when accusing the Bulgarians of cheating the Russians in Southeastern Europe with “Jewish methods.” He wrote about the “Armenian defeating you with his cynicism” and that: “The Armenian merchant sees that you need the product and based on the look in your eyes he instantly comprehends the price [...]. If you are not Armenian, they immediately demand twice as much as the actual selling price.” Meščerskij repeatedly criticized the Armenian population of being unreasonable and unpatriotic when describing their commercial activities. He believed they were more concerned about their private commercial profits than supporting the Russian Empire’s army, and he accused them of making a business out of Russian needs for the war’s wounded soldiers:

With respect to whether any of the merchants here would yield an iota of their wares for the wounded—I’d say no. On the contrary, like I noted elsewhere, when they figured out that I needed a large amount of sugar for the wounded, they raised the price during the day from 8 rubles and

20 kopecks to 9 rubles, not considering that a huge amount of the sugar came to Tiflis from Charkov (Ibid.: 122).

Furthermore, Meščerskij contributed to the perpetuation of the common narrative of the Caucasus as a semi-civilized world where filth and unhygienic conditions dominated the townscape, and he did not exclude the Armenians, even though he portrayed them as the city's social and political elite. In the prince's travelogue, one can read about the "Armenian quarter, i.e. a world of grime and an unimaginable stench, where, one says, since the foundation of Tiflis, not a single stout policeman's hand was ever felt" (Ibid.: 80). Maslov's portrayal of Armenia and its population was written in the very same tone as Meščerskij's. When describing the cities of Eastern Anatolia as dirty and foul-smelling, his invective applied equally to the local Turkish and Armenian populations (Maslov 1879: 97–99). Not even Christianity was much of a connecting factor in Maslov's view, as what he found most striking was "the soiled rags in which the local clergy came to greet us" (Ibid.: 48). He furthermore wrote about a priest who allegedly sold liturgical services by auction and reported on negotiations over what price had to be paid, only to conclude that the priest had to double-check the final price, a buffalo, because "an Armenian can deceive" while the "stupid Armenian" would ultimately be happy to give the priest his buffalo only to become "Christ's godfather" (Ibid.: 4). He also conceded that times were changing and that the Armenians were beginning to at least learn to speak Russian and also lived less timorously than they had before. But what was most important in Maslov's eyes was apparently their attitude when it came to the question of supporting or even cooperating with Russian troops. He reported about some Armenians helping to carry logs and nail some boards, but altogether, Maslov complained, they got in the way more than they actually helped (Ibid.: 48). However, he portrayed them not only as unhelpful but also as unwilling to help. Not a single one of them would take up arms and join the Russian cause, nor would they lift a finger in any other way to fight for their own freedom. He juxtaposed them with the "Bulgarian brothers" who fought at Šipka and who formed their own battalions while the Armenians he came across on his travels through the Caucasus and through Eastern Anatolia did not show any sympathy with the Russian Empire and the war it was waging against the Ottomans. Briefly, he accused the Armenian population of not showing any will to side with the Russian Empire against the Ottomans and concluded with the harsh assessment that the Armenians would bring nothing good whatsoever to the Russians (Ibid.).

The sole exception to all of these negative descriptions was provided by Prince Meščerskij with respect to the Armenian contribution to the Russian

Empire's troops. He spoke highly of the Armenian generals and especially emphasized that, aside from the Italian-born Montenegrin General Oklobžio, all leading figures in the Caucasus army were in fact Armenians, of whom he named Loris-Melikov, Lazarev, Šelkovnikov the younger Loris-Melikov, Ter-Gukasov and Alchazov (Meščerskij 1878: 107–08). He explicitly praised their desire to form the strongest social group in the Caucasus and aside from the “unpatriotic merchants” he did not hesitate to underline their strong ties to the Russian Empire. Loris-Melikov, for instance, “has everywhere and always been unconditionally spotless and honest and he is reputed to be like that with every soldier and officer” (Ibid.: 319). Meščerskij also countered Russian assessment of the Armenian high-ranking officers like Loris-Melikov as representatives of Armenian nationalism and separatism, writing that “undoubtedly there are separatist dreams among the Armenians” but that these only prevailed in the lower and middle classes of the Armenian population, i.e. “a different tribe altogether,” which did not even appreciate their renowned generals (Ibid. 322). The latter, on the other hand, would loyally serve the Empire and strengthen Armenian-Russian bonds rather than support any kind of separatist ambitions. However, Meščerskij not only believed the degree of loyalty to the empire depended on whether or not an Armenian served in the army, as for him it was also a question of age. Of the many people in the lower and middle classes, Meščerskij argued, a high number consisted of young people who just could not adapt to the thought of Russian rule over the Caucasus and who passionately tore themselves away from tradition and family life because they adhered to international notions of progress and civilization (Ibid.: 122–24; Acar 2004: 16–17). The Armenian elders, however, held up these traditional and religious values, so Meščerskij concluded that they would be more likely to accept and support Russian rule while Armenia's youth vied for an independent Armenia.

What about the second South Caucasus ethnic group with a strong sense of a common national tradition and history, the Georgians? Just as he viewed Armenian society as split between an older generation loyal to imperial Russia and the youth striving for autonomy, Meščerskij saw the very same problem for the Russian Empire with respect to the Georgians. Just as with the Armenians, the Georgian youth passionately abdicated their traditions, but other than that, the descriptions of Armenians and Georgians were not at all alike. The latter were portrayed in a much more favorable light and certain formulations suggest that the Russian military actually considered the Georgians equal to themselves. For Meščerskij, it was of no importance whether his coachman was a Russian, Cossack, or Georgian and, unusual for his travelogue, he rarely found it necessary to comment on the latter, although he occasionally addressed them with posses-

sive pronoun, suggesting a certain approval and closeness (Meščerskij 1878: 35–36). When lamenting that the “unpatriotic Armenians” dominated most political, economic and social life in the Caucasus, he did so by equally underscoring the lack of Russians and Georgians in higher positions, and stressed that he would have preferred it much more if the latter had a say in the empire’s south rather than witnessing any further Armenian control over the Caucasus (Ibid.: 107–08). References to Georgian participants on the battlefields followed the same pattern and differed fundamentally from references to their neighbors. In describing the course of the battle for Kızıltepe, Maslov (1879: 70) wrote about the Georgians, who “bravely rushed further forward” and he juxtaposed the Georgians with his descriptions of the Karapapaks as “cowardly jackals,” saying that the latter’s behavior embittered the Georgians to the fullest (Ibid.: 49). The references to the Georgians in *Iz zapisnoj knižki Kavkazca* [From the Notebook of a Caucasus Man] (1879: 508) read similarly, equally according bravery to the soldiers taking part in the battles. Gradovskij (1878: n. pag.) also spoke of the Georgians as perfectly equal co-combatants when describing different episodes in which Georgian battalions heroically stormed Ottoman camps and broke the enemy’s ranks, thereby making the advance of other units and the cavalry in these battles possible. He repeatedly praised Georgian contributions to the war and, aside from their bravery and courage, he also stressed their hospitality, suggesting that he and, with him, the rest of the Russian military saw the Georgians as their main ally in the region. All descriptions rest on friendly and understanding narratives rather than on suspicion and implied Russian superiority.

The Georgians as the positive example of cooperation within the Russian army and empire are certainly the exception to the Russian military’s perception of the many ethnic groups living inside its southern borders, and just how much of an exception the Georgians really were may be seen quite well in the case of the Ossetians. Given the intensification of Russo-Ossetian relations early in the Russian Empire’s conquest of the Caucasus, the suggestive name of the capital Vladikavkaz and its status as a major military outpost in the region and the fact that the majority of the Ossetian population was Christian, it would have been natural to assume that the Russian military considered the Ossetians cooperative allies in their endeavors to reinforce their control over the Caucasus. However, the military descriptions give a rather ambiguous picture of Russian perceptions of the Ossetians. As illustrated above, the Ossetians were far from excluded from narratives about the “perilous Caucasus” (cf., for example, Meščerskij 1878: 15, “dangerous to pass by the Ossetian beasts of prey’s *auls*”) or the “stupid Caucasus peoples,” as in Meščerskij’s description (Ibid.: 35–36) of an Osse-

tian coachman, i.e., the “stupor” he attributed to the Ossetian and “the inane and mute despair on his face” as soon as something did not function properly on the cart. He went on to describe the Ossetian as a “silent and downtrodden savage,” then projected the character of this particular coachmen onto the entire Ossetian people, eventually calling the Ossetians a “stupid people” altogether. Meščerskij (1878: 39) also had an image of “typical Ossetian physiques” in his head but he did not go into detail as to what these would actually be. Maslov (1879: 83) also described a village of emigrant Ossetians and Tavlinians (a Russian designation for the peoples of Northern Dagestan), where he and his company had to spend the night and his remarks read similarly to the generational question of the Armenian and Georgian elders being much more cooperative than the youth. The positive portrayal refers to the village’s older inhabitants expressing their desperate wish to return to Russia, implying strong ties between the Caucasus and its diaspora in the Ottoman Empire, where the emigrants already regretted leaving their homes in the first place.

The descriptions in Tutojamin’s reports from the front paint a different picture of the Ossetians: one of potential military collaborators who deserved a chance to raise their esteem in the eyes of their Russian masters and commanders. This chance had yet to be taken and it seemed that the Russian military viewed the Ossetians cautiously, for the belief they would excel in the war was far from given. Tutojamin (1879: 55) wrote about a duel of Ossetian and Circassian “opponents of the same tribe” to be “the first trans-Danubian test of Ossetian loyalty to the Russian banner.” So even before any of the warfare actually took place, the Ossetian divisions had to prove themselves in the Russian Empire’s military, and they were not portrayed as equal units. However, the results of the battles reflected a certain Russian acceptance of their fellow soldiers from the Caucasus region, attributing to the Ossetians both ability and bravery (Ibid.: 105) as well as honor and cold-bloodedness (Ibid.: 112).

Skepticism over the participation of an *inorodcy* contingent could go the other way as well and did not necessarily lead to a better mutual understanding and acceptance or even praise, which happened with the Ossetian division. The very same regiment was initially composed of Ossetians and Ingush, i.e. “the hunters of two neighboring mountain tribes” (Ibid.: 3–4). At the very beginning of his accounts, Tutojamin already wrote about rumors surrounding the regiment’s mountaineer corps, noting that its members “individually returned to the Caucasus and did not want to fight the Turks” (Ibid.). Later, he leveled the very same accusation again when referring to Skobelev, who had returned to the front “pained by the stories of the Ingush and Ossetians” (Ibid.: 20–21). According to rumor, in winter the Ingush still talked about not wanting to fight the

Ottoman Empire. In the eyes of Nikolaj V. Maksimov (1878: 346; cit. in Sotničenko 2011: 141): “The Ingush sympathized with the Turks, their ‘brothers in faith’ as they called them.” Such rumors combined with the already existing fear of the Ottomans trying to find allies among the Caucasus peoples did much share to successfully deny the Ingush troops an opportunity to prove themselves and their loyalty to the Russian Empire. Instead, the troops were re-organized and Ingush soldiers were transferred to Odessa by command of the government, as talk of “misplaced hopes for the mountaineers” would not cease and the military was not to be weakened from the inside under any circumstances (Tutojamin 1879: 20–21). The Ingush were obviously considered a risk to the Russian army, despite the fact that they had already been incorporated into the military and that these Ingush formations had already joined their Ossetian comrades on the front.

The “opponents of the same tribe,” as Tutojamin called the Circassians when speaking about the Ossetians, are certainly the best reflection of how a social group can function as a projection surface for the entire othering process. It started with the designation of the Circassians, or *Čerkesy* in Russian, being used synonymously for all emigrants from the Caucasus to the Ottoman Empire, regardless of whether or not they actually were members of the Adyghe ethnic group or at least closely related ethnic groups such as the Abazins or Abkhaz. All emigrants, the so-called *Muhajirs*, were referred to as Circassians, leaving an indelible mark on the Russian image of the Adyghe people. In the Russo-Ottoman War this went so far as to refer to all non-Turkic regiments of the Ottoman army as Circassian, i.e. the enemy’s irregular troops fighting for the latter’s cause and against their former homeland. These “Circassians” were not only used as a wholesale designation for non-Turkic units, as the references to them also mostly described ruthless units excelling in violence and brutality. Meščerskij (1878: 198–99) even seemed to think it was necessary to attribute certain atrocities perpetrated on the battlefields specifically to the Turks and not only to the Circassians as one would, at least according to the Russian nobleman, think. It was an integral component of the Russian military’s descriptions of the battles at both frontlines to illustrate the enemy’s atrocities in great detail, and many of them were directly related to descriptions of the Circassians, making them a screen onto which all manner of inhumanity was projected. A notable key word that appears in conjunction with the Circassians is some form of group, for many anecdotes about them include quantifications such as “500 Circassians” (cf. Maslov 1879: 149; Tutojamin 1879: 86) or more vaguely “groups of Circassians” and “bands of Circassians.” Hardly any other social groups other than the Circassians are ever quantified in this manner in the Rus-

sian military's descriptions, which suggests that those writing these accounts wanted to stress their numerical strength as well as their distinct organization within the enemy's troops. While it was important to the Russian military to underscore the qualities of Circassian brutality and their partial independence in warfare as individual traits, they at the same time did not miss any chance to highlight their affiliation with the Ottoman enemy. Therefore Tutojamin (1879: 54) wrote of the Circassians as "enemy forces" controlling a certain gorge's exit, Maslov (1879: 34) said that "the Turkish artillery consists of Circassians" while *Iz zapisnoj knižki Kavkazca* (1879: 506) includes an account of the Ottoman commander-in-chief on the Caucasus Front, Ahmed Muhtar-Paşa (1839–1919), taking pleasure in commanding the Circassians to hound Russian units.

The negative portrayal of the Circassians however was not limited to accusing them of committing the most horrific atrocities during the war. For example, Maslov (1879: 38) wrote that the Circassians as a whole were not exactly notable for any bravery, going on to describe pointless gunfire in the air rather than any reasonable conduct in firefights, which would break out on a daily basis, especially between them and the Cossacks. Also, they were not able to properly handle counterattacks and whenever a few grenades were thrown at them, they would run about in confusion like rabbits. Tutojamin (1879: 79–86) had a similar attitude toward the Circassians and described them as cowards, who would hide, only open fire from a safe distance and flee as soon as possible. Then again, other descriptions depicted the Circassians as an impudent people with their style of warfare, as they attacked the Russian cavalry and staged lively exchanges of gunfire with Russian troops (Maslov 1879: 15), indicating that the descriptions of the Circassians were as ambiguous as their exonym was vague throughout the 19th century—spanning from ruthless cutthroats to devious cowards.

Sometimes the term "Circassians" was also used within a broader context of Caucasus emigration or synonymously with the *Başıbozüks*, the irregular troops of the Ottoman army. Just like the Circassians, they could potentially be but did not necessarily have to be members of the Adyghe people. The *Başıbozüks* could be emigrants from the Caucasus but they were also recruited from completely different parts of Europe and Asia Minor. Narratives with respect to the Circassians and to the *Başıbozüks* very often conformed and portrayed them as equally ruthless in their operations on the frontlines, which is why a differentiation between irregulars and Caucasus emigrants was often absent, rather they were instead equated. And if not already characterized as the same, they were at the very least portrayed as collaborating forces in their struggle against the Rus-

sians, either side by side with the *Başıbozüks* (cf. Maslov 1879: 149) or the Ottoman Turks (cf. Tutojamin 1879: 65).

While portrayed as mercenaries in Ottoman service, the diaspora background of the different ethnic groups living in the Ottoman Empire and the reasons for the migration of Caucasus peoples are hardly ever stressed. References to the migrations after the Caucasus War are merely a side note and contain arguments similar to those developed by Russian ethnographers during the 1850s and 1860s, i.e., the Caucasus peoples voluntarily opted to migrate to the Ottoman Empire, asked the Russian government for permission and after St. Petersburg agreed, it also organized their resettlement (cf. for instance SEA, f1087/op1/588: 49). The military apparently saw no particular reason as to why they should comment on this process, which is interesting given the widespread belief that Caucasus emigrants largely supported any enemy fighting the Russians. While Ottoman influence on the Caucasus peoples and the latter's alleged willingness to succumb to foreign influence and rise against Russian rule were continually perpetuated narratives, the migration processes and its circumstances and the mutual relations between emigrants and the region's remaining native residents or returnees were almost entirely neglected by the Russian military. Only vague statements on these relations can be found, mostly referring to religious influences on the Caucasus originating outside of the Russian Empire, i.e. Muslim proselytism conducted by returnees who had been to the Ottoman Empire in general or to Mecca in particular and who had either begun to spread their ideas in their former home or did so via correspondence from their Ottoman exile (cf. Tomkeev 1910: 6).

THE QUESTION OF RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

Proselytism seems to be the only factor that prompted the Russian military to reflect on ties between the Caucasus natives and those who had migrated to the Ottoman Empire even before the war of 1877–1878, for other than that, religion was not really a key component of the military's descriptions of life on the frontlines or of their assessments of the war. This is surprising as the war was staged as a clash between a Russian-led Christian alliance against the Muslim empire of the Ottomans and with excessive propagandistic exploitation of that narrative, one could reasonably assume that the othering of the Caucasus peoples would have been strongly driven by anti-Muslim sentiments and anti-Muslim stereotypes. This, however, was not the case. What one does find is half of the narrative of a Muslim-Christian dichotomy—the story of the war as a struggle for Christianity and its values. In his *Dnevnik russkago korrespondenta*

[Diary of a Russian Correspondent], Nemirovič-Dančenko (1878: 20) compared events on the Balkan Front with historical incidents and concluded that the massacres were only comparable to three, namely the Sicilian Vespers, the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre as well as the persecutions of the Cathars and the Albigensian Crusade, by which he placed the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 within a continuity of religious conflicts and wars rather than political ones. He was also quick to emphasize that all manner of barbarities beset the Balkan Christian population, who were persecuted and humiliated by the Ottomans for precisely the same reason, and that this would also affect the Christian Russians fighting against them. Nemirovič-Dančenko (*Ibid.*) went on to give his readership visualizations of slain Russian soldiers, whose heads were found assembled in the form of a crescent, while at another site he had stumbled upon a star made of other body parts. He furthermore accused the Ottomans of not showing any mercy whenever soldiers begged for it—if they were Christian (*Ibid.*: 8). Voejkov (2008: 6) recalled similar things and wrote: “Everyone was upset by the Turks for a long time now, as they torment the Balkan Christians; the newspapers are filled with news of Turkish atrocities.”

In general, this strong emphasis on the Christian population of the Balkans can be juxtaposed with the lack of denominational references on the Caucasus front, something that appears almost as an oppositional pair, such as in “the Christian population in Turkey [...] and the mountaineer population [of Dagestan]” (Tomkeev 1910: 6). Whereas the Balkan peoples were portrayed as Christians waiting for the Russian Empire to save them, thereby extending legitimacy to all Russian campaigns during the war, the peoples in the Caucasus, regardless of whether they were on the Ottoman or Russian side, were not defined by their faith but by their belonging to the “Caucasus peoples.” This lack of Muslim othering in the Caucasus stands in stark contrast to the self-image of the faithful Christian Russians, for Christian self-designations are ever-present in the military's descriptions. Lieutenant-Colonel Tomkeev (SEA f1087/op1/587: 8) incorporated a governmental decree into his writings: “Forward. With God for the homeland and His Majesty.” Bakunina (1879: 483) wrote “all of them were praying for the Emperor, and for peace, and for the entire army of the Christian faith,” while Meščerskij (1878: 302) also reported of a deacon who always spoke of the war as a battle for Christian belief. Maslov (1879: 42) described himself and his compatriots as enthusiastically receiving the news on the advance of Russian troops and that they had “beseeched God for Osman-paša to fall in Plevna and with him all Ottomans [sic!] of European and Asian Turkey” and that even though their troops would soon vanquish the enemy's army on the Caucasus front and then be able to sign a peace treaty in

Anatolia, an end to the war was not in sight as long as Plevna had not been taken and with it Jerusalem. This idea had already contributed to the outbreak of the Crimean War and still served as a vital narrative in Russo-Ottoman confrontations.

Since part of the self-perception of the Russian military was that it was a Christian force in a war being waged for Christianity, why is it that Islam played such a small role in portraying the peoples perceived as hostile to the Russian Empire in the Caucasus? This does in fact go hand in hand with the portrayal of the Ottomans, who just like the Caucasus peoples, were not primarily othered via denominational classification but rather the marker “Turk” seemed just as adequate as the marker “Caucasus” proved to be. The military did depict the Ottoman adversary in a better light than one may assume. Other than in propagandistic approaches that aimed to influence public perception and the inherent wish for broader support for Russia’s war against the Ottoman Empire, the military did not need to find legitimation for its actions and seemed to have had another ambition: to portray its enemy as a worthy and strong opponent, making a Russian victory appear even more impressive. This means that the military had an interest in describing the Ottoman weaponry as wonderful (Maslov 1879: 38), the enemy’s leader as “a very tall and handsome man” (Ibid.: 78) and the Ottoman soldiers as “strapping, stalwart, vigorous and remarkably patient” (Nemirovič-Dančenko 1878: 15). This military potency, however, found its outlet in the aforementioned ferocity the Russian military ascribed to the Ottomans, allowing the former to present themselves as the antithesis to cruelty and slaughter. Cut-off noses and crosses carved into the chests of corpses (Meščerskij 1878: 199) were supposed to illustrate to readers the methods employed by the powerful enemy, something the humane Russians would never do and for which it should earn the respect even among Anatolia’s local Turkish population, at least according to Meščerskij, who reported of a Turkish host saying that his fellow countrymen would love the Russians very much, as the latter’s generals excelled in justice, in direct contrast to the Paşas (Ibid: 336–38). But again, definitions of the Ottoman Empire by faith cannot be found, and when the intention was to underscore savagery or brutality, the Islamic marker was not used for the Ottomans, as one instead reads of “empty-headed and predatory Turks” (Maslov 1879: 136).

Neither the Caucasus peoples, of whom a fair share were Muslims, nor the Ottomans were primarily defined by Islam, and the interpretation of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 as a “holy war” worked in one direction, i.e. to present the Russians as the defenders of Christianity rather than to present the Ottomans as the Muslim other. Overall, Islam played a subordinate role in the

military's accounts of the war. Tutojainin (1879: 63–68) only found it necessary to speak of the Muslim population when describing the Ottoman practice of distributing weapons solely to its Muslim subjects. Other than that, the rare instances of references to the Ottoman majority religion have negative connotations, such as in Nemirovič-Dančenko's (1878: 8) account of Russian heads assembled in the form of a crescent, or Maslov's (1879: 48) describing how the Muslims inflicted harm on the Russian troops from within as well as in the collected volume *Geroi i dejateli Russko-tureckoj vojny 1877–1878* [Heroes and Statesmen of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878], in which it says: “Muslims slaughtered the Armenians, discriminating neither by sex nor age” (*Geroi i dejateli* 1878: 4). However, in no case was the designation “Islam” needed in order to define the other. Religious fanaticism was not seen as the main reason for any confrontations and it was even less so seen as a problem that the Russian army could not solve. Meščerskij (1878: 19) did once write about such religious fanaticism in Dagestan, only to immediately classify them within the common narrative of the Caucasus peoples being savages and bandits who would hopefully be defeated by the Russian army by autumn. Thus, an argument not employed throughout the military's Caucasus accounts is that of a region that logically supported the Ottoman Empire in its war against the Russians due to a common religious belief. Islam both with respect to the Ottomans and to the Caucasus was a negligible point of reference, as either of the latter on their own seems to have been a stronger marker in Russian perceptions.

UNDERSTANDING THE CAUCASUS

If not by their faith, the native population was considered fundamentally different by something else: their language. As indicated in the analysis of Russian ethnographic studies (cf. Chapter 4), the awareness of the Caucasus as a region where fundamentally different languages are spoken had increased throughout the latter half of the 19th century. This did not, however, mean that the Russian military apparently accepted these languages as equal to their Russian mother tongue and repeatedly used a given native language to try to depict someone from the Caucasus region as a savage. Meščerskij (1878: 35) wrote that his Ossetian coachman “let out some savage sound” when speaking and elsewhere characterized the Ossetian's language as “voiceless and semi-savage exclamations” (*Ibid.*: 40), while Tutojainin (1879: 112) defined Ossetian as a “guttural language.” When attempting to compare the Ossetian language to another he came to the conclusion that it must be similar to the “Čuchna's,” a now obsolete term for Finnic peoples, thereby indicating just how little ethnographic knowledge had taken root among the Russian military men serving in the Cau-

casus, since Meščerskij thereby identified an Iranian with a Finnic language which have nothing in common except the fact that a Russian nobleman perceived them both as semi-civilized languages. In *Iz zapisnoj knižki Kavkazca* (1879: 509–11), one can find something similar: the slyness of a young Lezgian allows him to insinuate himself into an Ottoman Turk's confidence, who would think he was one of his [sic!] Circassians, which the author on the other hand concluded must have happened due to the Lezgian language being almost the same as Turkish. This, of course, is as accurate as Meščerskij's assessment of Ossetian and Finnic languages having certain similarities, for the Lezgian language does belong to the Northeast Caucasian language family and is therefore linguistically far from the Turkic languages.

Furthermore, the Russian image of the Caucasus languages was not only dominated by widespread ignorance but also by the conviction that the Russian language was superior to all vernaculars spoken in the region, which were incomprehensible to the Russians. Meščerskij (1878: 318) reflected on General Loris-Melikov, and seemed to attach the condition of being Russian to the ability of fluently speaking the Russian language when he wrote: "Knowing the Russian language well—that already means being Russian," an attitude obviously problematic in the multi-ethnic and polyglot Russian Empire. Languages other than Russian were only noted with skepticism, which was especially true of Arabic, as the Russian military seemed to have considered correspondence in this language—despite being widespread in Dagestan and Chechnya—suspect because it conveyed anti-Russian sentiment (cf. Meščerskij 1878: 101). However, some military leaders did express limited criticism of the Russian understanding of a single language being adequate to efficiently operate in the Caucasus. Despite the obvious ignorance expressed in *Iz zapisnoj knižki Kavkazca* (1879: 509), the author did criticize the military's widespread monolingualism, especially in comparison to the Ottoman army, where many knew how to communicate in Russian, while a Russian soldier generally knew little more than the two words for bread and barley in the opponent's native tongue. Maslov (1879: 99) was at least aware of the inadequacy of writing about the Caucasus native population without understanding a single word, but his statement about it being difficult to comment on the everyday life of locals without being able to speak to them only led to the conclusion that life must be tedious and humble.

CONSTRUCTING SELF-PERCEPTION

Certainly one of the dominant narratives prevailing in military descriptions is their inherent wish to depict the Caucasus as a sphere of Russian heroism, dom-

inance and strength. Therefore, it is not exactly surprising that many references to the Caucasus War and to officers and troops who served in the Caucasus before are references to precisely these three traits. A special place within this narrative is reserved for the Cossack units. Meščerskij (1878: 12) wrote that “all Cossacks have gone to war, not a single one has stayed behind. The Turk is afraid of the Cossack [...]” Bakunina (1879: 481) referred to them as “our war-ring Cossacks,” while Nemirovič-Dančenko (1878: 3) asserted that the enemies were frightened by a “bold Cossack general.” The Cossacks were thereby well integrated into the story of Russian valor, dominating the Russian military’s memory of the Caucasus War, which was at the very least dubious due to the decades of military failure against a numerically inferior opponent. And still the term “Caucasian,” meaning a Russian veteran of the Caucasus War of 1817–1864 rather than a native of the region, denoted the same image of strength and vigor. Meščerskij (1878: 160) exaggerated the image of General Zedergol'm as the glorious “old Caucasian,” Maslov (1879: 22) did the same when writing about the “brave Colonel Komarov” and Butovskij (1879: 520) wrote that: “Concerning the Caucasus officers, their fighting courage was famed all over the world.” And it not only applied to the leaders of the Russian army in the Caucasus but to all units participating in the Russian Empire’s war and striving for legendary “Caucasus fame” (Maslov 1879: 8). Furthermore, Tomkeev (SEA f1087/op1/587: 8) composed a motivational speech, saying: “With you—the heroic past of the Caucasus army, ahead of you—fields and strongholds stained with the blood of your fathers and brothers.” Meščerskij (1878: 195) also wrote about the soldier serving on the Caucasus front as the “brave, valiant, good-natured, humble, and generous Russian soldier.” Maslov (1879: 33–34) considered the “brilliant qualities of the Caucasus army” to be responsible for any successes and the Russian soldiers symbols of “adamant masculinity,” while the author of *Iz zapisnoj knižki Kavkazca* (1879: 501) had a similar opinion when informing readers that “only the Caucasus troops are capable of such a campaign.” Reflections on any advances by the Russian troops are additionally marked by the very same vocabulary. According to Smekalov (Tomkeev 1910: 29), the troops conducted themselves heroically when defeating an *aul’s* “rebels” and the collected volume *Geroi i dejateli Russko-tureckoj vojny 1877–1878* (1878: 1) opens with the attributions “courageous and brave” when referring to the defense of a fortress; it goes on to speak of the “heroism of our troops.” These heroic and martial images of emergent heroism go hand in hand with what the Russian military apparently saw in the Caucasus: an opportunity to become a Caucasus hero, a motive conveyed without alteration from the Caucasus War of 1817–1864 to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878.

This narrative naturally went in two directions. Not only was the Caucasus perceived and presented as a source of Russian heroism but also of local inferiority and submission. In the eyes of the Russian military, its troops and within a broader context the “Russianness” of the empire were naturally superior to the native peoples, who would automatically be forced into submission and surrender, which must be seen as rather ironic given the long history of Russia’s inability to conquer the territory. On a linguistic level, this opinion is best seen when looking at how the Russian military reports on its advances against any resistant natives. General Smekalov seemed to have it taken for granted that any resisting forces would immediately surrender as soon as he led his troops into the field. Therefore, his reports all contain wordings such as “they expressed their submissiveness” (Tomkeev 1910: 19), “the Tindi appeared with an air of submissiveness” (Ibid.: 21), or “the inhabitants of this village hurried to deliver their unconditional submission today” (Ibid.: 24). Furthermore, the letters by and to General Smekalov indicate a semantic opposing pair when either referring to the situation before and after Russian military intervention in a given district or village. On the one hand, Smekalov sees these regions as “rebellious *auls*” and its inhabitants as “rebels,” while the respective villages became “pacified” or “tranquil” after Russian intervention (Ibid.: 19–27). Moreover, these arguments portray the Russians as a rational actor, who had everything planned, who “would have taken the most forceful measures to suppress the uprising” (Ibid.: 21) but who took all measures “so that any bloodshed is avoided” (Ibid.: 27).

This implied rationality also needed results to show to the military command. Therefore, the military in the field combined the suggested inferiority of the Caucasus peoples with their own personal success stories. Sometimes these successes were illustrated by a juxtaposition of the extremely high losses the opponent had sustained with the comparatively low number of casualties the conflict had caused the own army. Thus, on 16 (28) October 1877, General Smekalov (Tomkeev 1910: 22–24) reported to the military command of the Terek Province that a horrible fight had broken out: “The rebels lost approximately 100 men while [...] on our side one Cossack was killed and two officers injured.” A similar emphasis on the indisputable outcome of operations in the Caucasus reads: “The victory turned out to be total and brilliant” (Ibid.: 31). Furthermore: “I am happy that our united troops did better than the indigenous, they moved quickly and showed that one needs to deal with the mountaineers with courage and determination” (Ibid.: 36). The rationality the Russian military demanded from its own side was also reflected in the reference to skirmishes as minor “affairs” that were not worthy of exhaustive accounts but simply had to

be dealt with accordingly (cf. Tomkeev 1910: 44; Tutojamin 1879: 153). It should be noted that this narrative was not exclusively employed for the Caucasus but also for the Ottoman troops. Tutojamin (1879: 108) at one point described a battle between Ottoman and Russian forces in which the latter stood *in situ*, while “the Turks shot at us in a fit of violent temper,” thus apparently explaining the enormous differences between Russian and Ottoman losses.

The rational actor in the Caucasus, bringing order and organization to chaos: that was the image the Russian Empire disseminated through its officials in the regions who either staffed the administration or the military. This went hand in hand with Russia’s self-proclaimed civilizing mission in the Caucasus, bringing culture and stability. Meščerskij (1878: 15–16) wrote of the Russians making Vladikavkaz a beautiful and large city while it was quite the opposite before. Boulevards, theaters, large complexes for schools, barracks and hospitals—all things for which the Caucasus should be grateful to Russian governance for making them possible. However, the administrative changes and the urban development were certainly not the main interest for the Russian military. Far more emphasis was accorded to the contribution of the military itself. According to Meščerskij (1878: 18–19), the constant presence of Russian soldiers had made the Caucasus a safer place and all hopes were pinned on the Russian army successfully dealing with all rebellious forces, so that no one would have to fear for his/her life. So when Major-General Smekalov (Tomkeev 1910: 33) reported on the chaotic situation in Central Dagestan, he did not hesitate to imply that only he, personifying the Russian Empire, could help overcome the province’s misery and also that on his way the entire population had approached him with appeals to establish order. Also, for Southern Dagestan, only he and his troops could implement a solution in form of pacification (Ibid.: 42). On the question of the role Russia would play in the development of its southern borderlands, Meščerskij (1878: 57–58) certainly set the tone by saying that the Caucasus was one of the richer regions of the globe but that it apparently lived at Russia’s expense to a considerable degree. He then went on to say that if the Caucasus were given the chance of normal and ordinary living conditions and received proper public administration, it would not only be self-sustaining but even of significant value to Russia. Of course, the latter conclusions were drawn on basis of steps that the Russian side had to take. He thereby implied that the exact opposite was true with respect to the *status quo* in the Caucasus, namely that the Caucasus was neither self-sustaining nor of specific value to the Russian Empire.

This line of argument was obviously only employed as a way to legitimize the latter’s involvement in the region. The Caucasus had previously and still had

high strategic importance to the Russian Empire, which is why the well-developed narrative of Russians bringing civilization to the region was merged with narratives accompanying the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. This is why according to Meščerskij (1878: 59), the Russians would continue their old system of humanity toward the Ottoman *Pašas*. This is also why he went on to draw a line between those Armenians living under Russian rule and those living under Ottoman rule, with the former being civilized and peaceful rather than separatists like the latter (Ibid.: 322). This is also why Maslov (1879: 43) finally found the clearest words for the self-described role of the Russian Empire in the war, writing that the Russians aimed to “defend justice and humanity.” While this role may well apply to the war in general and not only to the Caucasus front, elsewhere one can find references to earlier Russian plans in case another war with the Ottoman Empire broke out. A rescript from 10 (22) September 1876 foresaw “the preservation of peace in the Caucasus region with its two million Muslim subjects” as one of the Russian Empire’s main duties in a war (cit. in SEA f1087/op1/588: 8).

Despite the strategic importance of the region and despite the long history of experience the Russian Empire had in the Caucasus throughout the 19th century, increasing knowledge about both the land and its people did not help improve the Russian perception of them. In fact, quite the opposite was true. The Russian military considered the Caucasus a remote and underdeveloped region rather than equal to other parts of the Russian Empire. Once the Caucasus became a part of Russia, there was at least some increased awareness of the region’s ethnic diversity, which can be seen in the nomination strategies contained in the analyzed texts—if, at a minimum, one considers the quantity of references to different ethnic groups and the associated decline of anonymous blanket designations. However, with the fading of the image of the “mountaineer” as “noble savage” (about whom little to nothing was actually known) after the Caucasus War came to an end and after the Russian Empire managed to establish control, it seems that Russian perceptions of the native population took a turn for the worse. They were the target of massively pejorative attributions, i.e., they were characterized as wild, rebellious and semi- or even uncivilized barbarians, who were considered nothing like the Russians themselves and therefore alien to the values of the Russian Empire. With these ascribed traits of unrest, warfare and violence dominating everyday life, the Russians also sought justifications for their brutal and ruthless campaigns, as only implementation of Russian policy would finally bring stability and peace to the region. By describing the Caucasus and its inhabitants as wild and uncivilized, Russia created a platform to pre-

sent itself to its public as the civilized, stabilizing, and rational actor, thereby enhancing its identity among the non-Russian subjects living within the very same empire. This went hand in hand with Russia's self-proclaimed civilizing mission in the Caucasus, allegedly bringing culture to barbarians.

Suspicion dominated Russia's image of the Caucasus peoples and at least for the military, the only way to prove oneself a worthy citizen of the Russian Empire was by contributing to the Russian military campaigns. This, for instance, earned the Ossetians a higher standing in the Russian military's eyes in the aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. The image of other peoples, though, sustained a serious blow due to the war. The image of the "Circassians" worsened considerably, as they did not necessarily have to have anything to do with the Adyghe community as the designation was uniformly used for all those who had left the Caucasus in order to migrate to the Ottoman Empire and who were then all perceived as enemy collaborators, inevitably leaving an irrevocable mark on the Russian image of them.

In a war that was framed as a clash between the leading political powers representing Islam and Orthodox Christianity, it is interesting to note that on both the nominative and attributional levels, emphasis on the Islamic faith of the Caucasus population was remarkably weak. The explanation for that weak designation may be twofold: first, one could argue that it was not quite necessary to mark the Caucasus peoples as Muslim, as this alterity had already taken deep root in Russian society. Second, I suggest that the Caucasus designation itself had become much stronger than the Islamic designation, so that in fact it was not necessary to address the local population's major faith, for being part of the Caucasus itself had much greater significance in the Russian perception. This also explains why the constant emphasis on differences between Russians and non-Russians did not run along denominational categories at all. The military accounts indicate the very same imperialistic attitude on the members of Christian majority peoples, such as the Ossetians and, especially, the Armenians as on the region's Muslim population. While the latter were additionally portrayed as a twofold threat to the Russian Empire, namely due to their alleged inherent violence in a society dominated by brigandage and their collaboration with the Ottoman Empire in order to fight the Russians, the Christian faith of other peoples did not exclude them from the othering process that dictated Russian perceptions of the Caucasus. Throughout the war of 1877–1878, hardly any positive portrayals could be found anymore, the sole and notable exceptions being sectarians such as the Duchobors and Molokans, as well as with the Georgians, who were perceived as the primary Russian ally in the region. This lack of Muslim othering in the Caucasus contrasted to the creation of the self-perception of

faithful Christian Russians, for such identification with Christianity are omnipresent in the military's descriptions. Since Islam had subordinate importance in texts about the Caucasus front, the war served as a platform for Russian heroism and portrayals of the Caucasus as a naturally inferior region, thereby creating a suitable counter-image to Russian glory.

By the late 1870s, the transition from a partially romanticized image of the Caucasus had finally given way to the prevailing perception of brutal savages, fundamentally different to the Russians living in the empire. This transition was further underscored by the lack of the Muslim designation for Muslim peoples in a war framed as a Christian-Muslim confrontation. The increasing rejection of the Caucasus peoples by the Russians resulted in increasing tensions between Russia and the Caucasus rather than showing any improvement due to the process of integration into a common empire. The military's accounts of the southern borderlands became a reflection of Russian imperialism on the backs of the region's native population and did not herald improved relations or successful integration but rather continuing conflict and distrust. Furthermore, there is some question as just how genuine the desire for better relations with and successful integration of the Caucasus peoples into the empire actually was, since the region primarily served the need to create a strong self-image rather than to deal with consistent expressions of discontent with Russian rule. Organized unrest emerged during the war, especially in Chechnya and Dagestan, where uprisings were brutally crushed by the Russian administration. However, the Russian military's accounts on the Caucasus front do not say a single word about these uprisings, for on one hand, they were not in the focus of those writing these accounts, on the other, no collected accounts of Russian participants in the 1877–1878 campaigns in the North Caucasus ever garnered any attention. Therefore, it is necessary to examine Russian press coverage of these uprisings in order to gain some insight into the Russian perception of the Caucasus resistance, descriptions of the region and its inhabitants, and the extent to which the latter constructed or affirmed images of Russia itself.

7 PRESS COVERAGE OF THE CAUCASUS FRONT

Yes, all the papers say the same thing [...] So much the same that they are just like frogs before a storm! They prevent our hearing anything else! [...] So is it with the unanimity of the Press. It has been explained to me: as soon as there is a war their revenue is doubled. How can they help considering that the fate of the people and the Slavs—and all the rest of it (Tolstoy 1999a: 796)?

In the character of Stepan Oblonskij, the brother of the titular protagonist Anna Karenina, Lev. N. Tolstoj seized the opportunity to comment on the Russian press during the war. Obviously, war coverage had become a prosperous business for newspapers, which greatly influenced the selection of reported episodes and the reporting style. Since “military glory” on the battlefields in Southeastern Europe and the fate of the “Slavic brothers” were more marketable narratives than further troubles with the North Caucasus peoples, one has to ask how these developments influenced coverage in Russian newspapers and which attitudes toward the Russian Empire’s newest subjects were expressed in the mass media of the time. The present chapter will therefore explore the role of the Russian mass-circulated press in the formation of the image of the Caucasus during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 and the simultaneous uprising in the North Caucasus.

The end of the Caucasus War in 1864 was preceded by a reform period in the Russian Empire that had also massively influenced the development of the press. For that reason, the war of 1877–1878 can be considered the first military conflict in Russian history in which the commercial press had become firmly embedded in Russian society and culture and had an influence on widely circulated opinions. However, this is not only true for Russian foreign policy but also for the Caucasus region, as the parallel uprisings in Chechnya and Dagestan were the first Russo-Caucasus conflicts upon which the Russian commercial press and the unprecedented amount of newspapers could comment. Something previously unknown but very present in the late 1870s were illustrated magazines, which not only vividly portrayed the confrontation between the two empires but also reached a higher number of readers in the countryside, where the intelligentsia’s debates (cf. Chapter 5) were scarcely followed let alone subject to comment.

The following sections will address the formation of the mass-circulated press in Russia in the 1860s and 1870s, briefly outline the conflicts between North Caucasus peoples and the Russian authorities during the war, and eventu-

ally include a critical discourse analysis of the popular newspaper *Vsemirnaja illjustracija* [World Illustrated], as it was one of the most prodigious and most-read with respect to its war coverage during 1877–1878. The CDA will thereby focus on the conveyed image of the Caucasus mountaineers during the war, examining the depiction of their role in the war, questioning the interpretation of the uprisings, and finally answering the question of how the image of the Caucasus in the popular press developed up to the late 1870s. Furthermore, it will be interesting to see whether the Caucasus as a *topos* was still dominant enough to be frequently addressed as such during a war staged as a Christian-Muslim conflict or whether the two narratives of separate Russo-Caucasus and Russo-Ottoman conflicts merged in the press coverage in favor of that particular ideological othering.

THE FORMATION OF THE MASS-CIRCULATED PRESS IN RUSSIA

The 19th century brought a previously unseen rise in importance for newspapers throughout Europe which firmly embedded the medium in society and culture. In fact, the new dimension of the mass newspaper circulation went so far that, in combination with new technological achievements which helped to overcome previous temporal and spatial limitations, it reordered mass communications and led to a new way of conducting politics (McReynolds 1990: 277). Newspapers were now able to report the most current events, which eventually led to a stronger emphasis on empiricism over interpretations of the larger picture. The new mass production also significantly broadened the number of those who could gain access to that kind of information.

In Russia, the accelerated development of the press coincided with the beginning of Tsar Aleksandr II's reign. Soon after he ascended the throne in 1855, his government loosened its censorship of the press within its *glasnost*' policy (Lincoln 1981). Before Aleksandr began to reform his empire, Russian newspapers were hardly read and under full tsarist control, as the government was both the main publisher and the principal source of information (McReynolds 1991: 18–19). The new socio-political situation immediately reflected in the establishment of new newspapers and magazines. While between 1851 and 1855 thirty new periodicals appeared on the Russian media landscape, the years between 1856 and 1860 saw five times as many emerge (Zapadov 1973: 316). Just as in Western Europe's major cities earlier the same century, the many new publications had a strong commercial interest and led to the formation of a Russian "penny press" (Brower 1990: 170–87).

Also, Aleksandr's "Great Reforms" not only brought social change after the 1861 abolition of serfdom, but also extended opportunities for social mobility, from which journalists capitalized, for according to Louise McReynolds (1990: 277), they were able to "break down rigid stratification and to integrate various groups into a pluralistic society." The societal background of both the people responsible for the content of newspapers and their readership changed as the reforms encouraged a wider audience to read current publications in order to receive guidance on how to live in the new social environment (Tatsumi 2009: 159–63). Of the many successful publishers at the time, two stand out in illustrating how much commercialization of the press defied social categorizations. They are the publisher of *Birževye vedomosti* [Stock Market Gazette], Austrian Jewish immigrant Stanislav M. Propper (ca. 1853–1931), and Nikolaj I. Pastuchov (1831–1911), who was a semi-literate bar owner (McReynolds 1990: 282–85) before launching the daily gossip sheet *Moskovskij listok* [The Moscow Sheet] and then becoming one of Russia's most renowned publishers. Also noteworthy is that women continued to be greatly underrepresented, almost entirely left out in fact, in the 19th-century Russian press. The changes came from both above and below and meant that in the latter half of the 19th century, the press became an inextricable part of Russian society's public sphere. This development was favored by the reforms of the 1860s, as they induced economic growth that made the expansion of an independent and news-oriented press commercially viable (Ibid.: 278–80). The result was a far more diverse media landscape in Aleksandr II's Russia in comparison to the time before he had ascended to the throne. Furthermore, the reformed censorship statute of 1865 meant a dispensation with preliminary censorship for the periodicals of major cities, enabling the new and expanding magazines to be substantially different from the already existing press. Finally, the daily press was allowed to become a public forum, which first and foremost meant that the rapidity in which information flowed was not impeded, even though the restrictions on the types of events which could be covered were still rigid and remained subject to various penalties (Brower 1990: 171).

One of the novelties on the Russian media landscape was the introduction of illustrated magazines, which played a very important role in the advent of the mass-circulation press. The decisive influence for the establishment of Russian illustrated magazines came from Western Europe, where publications such as *The Illustrated London News* in Great Britain, *L'Illustration* in France and the Leipzig-based *Illustrierte Zeitung* were already established by the early 1840s. It was hardly coincidental that the three main protagonists behind the introduction of such magazines on the Russian market all had Western European back-

grounds (Tatsumi 2009: 164). In 1870, the German Adolf Marx [Adol'f F. Marks] established the magazine *Niva* [Cornfield], which soon became the most popular Russian magazine of the late 19th century with a circulation of 250,000. He was followed by the Pole Hermann Kornfeld [German Kornfel'd] and another German, Hermann Hoppe [German Goppe], with their magazines *Strekoza* [Dragonfly] and *Vsemirnaja illjustracija* [World Illustrated] from the 1870s onward (Belknap 1997: 114; Brooks 2003: 111–13; Mazaev 1892: 391–92; Tatsumi 2009: 164–65). By the end of the century, the illustrated magazines could boast of astounding numbers of subscribers, with 500,000 copies in comparison to a mere 90,000 of so-called “thick journals” [*tolstye žurnaly*] (Rejtlat 1991: 15; 41; cit. in Tatsumi 2009: 165). However, it should be noted that this circulation was concentrated largely in “European Russia,” i.e. mainly within the cities of St. Petersburg and Moscow. The figures given for *Niva*'s early 1880s distribution show 87.6% of its copies delivered to the two cities, while only 3.6% of the total of 100,000 copies actually went to the Caucasus, both north and south of the mountain range, and other regions and provinces such as Siberia or Finland had even lower subscription rates (Tatsumi 2009: 167–68). As a consequence, the illustrated magazines did revolutionize the Russian media, but numerically speaking they did so almost exclusively on the main urban markets of St. Petersburg and Moscow. The subscription figures for illustrated magazines in the Russian countryside were fairly low, but on the other hand, they often became the sole medium, as competition was not too high and well-established “thick journals” sold even less copies in such areas. The main illustrated magazines, which included the three named above as well as *Rodina* [Motherland], had more than 1,500 subscribers in the Voronež province in the late 1880s, while *Vestnik Evropy* [Herald of Europe], the only “thick journal” worth mentioning, did not sell more than 68 copies per month (Ibid.: 170–71). Figures for other provinces in the Russian Empire's countryside show very similar tendencies. Thus, it is fair to say that despite their low circulation numbers, the illustrated magazines became the most important media in the Russian countryside.

The illustrated magazines also created a new type of readership. The well-established “thick journals” all demanded considerable knowledge on social issues, literary debates and contemporary politics from their readers, while the articles in the illustrated magazines obviously offered supporting illustrations for all of these problems. As a result, readers gained access to these topics and eventually understood them far more easily than it would have been the case if they had consulted the ‘intellectual’ newspapers, similar to the phenomenon of the *lubki* described in the fifth chapter. The result was a massive increase in the

popularity of the illustrated press, and from the 1870s onward, step by step, the increasing number of copies published meant widening circulation of the images conveyed.

Before commercial considerations became a huge factor for the Russian press, the existing periodicals were mainly dominated by two factions: 1) the highly politicized, i.e. state-sponsored, media, perpetuating official government-approved narratives, and 2) the so-called “thick journals,” which were both written by and designed for the empire’s intellectual elite, the intelligentsia (Ibid.). Before mass-circulated newspapers appeared, the latter had held a monopoly on political opinion and expression independent of the government. This intelligentsia included some of the most renowned literary and political thinkers, dominated the journalistic establishment and was not insignificantly able to publish its own weekly or monthly overviews of their works, thereby giving them a position of controlling the selection and interpretation of topics before communicating them to their respective readership. The reforms of the 1860s and the gradual transformation of the Russian Empire’s media landscape did not prevent these circles from maintaining their communication through their respective “thick journals.” Additionally, Russian censorship kept its main focus on precisely these periodicals (Ibid.).

What did change was that the increasing number of commercial newspapers brought a change in the style of the press. News became increasingly important, while attention to the expression of views as well as extensive editorials declined. As a consequence, the changing media landscape and the growing commercialization of newspapers challenged the intellectual elite’s authority. The process of selection and interpretation was stymied by the primary goal of the popular press to be as up to date as possible, which undermined the intelligentsia’s position in Russian society. At first, the intellectual elite did not adapt to the new media circumstances. McReynolds (1990: 280) quoted Aleksandr I. Gercen (1812–1870), famous also for his London-based diaspora periodical *Kolokol* [The Bell], by saying that reporters were like “grasshoppers, devouring events before they have time to ripen.” Furthermore, intellectuals lamented that the commercial success of the popular press would increasingly influence which topics were prominently discussed. However, mass-circulated periodicals did not become a short-term phenomenon. Quite the opposite, the most successful ones made their publishers millionaires and also helped their other contributors become wealthy (Ibid.). Obviously, these publishers did not come from nowhere, rather they had acquired their experiences in the existing media landscape in the decades prior to Aleksandr’s reforms. A good example is certainly the founder of *Golos* [The Voice], one of the most successful newspapers of 19th

century Russia, Andrej A. Kraevskij (1810–1889). Having worked his way through governmental newspapers and the “thick journals” alike, he jumped at the opportunity to begin publishing an independent newspaper in 1863, a decision which would become a success story and a milestone in the commercialization of the Russian press (McReynolds 1991: 30–32). Despite the numerous examples of profit from the reforms, the intellectual elite could still not come to terms with the new commercialized trend toward the mass production of daily newspapers, at least not until the beginning of the 20th century, when its new circles gradually began to participate in popular journalism (McReynolds 1990: 292–93).

All these developments led to a new occupation gaining respectability and credibility: the (war) correspondent. The Crimean War (1853–1856) is believed to have been the first modern mass media war (Knightley 2004: 1–19; Maag et al. 2010). The media war was dominated by the British and French, and was particularly identified with the war reporter William Howard Russell (1821–1907), who became the first journalist to use a telegraph to transmit his stories to *The Times* (Paul 2004: 62). The experience for both the press and the military on how to handle the new situation with respect to organization and censorship was all quite new and it often led to tensions between the two sides, when a reporter dared to criticize the situation on the front. The Russian press had to wait for these experiences until the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, as it became the first major military event in which it could rely on a large set of correspondents actually in the field and able to offer readers lively accounts of the latest developments. These new possibilities contributed to what would become a real boom for Russian commercial newspapers in the late 1870s (McReynolds 1990: 278). Widespread public interest in the war made thousands of readers turn to the daily newspapers to get the most up-to-date information possible from the front. The editors had to adapt their content to comply with reader expectations and immediately transmitted news from the frontlines became their main point of interest. Even before the Russian Empire declared war on the Ottoman Empire, the leading newspapers had begun to dispatch correspondents to Southeastern Europe’s focal points. The coverage of the Serb and Montenegrin wars (1876–1878) against the Ottoman Empire as well as the Bulgarian April Uprising in 1876 aroused immense public interest in Russia, and eventually the continually growing interest in the Russo-Ottoman War made the first Russian war correspondents, such as Vasilij I. Nemirovič-Dančenko (1844/45–1936), whose eyewitness reports for *Novoe vremja* would later form a part of his war chronicles (cf. Chapter 6), famous. Increasingly, dispatches from Southeastern Europe took over the front pages of Russia’s newspapers.

Onur İşçi (2014: 184–88) elaborated on the implications of the war and the economic interests of newspaper editors, arguing that in the case of *Golos*, the war helped the Russian printing industry to become a lucrative promoter of nationalist ideas. According to him, Kraevskij's newspaper was difficult to classify during the wartime years, as the editor's preference for making a profit over inciting the people against the government had placed *Golos* above ideological currents in favor of a balance between the various publicly-expressed opinions. Still, the war was a big business for the different periodicals and *Golos* also did not hesitate to send their correspondent Grigorij K. Gradovskij (1842–1915) to Southeastern Europe and remarkably also to publish regular columns on the Eastern Front with a special focus on the Armenian situation. In stark contrast to the negative depictions of Armenians in the Russian military's accounts, İşçi (2014: 188) emphasized the inclusion of Orthodox Armenians in the wartime coverage by the press, quoting a report in the 1877 issues of *Golos* about the rescue of "over 3,000 Armenian families from the blood-thirsty Kurdish bandits and Bashibozuks" and that: "These peaceful Christian peoples of Asia Minor were energized with Russia's recent operations in the Balkans since the future of an independent Armenia depended on Russia's victory in the War."

How prominently the war was discussed in the Russian press may perhaps be best seen in the case of the illustrated magazine *Vsemirnaja illjustracija*. In 1872, the St. Petersburg-based weekly had produced a series of supplements to honor the 200th birthday of Pëtr I, a serial that would later be published as a separate book. The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 offered the second opportunity for such serial journalism (Mazaev 1892: 391–92). The supplement on wartime operations included in every single issue published during the 1877–1878 campaigns was later collected and published as the two-volume *Illjustrirovannaja chronika vojny (1877–1878)* [Illustrated Chronicle of the War (1877–1878)]. Coverage of the war was therefore not simply integrated into common reporting, as it obtained a platform for a distinct supplement so that readers could immediately find what interested them the most.

THE WAR YEARS IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

The main focus of public attention regarding the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 was directed at events in Southeastern Europe and the Russian army's march toward the Ottoman capital. But the war was not limited to Southeastern Europe and had another important frontline running along the Russo-Ottoman border in the Southern Caucasus, and the war additionally coincided with a new wave of unrest north of the mountain range. Russian historians Irina Babič and

Vladimir Bobrovnikov (2007: 143) concluded almost ten years ago that this topic was still widely understudied in current historiography on the North Caucasus, about which not much has changed up to the present. Thus, and prior to addressing the key question of how the uprising and its participants were, if at all, described in the Russian press of the time, a brief outline of the uprising's reasons and outcomes follows.

The end of the Caucasus War prompted the Russian authorities to do their best to integrate the conquered lands into the empire's administrative structures. The Terek Oblast', established in 1860 and corresponding to most of what is today understood as the Northeast Caucasus, and its seat Vladikavkaz were gradually transformed into a regular administrative unit (Gammer 2006: 82–83). The 1860s saw, among other measures, the opening of a district court of law as well as the introduction of a code regulating administration and the courts. By 1876, the directorate of education was established and it had jurisdiction over all schools except religious ones. All of these steps, however, were only taken for the benefit of the local population that fully cooperated with the Russian authorities. In Chechnya in particular, the majority of the population was severely impacted by Russian restructuring, mostly because of the shortage of land, which had been confiscated during the reforms of the 1860s, while the lands of the deported and emigrants was also appropriated (Ibid.). The confiscated lands were eventually redistributed to some Chechen collaborators and certain Russian officials, but mainly to the Cossack settlers in the Terek Oblast'. Not surprisingly, the local population was effectively marginalized in terms of social and economic significance to the region's organization. The Russian administration's indifference to these developments heightened the already existing tensions, religious, political or otherwise, gradually creating the potential for a new large-scale conflict. In Dagestan alone, there were 18 rebellions against Russian rule in the years between 1859 and 1877 (Babič/Bobrovnikov 2007: 137). These smaller revolts and the formation of Chechen and Dagestani resistance factions were immediately quelled throughout the mid-1870s, but finally the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 provided a platform for turning these tensions into open unrest, or what is also known as “the lesser Ghazavat” (Gammer 2006: 84–103). This uprising ultimately meant simultaneous resistance against Russian rule in Chechnya and Dagestan but also in other parts of the region such as in Abkhazia and in the Zakatal'skij District of present-day Azerbaijan (Babič/Bobrovnikov 2007: 143–51).

That the local discontent with Russian rule ignited into uprisings just at the moment when Aleksandr II declared war on the Ottoman Empire let Russian sources connect the two events (Gammer 2006: 85–86). In this view, the Rus-

sian side emphasized and surely overstated the North Caucasus people's ties with the Ottomans during the war and the uprising (cf. also Babič/Bobrovnikov 2007: 143), following the very same narrative of the Caucasus peoples as unfaithful subjects and collaborators with the enemy, something already seen in ethnographic studies (cf. Chapter 4) and military documents (cf. Chapter 6). While it is likely that the outbreak of the Russo-Ottoman War raised the rebels' hopes of being able to successfully resist the Russians, the reasons for the uprisings had hardly anything to do with existing Ottoman agitation or the allegedly inherent local trait of going behind Russia's back whenever possible. It was mainly the precarious socio-economic situation in which the native population found itself after their lands had been fully integrated into the Russian Empire that finally pushed the situation in the Terek Oblast' past the brink. Therefore, it is hardly a coincidence that the rebellion began in Ičkerija, the poorest part of the region (Dettmering 2011: 314–16). While the economically misleading policy of the Russian administration might have been the most significant reason for the Dagestani and Chechen uprisings in 1877–1878, two more reasons also contributed to the complicated situation in the Russian Caucasus. First, Russian attempts to influence local social structures and thereby especially the authority of the elders utterly failed. In a first step, the uprising violently expelled those of the elders who were considered obedient to the Russian administration and who could therefore no longer count on any support from the population's majority. The second reason was the growing isolation of Muslims, i.e., the majority of the population in the North Caucasus, and the restriction of their religion practices (by forbidding the *dhikr* for instance) in the empire's new administrative units (Perović 2015: 133). Despite the fact that the roots of the uprising were not inter-confessional conflict, the Muslim elites would gradually take over control to fight their own marginalization. During the uprising, an imamate was once more proclaimed, and it once again included Chechen and Dagestani lands (Dettmering 2011: 314–16).

One can also see a certain continuity in the Chechens' struggle against the Russians by considering the example of Uma-Hajji (Uma-Chadži) Duev (1808–1878). Once a close confidant of Imam Šamil' who fought Russian troops until his apprehension in the Caucasus War, he returned from the subsequent exile in 1876 and hesitated to support a potential revolt. Although the reasons are not clear, he soon changed sides and not only supported the uprising when it broke out in 1877, but he eventually became one of the most important leaders in this latest episode of resistance against Russian authority in the North Caucasus. Later he justified his actions by citing Russian repression against Islam (Dettmering 2011: 315; Ibragimova 2006: 316–21; 342–44; Ibragimova 2009: 235–

36). Another important figure in the rebellion of 1877–1878 was Albik-Hajji (Alibek-Chadži) Aldamov (1850–1878), who returned from his pilgrimage to Mecca just in time and worked for independence from Russia as well as the establishment of an imamate in the tradition of Šamil'. He gathered roughly 300 to 500 men and attempted to drive Russian troops out of the Chechen and Dagestani highlands (Perović 2015: 134–35).

While the reasons for Caucasus resistance were manifold, the international situation certainly helped the cause of local rebellions. Obviously, the Russo-Ottoman War compelled St. Petersburg deploy its troops on the two fronts rather than inside the empire's borders. Thus, the beginning of the uprising in mid-April 1877, i.e., at the very same time that Aleksandr II declared war on the Ottomans, caught the Russian forces somewhat off-guard, for some of the units stationed in Chechnya and Dagestan had already been moved to the front with the Ottoman Empire across the mountains. The insurgents attacked Russian soldiers in the same way as they had in the Caucasus War: They only moved against smaller units and tried to cut off the opponent's supply-lines of communications by primarily trying to destroy the bridges the Russians had built. The uprising's epicenter was once again the many *auls* in the mountains, and hundreds of villages and thousands of insurgents took part, which made it difficult for Russian troops to quash the movement as quickly as they had intended.

However, the uprising was poorly coordinated and despite the best efforts of Albik-Hajji and Uma-Hajji, it lacked strong leadership which may have unified the many disparate groups into a common Chechen-Dagestani movement (Perović 2015: 135–37). The lack of leaderly authority also meant that they could not count on the entire local population to join their side, as many of those who were generally sympathetic to the resistance movement and who were highly dissatisfied with Russian rule in the Caucasus still hesitated to take up arms. Furthermore, already existing alliances were broken and formerly rebellious villages opted to pledge allegiance to the Russian authorities once more, or as one of the latter's representatives put it: "The population of Greater Chechnya was very unreliable and its representatives openly confessed that they would side with the stronger party" (Semënov 1891: 15; cit. in Gammer 2006: 87). Continuous fealty to the Russian Empire rather than changing sides could be seen among the former Dagestani elite, who decided to support Russian troops in crushing the revolt, a detail which can be understood as a success of the Russian policy of cooperation and cooptation (Perović 2015: 136–37). Therefore, instead of uniting the Dagestani and Chechen population by supporting fronts in neighboring districts, the resistance movement's peak was reached in August of 1877, when it engulfed a total of forty-seven *auls* with a population of approxi-

mately 18,000 (Gammer 2006: 92). By the end of the year, the uprising had already been beaten back and it continually lost support among the local population, so that the last waves of resistance actually took place in southern Chechnya and in central and western Dagestan in November and December 1877 (Babič/Bobrovnikov 2007: 147).

The structure of the uprising in the North Caucasus during the Russo-Ottoman War therefore demonstrated two things: on the one hand, it was the expression of continuing refusal to accept Russian sovereignty by a goodly portion of the native population; on the other hand, it became clear that a restoration of the status quo under Šamil' was not feasible, as the movement's leaders lacked the famous Imam's integrity and credibility among the many fractions in the region. In particular, the newly proclaimed Chechen Imam Albik-Hajji, who was still in his twenties during the uprising, had no chance of convincing the Dagestani elite to join his campaigns and to acknowledge him as the legitimate leader of the anti-Russian resistance (Ibid.: 137). The subsequent lack of organization made it simply impossible to drive Russian troops out of the Caucasus, regardless of the latter's focus on fronts with the Ottoman army.

The Russian response to the uprising was reckless. The leading figures of the resistance were persecuted and between 4 (16) March and 6 (18) March 1878, the seventeen (Gammer 2006: 100) or eighteen (Ibragimova 2009: 238) ring-leaders in Chechnya were court-martialed. Only a few received prison sentences, while most, including Uma-Hajji and Albik-Hajji, were sentenced to death and executed three days later (Ibid.). The situation in Dagestan was similar, as 300 persons involved in the uprising together with their families, for a total of 5,000 people, were forced to migrate to other parts of the Russian Empire and their *auls* were destroyed (Perović 2015: 138). However, Russian punishment was not limited to the rebellion's leaders. They burnt down villages, seized even more land, and once again forced the population of the mountainous hinterlands to settle in the plains, in inner Russia, or in Siberia, a punishment encompassing almost 1,000 families (Babič/Bobrovnikov 2007: 151; Jersild 2000). The harsh repression once again also forced thousands to leave their native lands for the Ottoman Empire (Perović 2015: 137). Furthermore, the Russian authorities made each household accused of participating in the uprising pay a compensation of three silver rubles, so that they collected a sum of over 30,000 rubles in Dagestan alone (Gammer 2006: 100).

As a result, the situation in the North Caucasus during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 simultaneously demonstrated the Russian Empire's strength and its weakness. On the one hand, it could flex its military muscle and beat down local uprisings rather easily. On the other hand, though, it clearly showed

the inability of the Russian authorities to adequately integrate its newly conquered territories and the non-Russian peoples living in the North Caucasus.

REPORTING ON THE CAUCASUS REGION IN WARTIME

The war in 1877–1878 captured the Russian public’s full attention. All newspapers covered the latest developments on the frontlines in their headlines and front pages. The standout publication in terms of rich war coverage was certainly *Vsemirnaja illjustracija*, which included a special war supplement for each of its issues during the Russo-Ottoman War. These supplements were later collected and published as the two-volume *Illjustrirovannaja chronika vojny (1877–1878)*. As the name of both the magazine and the chronicle already indicate, considerable emphasis was placed on the visualization of that war and led to what turned out to be the first Russian experience with photographic wartime reporting directly from the theater of war. Eight photojournalists were stationed at the forefront of the military and continuously fed the printing presses (Veprickaja 2010: 130). Furthermore, the magazine was designed for a diverse readership, encouraging the masses to buy it, abetted by its low cover price.

Dated 27 May (8 June) 1878, the preface to the second volume of the *Illjustrirovannaja chronika vojny* describes its very programmatic understanding of the previous campaign’s main objective, namely “the liberation of the Balkan Christians from the Muslim yoke.” Referring to the Christians of Southeastern Europe rather than to all Christians living in the Ottoman Empire, which would have included those living in its eastern parts, already indicates where the emphasis in the reporting was placed. The Caucasus region, both with respect to the Caucasus front of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 but also with respect to actual events, i.e. the unrest in the North Caucasus at the time, were greatly underrepresented in comparison to the constant news updates on what had happened during the last days in Southeastern Europe. The progress of the Danubian army was monitored much more closely than the advance of the Caucasus army, while the rebellions in Chechnya and Dagestan were mostly omitted from the Russian press coverage.

This is also true for the special war supplement of *Vsemirnaja illjustracija*, which consisted of seven to eight pages, roughly, half of which were text and half images, and which included several ongoing sections, allowing the reader to immediately find the sought-after information. One of these sections was entitled “War Review,” which gave readers an overview on the different operational theaters during the war. In this review, readers were not only informed of the movements of Russian troops but also of current developments in Montene-

gro, Serbia, Thessaly or Crete. These continuous updates helped to create the perception of an all-encompassing front against the Ottoman Empire, especially in Southeastern Europe but also in the Caucasus. Although not a unique selling point, a nonetheless quite important component of the structure of *Vsemirnaja illjustracija* was the many telegrams from the Russian army that were printed in the section “News from the Theater of War” and which suggested official approval of this news.



Figure 12: “A Telegram from the War Read Aloud in a Village”
[*Čtenie voennoj telegrammy v derevne*]

Another key to conveying news from the battlefields was the variety of correspondents writing for their newspapers, but *Vsemirnaja illjustracija* also reprinted information from other newspapers such as *Kavkaz* [Caucasus] or *Tiflisskij vestnik* [Tiflis Herald] and even reports by foreign correspondents in foreign newspapers, such as, for instance, news on Erzurum as written in the *Daily News* (ICHV 2, 75: 194), were picked up by *Vsemirnaja illjustracija*. Furthermore, a great deal of background information was given on the operational theaters of the war, as for instance the city and the fortress of Kars. In the case of the latter, the information encompassed a historical overview from its foundation as “one of the old cities in Armenia and one of the strongest fortresses [...] about which even Tacitus wrote,” the Russian capture in 1828–1829, and the blockade

during the Crimean War, while also giving lengthy descriptions about the details, qualities and the strength of the fortress (ICHV 1, 13: 99; 16: 126–28). Also strongly represented were many renowned representatives of Russian public life, including the participation of artist Vasilij V. Vereščagin in the war and his eventual injury (ICHV 1, 17: 130). They were just as present as the idealized generals of the Russian army, whose careers and distinctions were emphasized in exhaustive portraits. The main focus in the newspaper's coverage rested, however, on the battles *per se*, as every step by the Russian troops was exhaustively covered.

If the Russo-Ottoman War was understood as the Russian Empire's struggle against Muslim repression of the Christian peoples in Southeastern Europe, how did the newspapers present the uprisings of Muslim peoples in the Caucasus and did they refer to the rebellious subjects by their faith in any way? The nomination strategies of the newspaper coverage from the Caucasus front and the uprisings in the North Caucasus do not suggest that. In fact, the different peoples living in the North Caucasus were at no point simply referred to as "Muslims," which is one indication for the Caucasus designation still being a very strong point of reference and one that did not disappear in the narrative of Christian-Muslim antagonism as disseminated via anti-Ottoman propaganda during the war of 1877–1878. This was also true for the Ottomans themselves, who were always referred to as "Turks" or "the enemy" but hardly anywhere as "Muslims." However, the frequency of named ethnic groups was very low in the Russian media wartime coverage from the Caucasus front and from the Caucasus region *per se*. In Southeastern Europe, the Serbs, Montenegrins, Romanians, Bulgarians and others were frequently named and partly substituted by terms such as "our allies" (cf. ICHV 2, 75: 194) and so forth, but an analogous nomination strategy was not pursued for the region on the other side of the Black Sea. Reports from the Caucasus region do show a certain awareness of the region's ethnic plurality, as the occasional reference goes beyond the Armenian, Chechen and Circassian peoples, providing information on the situation concerning the Abadzech (ICHV 1, 13: 98), a people of Adyghe branch, the Didoi (or Cez) (ICHV 1, 15: 115), today classified as a subgroup of the Dagestani Avars, or the Tuš (Ibid.), a subgroup of Georgians, who mainly live in the region of Tušet'i (northeast Georgia). However, these detailed references to ethnic (sub-)groups are the exception rather than the rule and are primarily included in military telegrams which appeared in the mass media. The majority of the news from and on the Caucasus relied on well-established subsuming designations, as the conflict in the North Caucasus was not perceived as a specific of one or two particular ethnic groups but of all of them altogether.

For the Caucasus, subsuming designations such as “mountaineers” (cf. ICHV 1, 13: 98; 19: 147; 22: 173), “Caucasus mountaineers” (ICHV 1, 17: 131), “mountaineer peoples of the Caucasus” (ICHV 1, 19: 146), and from time to time within territorial localizations such as “mountaineers of Dagestan” (ICHV 1, 22: 172), are the primarily used terms when referring to the Caucasus native population. While these designations do refer to non-Russian peoples in the North Caucasus, it is interesting to read a “Note on the Kars Oblast,” published in late December 1877, which gives an account of the population structure of the districts in Eastern Anatolia and effectively considers “mountaineers” to be an ethnic designation for Muslim peoples only, as the equivalent references to the region’s Christian population includes Armenians, Nestorians and Greeks only (ICHV 2, 72: 171–72). This shows how much this reference is actually embedded into the socio-political context and can mean two different things, i.e. in this case a non-Russian as well as a non-Christian connotation for the term “mountaineer.” Already less neutral than the actual term are the many references to the “rebellious character” of the peoples described. Russian media coverage on the uprisings in the North Caucasus predominantly referred to them as “insurrectionary residents” (ICHV 1, 18: 138) or “rebels” (ICHV 1, 22: 175), which includes the substitution of the addressed group by their settlements as in “exchange of fire with the mountainous *auls*” (ICHV 1, 13: 102) or the transfer of the attributed “rebellious character” to their homes as in “denizens of the insurrectionary *auls*” (ICHV 1, 11: 83).

Other than these references to “rebellious mountaineers,” it is interesting to see that hardly any attributive strategies are present with respect to named ethnic groups, as their occasional mention is mostly not accompanied by pejorative adjectives. The arguments employed, however, give a clear picture of how negative the Russian perception of certain ethnic groups was throughout the war and once again, the “Circassians” and their problematic position between the Russian and the Ottoman Empires stand out. Reports of “Circassians” being the vanguard of “new Turkish barbarities in Bulgaria” dominated the newspaper coverage, saying that they cold-bloodedly, systematically “and even with delight” executed “women, just like forty unfortunate infants,” whom they “slaughtered like sheep, i.e. they cut everyone’s throat” (ICHV 1, 16: 126). The narrative of “Circassians,” alongside the *Başıbozüks*, as plundering and murderous gangs in Ottoman service, who were “assigned to devastate” (ICHV 1, 21: 162) different areas, was perpetuated in the Russian press during the war, which contributed to a Russian perception of the Circassian-Adyghe community as a malign opponent. The “Circassians” as Ottoman collaborators are also a recurring theme in the Russian visualization of the war (cf. Fig.13 and ICHV 2, 91:

325 for a similar motive in the image “The Danubian Army – A Skirmish of Dragoons and Turkish Circassians at Eni-Zagra [Nova Zagora]”).



Figure 13: “The Danubian Army – A skirmish of Baši-buzuks and Circassians against Russian Marksmen” [*Dunajskaja armija – Styčka baši-buzukov i čerkesov s russkimi zastrel'sčikami*]

Other than in the military diaries, and despite the fact that the newspapers derived a considerable share of their information from that same military, other ethnic groups were omitted from the war coverage, and so hardly anything could be read about the Chechens and even less on the Armenian population. The latter was furthermore not described by negative stereotypes but rather as the embodiment of suffering under the enemy’s cruelty. Russian telegrams from the frontlines refer to the Armenians as a persecuted people, forced to flee across the border from *Başıbozuks*, who “kill Armenians and rape their women,” while “the Bulgarian atrocities are nothing compared to the massacres of the Armenians” (ICHV 1, 24: 190). A report from Yerevan tells of hundreds of Armenians fleeing every day, arriving in the Russian Empire in extremely poor condition (Ibid.). In fact, the Armenians were not negatively described in the press, and indeed they were embraced as a fellow Orthodox Christian people suffering under their Muslim Ottoman overlords.

However, besides these *Başıbozüks*, who were portrayed as their persecutors, there was another Muslim group denoted as murderous savages: the Kurds. Described as “even worse than the *Başıbozüks*” (Ibid.), the Kurds were one of the few non-Russian groups frequently mentioned in Russian press coverage on the Caucasus during the war. On the one hand, they were simply described as Ottoman back-up-forces, as in the battle for Bajazet, where “there were 20 Turkish battalions, supported by 10,000 cavalymen, predominantly Kurds” (ICHV 1, 21: 162). Figure 14 shows quite well how the Kurds were portrayed as the enemy’s accomplices, as they are shown with horses, camels and oxen, literally carrying Ottoman provisions, alongside the “Circassians,” of course. On the other hand, they were also assigned with an active part in combat, actually influencing the course of Russo-Ottoman battles, as when “crowds of Kurds surround the city of Bajazet” (ICHV 1, 18: 138) and elsewhere they “plundered the surrounding settlements” (ICHV 1, 27: 210). The last quote however continues with the observation that the Kurds “wouldn’t even show mercy to Muslims.” This is typical of Russian press descriptions of the Kurdish population in the late 1870s and it helped stress the narrative of dissent among the enemy’s allies. Concerning the role of the Kurds in the Russo-Ottoman War, *Vsemirnaja illjustracija* summarized its point of view by saying that “already at the beginning of the present war, the Kurds have shown the Turks that they shouldn’t count on them [...]” and by accusing them of “not sparing anyone, neither Christians nor Muslims, plundering and destroying the lands and towns through which they wander” (ICHV 1, 28: 218). Furthermore, the Kurds were characterized as “semi-wild people” with “extremely raw and ugly facial features,” whose women “serve their men like slaves,” and who lived a semi-nomadic life with moments of “complete savagery” (Ibid.; ICHV 2, 72: 171). On the other hand, their military capabilities were constantly praised with expressions of admiration for their “perfect handling of weapons” and that it would be “too easy to simply say that the Kurds were a stupid people by nature or not capable of intellectual activity” (ICHV 1, 28: 218).

Despite such a classic narrative of the Kurds as “unpredictable and semi-civilized warriors” presented in the Russian media during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 and despite the occasional episode of Kurds and Chechens simultaneously attacking a Cossack patrol towards the end of the war and the uprisings in the North Caucasus (ICHV 2, 82: 251), it is interesting to see that aside from the vague designation of the “Circassians,” no other ethnic group from the Caucasus region was that prominently addressed and subjected to such an othering process. On the other hand, no particular group living in the North

or South Caucasus was praised for their cooperation with the Russian troops, not even the Georgians.



Figure 14: “The Caucasus Army – Circassians and Kurds, providing combat units with provisions” [*Kavkazskaja armija – Čerkesy i kurdy, dostavljajuščie proviant stroevym vojskam*]

Having addressed subsuming designations such as “mountaineers” already, there is another *topos* commonly used by Russian newspapers, which did not refer to the ethnicity of these groups but rather to their migratory background and included variations of the “returning Caucasus migrants” (e.g. ICHV 1, 18: 138) playing a decisive role in unrest in the region during the war. This established connection between the Caucasus and external influences, coming or brought from the Ottoman Empire and shaping the course of the uprisings and also the local population’s participation in the war, is important to an understanding of the Russian portrayal of these episodes. The emphasis on returnees having a say in the political orientation of the different ethnic groups was strongly connected to the widely perpetuated narrative with respect to the Russian perception of the Caucasus (as already elaborated in Chapters 4 and 5): Ottoman-Caucasus collaboration with the aim of impairing the Russian Empire.

Figure 15 shows a group of Abkhazians, who had emigrated to the Ottoman Empire and are depicted as fierce-looking men, armed to the teeth, and who have their hands on their weapons, ready to strike at any command.



Кавказская армия. — Типы абхазцев, высланных в Турцию.

Figure 15: “The Caucasus Army – Types of Abkhazians, Expelled to Turkey”
 [*Kavkazskaja armija – Typy abchazcev, vyselivščichsja v Turciju*]

Thus, it is no wonder that one can often find emphasis on Ottoman attacks that had some sort of background support from among the local population residing near the given Caucasus battlefield. For example, a description of a battle on the Abkhazian coast in June 1877 tells of the “enemy,” i.e. the Ottoman army, attacking the troops of General Jakov K. Alchazov at Ilori, with both the support of an (Ottoman) ironclad and parallel attacks by “mountaineers” (ICHV 1, 19: 151). The “War Review” of the very same month has a similar account, as “the enemy’s troops, consisting of, in addition to Abkhazians, regular Turkish and Egyptian infantry” were the counterpart to General Alchazov’s units and which had additional artillery support from nine battleships (ICHV 1, 21: 162).

These ties naturally go the other way as well, and a lengthy portrait of the capture of Ardahan describes a certain Kaftar-Bek as the main protagonist in the Ottoman defense of this fortress, although the writer was not exactly sure whether he can attribute the defender’s outstanding energy to his roots as a “Caucasus mountaineer” as other information indicated that he was of Hungari-

an origin (ICHV 1, 17: 131). Be that as it may, these examples do illustrate one thing: that the Russian perception of the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the population of the (North) Caucasus overestimated its importance. The reports from the region suggested a need to break both parties simultaneously, as shown in a telegram from 26 October (7 November) 1877, signed by General-Feldzeugmeister Michail (Nikolaeviĉ, the youngest of Tsar Nikolaj I's children), stating: "I am pleased with the operations of Prince Melikov in Dagestan and General Lazarev at Kars" (ICHV 2, 64: 110).

On the other hand, the Russians were also quick to point out any signs of Ottoman failure to successfully orchestrate or at least initiate anti-Russian resistance in the region. In a "War Review" from May 1877, i.e., still early in the Russo-Ottoman War, one can read about the successful disarmament of Kobuleti's residents which was nowhere met with any resistance and that "the failures of the Turks in the Caucasus promoted such a mood" (ICHV 1, 13: 98). Three weeks later, the very same "War Review" section reported of "initial discord between Turks and Abkhazians," which favored the Russian troops in subsequent battles (ICHV 1, 17: 130). While the population of the North Caucasus was described as Ottoman collaborators, this narrative still had to be set against the portrayal of Russian dominance over the Ottoman opponent, for which these Ottoman-Caucasus ties were interpreted as crucial to the development of unrest in the region but also as not necessarily threatening to the superior Russian Empire and its troops.

The Russian Empire's all-encompassing foreign policy ambitions to defeat the Ottoman Empire and to reinforce its own influence in both the Caucasus and Southeastern Europe at the geopolitical level dominated the years 1877–1878. But this dominant focus on what happened on the frontlines also meant less attention was accorded to internal conflicts, especially if they appeared to be a tired revival of what had already preoccupied the Russian army for so many decades: the Caucasus War and what was perceived as its small-scale aftermath, the uprisings in the North Caucasus thirteen years after the war had ended. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that Russian media coverage included the uprising only as a mere footnote to the largely staged encounter with the Sultan's empire. The typical coverage of the uprisings in the North Caucasus contained brief remarks below lengthy accounts of the situation in Southeastern Europe and Anatolia, such as, for instance, "unrest breaks out in the Terek Province," with the immediate consequence of several detachments sent to the region in question in order to strengthen the Russian grip on its southern provinces (ICHV 1, 27: 210).

It was certainly not the intent of the Russian army to engender the view that the situation inside the empire's borders was not fully under control, which is why the few telegrams which addressed the uprising and were printed in Russian newspapers reflect precisely this self-assurance. A telegram from Kjurjuk-Dara [Kürekdere] on 28 May (09 June) 1877 thus primarily outlines the situation at Kars but then briefly refers to developments in the North Caucasus with the brief assessment: "All is calm in Dagestan and the Terek Oblast'." The telegram then closes by stating that the Russian troops are "in excellent condition; everywhere hale and the two troops are splendid" (ICHV 1, 13: 99).

If it was impossible to present the North Caucasus as a haven of safety and security, the ruthless suppression of any unrest was sold as impressive military successes. A telegram from the Dagestani city of Šura (today also known as Bujnaxsk) dated 19 (31) May 1877 contains an account of the campaign of Prince Aleksandr D. Nakašidze (1837–1905; his name is spelled Nikašidze in the telegram) and his troops against 500 rebellious residents of the Dagestani "rebel *auls*" Artluch and Danuk. No information on the campaign or the Russian *modus operandi* is given, as the telegram goes straight to a recapitulation of the results, which include the defeat of the locals, eighty men captured immediately while one hundred more were in flight. The telegram's closing line informs the reader of "the residents' readiness to comply with all requirements," i.e., to fully accept Russian rule over their native lands (ICHV 1, 11: 83). A telegram from the Caucasus front, sent on 11 (23) June 1877, was forwarded from the Romanian city of Ploiești one day later and eventually printed in Russian newspapers. It briefly refers to the situation in Abkhazia, where the Russian troops ran into a skirmish at the villages of Mergula [Merkula] and Mokva with "rebellious residents and returning Caucasus émigrés" (ICHV 1, 18: 138). Only a semicolon separates this description of the starting point from the results, which read: "Many horses and weapons were seized from them, their leader, Charibs-Maršaže, and a few Abkhazians have been taken prisoner. 35 bodies remained on the battlefield, on our side one Cossack was killed and a few militiamen wounded" (Ibid.). Further south, on the Georgian Black Sea coast, the arrival of Russian reinforcements immediately led to "the mountaineers suffering defeat everywhere" and to the pacification of formerly rebellious villages, convincing the Abadzech people to "discover obeisance and turn in the rebellion's instigators" (ICHV 1, 13: 98).

The search for the motive behind the uprisings in the North Caucasus yielded many explanations, but obviously they did not include a serious discussion of the problems resulting from Russian administration, which drew a line between Russians and non-Russians. Rather than scrutinizing the underlying reasons for

the precarious economic status of many Caucasus natives, the newspaper reports described the uprisings as aggressive acts of an unreasonable and semi-civilized people. The role of religion in this conflict was nonetheless disputed, which is interesting given the dominant interpretation of the Russian Empire's role in the war against the Ottomans. Of the unrest among the Didoi in Western Dagestan, numbering approximately 5,000 people, the "War Review" in *Illjustrirovannaja chronika vojny* first reports of "a deadly blow inflicted by the detachment of Prince Džordžadze" but then explains that one "should not attach serious importance to the uprising" as the reason for the unrest was not fanaticism but their "craving for banditry" (ICHV 1, 19: 146). Once again, an ethnic group of the North Caucasus was perceived by the Russian public as a group of feral looters.

But this "deadly blow" by the Russian military apparently did not close the case of the Didoi unrest, for several weeks later, the "pacification of the Didoi" was already prominent enough to not only be addressed by a paragraph in the "War Review" but also by its own section (ICHV 1, 26: 206). Interestingly, the situation in the region is described as unstable despite the Russian army's unquestionable successes:

Since the revolt of the Didoi, a few weeks have already passed and, despite the good news about our army's campaigns we have received from there, the whole of Kacheti is still in a state of great alarm. A few days ago, a battalion of the Širvan Infantry Regiment arrived here, and it was apparent that the pleasure of the Telavi citizens was great when they sent sugar, tea, and tobacco to be distributed among the soldiers in the battalion's camp (Ibid.).

The report then nonetheless goes on to assure readers as this particular regiment would in fact have not been necessary to quell the Didoi's revolt, as that had already been effectively initiated by the consolidated detachments of Prince Džordžadze and Prince Nakašidze, who had succeeded in crushing several of the rebel's *auls* including the most important—Asacho (Ibid.).

The crucial aspect of the Russian interpretation of Didoi resistance only begins then. The reporter wrote of "typical scenes transpiring" which showed the "desperate courage of the Didoi," as eye-witnesses spoke of women taking part in the *aul's* defense. These women fired at the troops and threw rocks from towers, but when the Russian artillery began to rout the settlement, "seeing their inevitable ruin and not wanting to be taken captive, they killed their own children and together with them plunged to their doom from enormous cliffs" (Ibid.). The report then quickly closes the case by stating that despite all of this, Russian troops had taken the *aul* and approximately 200 Didoi as prisoners,

while the conclusion reads: “After such a massacre, the other rebels will be prompted to reflect, and we hope that no news about the failure of our troops in Turkey will again arouse their fanaticism” (Ibid.). The report on the Didoi once again stresses potential influence on the Caucasus from the Ottoman Empire, but it also presents the region’s native population as unyielding, who would rather kill their own children than accept Russian rule. Such a description of the skirmish’s opponent helped legitimize ruthless Russian military campaigns to stifle any sign of unrest.

Then again, what kind of fanaticism did the reporter actually have in mind? This is clarified by another telegram sent from Tbilisi on 6 (18) June 1877. Unrest between the Didoi and Tuš peoples had broken out, in the course of which several Tuš shepherds were killed. The reasons given in the Russian interpretation of this violence were, on the one hand, old land disputes but also, on the other, “Muslim fanaticism” (ICHV 1, 15: 115). Obviously, the lack of nominative references to many ethnic groups living in the Caucasus region being of Muslim faith did not go hand in hand with an absence of arguments based on Islam allegedly being the reason for unrest and savagery.

How important this narrative of Muslim fanaticism actually was in Russian media endeavors to emphasize the opponent’s otherness can be seen best in the coverage of the war in Southeastern Europe. Martina Baleva (2012: 279–81) considered an illustration circulating in the Russian press and therefore also in the war supplement of *Vsemirnaja illjustracija* as a “prime example of visual warfare”: an illustration with the telling title “The Danubian Army – Rear Guard of the Retreating Turkish Troops” (cf. Fig.16). The 1878 engraving based on a sketch by Dutch artist Fritz van Haanen reflects a multitude of familiar Christian iconographic motifs. At the far left of the image, one can see a Muslim Ottoman, armed to the teeth, tearing an infant away from the arms of its mother, who is on her knees begging him to spare the life of her child, or what Baleva (2012: 281) called “the archetypical image formula of the Massacre of the Innocents.” Furthermore, the middle of the sketch depicts an abduction with another Muslim Ottoman dragging away another woman with her right breast exposed and her head thrown back, recalling the Pietà motif. The third major component of Christian iconography is the evocation of the crucified Christ with a bleeding wound on the right side of the picture, who is supposed to signify the suffering of the region’s Christian population under Muslim rule (Ibid.).



Figure 16: “The Danubian Army – Rear Guard of the Retreating Turkish Troops” [*Dunajskaja armija – Ar'ergard otstupajuščich tureckich vojsk*]

Although media coverage of the Caucasus front, let alone the uprisings in the North Caucasus, was not based on such intense anti-Muslim othering, it surely did include a similar understanding of the Russian Empire’s role in the region based on a Christian-Muslim dichotomy. As seen above, “Muslim fanaticism” was one line of argumentation to explain the simultaneous unrest in the (North) Caucasus accompanying the Russo-Ottoman War, but the perception of the Russian Empire’s need to protect fellow Christians from Muslim atrocities was also widely perpetuated. A telegram from Aleksandropol’ dated 27 June (9 July) 1877 gives an account on the troops of General Ter-Gukasov, who “were forced to assume the protection of up to 3,000 families of Turkey’s Christian inhabitants, fleeing from their villages in the Alaškert plain from the fury of bašibuzuks and Kurds, carving out entire villages” (ICHV 1, 22: 175). Such “Muslim atrocities” (ICHV 1, 27: 210) were both on the frontlines and with respect to Russian rule over the Caucasus juxtaposed with the self-perception of bringing much-needed protection, civilization and humanity. The latter was however not limited to fellow Christians, but also encompassed the Muslim other as well—at

least if it helped to transport the juxtaposition of Russian charity with Muslim fanaticism. A protocol from the front therefore reads:

[...] in a distance of a few hundred meters: on one side—over 50 wounded Muslims, getting the necessary aid from the Russian army’s doctors, in compliance with the demands of philanthropy, while on the other—piles of cut-off heads, the disgusting trophy of the barbarities of Turkish regular troops (ICHV 1, 31: 242).

Such black and white accounts helped to portray the war’s enemy as the ultimate institutionalization of irrational evil, but it also implied that the thin line between the self and the other was strongly rooted in the different faiths, which eventually had to influence the Russian perception of “us” and “them” in the Caucasus during the war. In the already cited “Note on the Kars Oblast’,” the line is drawn precisely between Christian and Muslims in the census data for the Anatolian provinces. On the one hand, it counts a Christian population of 183,042, of whom there are 157,583 Armenians, 22,605 Nestorians and 2,854 Greeks. The other category is Muslims, who include a total of 427,702 men, of whom there are 207,049 Kurds, 189,950 Turks, 25,098 Kızılbaş, 2,000 Tatars and 2,705 mountaineers (ICHV 2, 72: 171). All this data is obviously questionable, as ethnic groups are equally categorized as are adherents of the Shi’a order and the vague “mountaineers,” while it also only counts men and gives estimates [sic!] of the women living in Eastern Anatolia. The latter is also quite representative of the masculinization of both the Russo-Ottoman War and the Caucasus, as both hardly ever include stories about or by women involved in the war and living in the region. Furthermore, the numbers for the Muslim groups do not add up to the total indicated in the attached table, which at least suggests that there was a certain awareness of a greater plurality among the peoples living in the region, something not visible in the figures given for the Christian population, which allegedly included Armenians, Nestorians, and Greeks only. Despite the indistinct categorizations based on nationalities, the printed data primarily suggests an understanding of the main differentiation along Christian-Muslim lines. There seems to be no space between these two categories and they seem to be dominant in the Russian perception of the region as a space divided between Islam and Christianity, which at that time implied a space between black and white: between “Muslim fanaticism” and “Russian civilization.”

It is interesting to note that the resistance movement in the North Caucasus during the Russo-Ottoman War as well as the participation of Caucasus émigrés in it did not result in any heightened personification as happened with Šamil’ during the Caucasus War. This correlates with the fact that the 1877–1878 re-

sistance itself had problems finding strong leadership, which effectively made it impossible to unite Russia's opponents. At no point did the names Uma-Hajji Duev or Albik-Hajji Aldamov evoke a similarly clear association with resistance in the Caucasus as Šamil' had managed to develop, which is certainly the reason why no local resistance leader was ever mentioned in the Russian media coverage of the war. The same is mostly true for the segments of Ottoman forces consisting of or supported by emigrants from the Caucasus, as the few references to peoples generally cite nameless masses concealed within the Ottoman army. Since a rule only becomes a rule by having an exception, this assertion can only be true if the prominence of Musa Kunduchov is not considered. The story of this former Russian general of Ossetian descent now serving on the Ottoman side in the war had become notorious throughout Russia and it is therefore hardly surprising that his name is the only one frequently mentioned when addressing the narrative of Caucasus émigrés changing sides and fighting against the Russian Empire. The fact that his name often served as a stand-alone reference is another indication of this prominence, since Russian correspondents and journalists obviously did not feel the need to elaborate on who Musa Kunduchov was. For example, a telegram dated 24 May (5 June) 1877 with "news from Asian Turkey" tells of "the defeat of Musa-paša Konduchov's [sic!] cavalry" which then "fled for Saganlug with great haste" (ICHV 1, 11: 83). In the "War Review" section, similar references are made to him, as one can read in the aftermath of a battle at Begli-Achmet near Kars that "out of 4,000 cavalry detachments, formerly under the command of Musa-paša Kunduchov, only around 200 men were rescued" (ICHV 1, 13: 98).

These two citations also adhere to the scheme of highlighting Ottoman losses, underscoring flight and the death of many of the enemy's soldiers, to support the narrative of the Russia's triumphant march through Anatolia—the natural course of the war that not even the former Russian general could turn around. The heightened role and impact attributed to Kunduchov by the Russian press can be seen in the following quote: "Generally speaking, they placed high hopes on the mountaineer cavalry, consisting of emigrant Circassians, in Kars. They expected special victories by Mussa-paša [sic!] Kunduchov, who formerly had been a Russian major-general" (ICHV 1, 22: 174). The attributed importance of both Kunduchov and his "mountaineer cavalry" or his "Circassian" troops is, however, embedded in an episode of "News from Kars," which once again was also supposed to serve the narrative of Ottoman internal disputes playing into Russia's hands. Therefore, the report of the actions at Kars continues as follows:

On May 17, Mussa-paša [sic!] Kunduchov arrived at Kars from the Saganlug fortifications, accompanied by five Circassians, and said that the

Russians appeared below Kars, that he'd crush them with his cavalry, left behind in Begli-Achmet, and asked the commander to give him infantry and artillery (Ibid.).

According to the Russian reporter, the Ottoman commander-in-chief did not grant Kunduchov's wishes: "We stand here for six months," said the paša, "and he (Kunduchov) turned up yesterday and now wants to distinguish himself." They denied his request, did not give him any infantry troops but only two small-caliber cannons and a few artillerists, who, it was said, could not fire using these artillery pieces (Ibid.). This little anecdote about Musa Kunduchov ends with his defeat and eventual flight back whence he had come. The Russian commentary could not miss the opportunity to stress the lack of strong cohesion in the Ottoman army but also the absence of support the opponent had among the Anatolian population: "The residents of Kars deeply regretted this and accused the paša of having ruined Kunduchov [...]" (Ibid.). So what this minor, ancillary narrative of personalized Caucasus emigration by the former Russian and later Ottoman general also included was the intimation of Ottoman discord, a major problem for any military ambitions, but also with respect to opponents supposedly encountering problems when attempting to garner support from the population living at or near the theater of war.

This lack of personalization of wartime events was not to be seen on the Russian side. Indeed, the Caucasus War and the Russo-Ottoman War, and partly also the suppression of the new wave of rebellions in Chechnya and Dagestan during the latter conflict, equally gave military leaders a platform to become the focus of heroic narratives. Almost every high-ranking Russian military officer was described at least once during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 in the various newspapers. A newspaper column on any given individual would include an overview of his personal life and military career, and praise him as an outstanding personality in the service of the Russian Empire. One of the many examples is Michail T. Loris-Melikov (1825/1826–1888), an Armenian-Russian general and later also Interior Minister of the Russian Empire, who was repeatedly praised for his efforts in the campaigns against the Ottomans. Loris-Melikov was not only praised for his military achievements but also for his outstanding ability to communicate and coordinate in the Caucasus region. Fluent in Turkish, Persian, Armenian and Georgian, he was praised for his efforts to welcome influential figures from rebellious communities, holding cordial and long-lasting talks with them while cleverly probing them about the enemy's forces and movements (ICHV 1, 16: 122). As demonstrated in the sixth chapter, such a polyglot figure in the Russian army was certainly an exception and therefore it is hardly surprising that the vast majority of the Russian press emphasis

on the glory of the empire's military was limited to highlighting its battlefield successes.

One of the major achievements in these military careers was the “pacification” of the Caucasus, as many veterans from the Caucasus War again found themselves on the Caucasus front during the war with the Ottomans or perhaps even somewhere between Chechnya and Dagestan to stifle the simultaneous unrest. General Ivan D. Oklobžio (1821–1880) is one of those examples in which both the Caucasus War and the Russo-Ottoman War laid the foundation for adulation in the Russian media. A portrait of him in *Vsemirnaja illjustracija* recounts that he fought against the “large forces of mountaineers, led by Šamil', Chadži-Murat, and Daniel-Bek” and participated in the “outstanding campaign against the Chechens,” whom he and his troops had routed (ICHV 1, 19: 147). Aršak A. Ter-Gukasov (1819–1881), another Armenian-Russian general, was praised for his contribution to the “final conquest of Dagestan in 1858–1859” as he was awarded a golden sabre bearing an inscription “for bravery” and many more medals and decorations for the conquest of the entire Caucasus (ICHV 1, 22: 172–74). Prince Nikolaj I. Svjatopolk-Mirskij (1833–1898) was praised for his service in Lesser Chechnya, where he “handled the resettlement of the subdued inhabitants” and where he, not least for the “destruction of rebel gangs in the Terek Oblast',” was awarded several medals and decorations (ICHV 1, 27: 215–16). There are many more examples but overall, one can deduct from all these characterizations in the Russian press that the conquest of the Caucasus was considered a heroic act for which the region essentially emerged as a factory for heroism, something once more apparent when looking at descriptions of the Russian military stifling any signs of unrest in 1877–1878. The story of the Russian military operating in the Caucasus was written as a rather systematic recapturing of heroic deeds rather than pondering the reasons for and background of the confrontation, making the Caucasus War retrospectively but also the uprisings during the Russo-Ottoman War a platform for heroic narratives recounting who, when, and where had excelled in enforcing Russian ambitions.

Therefore, it is only fitting that the Russo-Ottoman War as well as the Russian rule over the Caucasus were described as a success story by the Russian media. Formulations such as “success does not abandon our arms” (ICHV 1, 13: 98) and “our young troops proved to be worthy successors of the old Caucasus fame” (ICHV 1, 18: 142) dominated the Russian coverage and the reader was presented with a story of ever-present success, building continuity from the Caucasus War to the Russo-Ottoman War. Such military successes necessarily triggered unrest and general panic among the Ottoman citizens (ICHV 1, 17: 130), and when exact casualty figures were given, very often the juxtaposition

of relatively low Russian losses with the opponent's high casualty count was supposed to stress this Russian battlefield dominance. A battle for Kars is summarized by simply listing one deceased general, 17 command staff and senior officers, and 470 lower ranking soldiers (ICHV 1, 76: 202). The opponent's losses are set against these figures with observations that the Turkish losses were enormous and that more than 2,500 bodies were buried in the first days, while there were so many wounded soldiers that the Russian hospitals were functioning at capacity and had to send a considerable number of them to other cities (Ibid.). Similar juxtapositions were also used with respect to the display of the Russian quelling of unrest in the Caucasus, reflected in a telegram from Kjurjuk-Dara [Kürekdere] dated 25 July (6 August) 1877, which reports of successes at the *auls* of Saizal and Idyšt'yr, where Russian losses of two dead and two wounded were contrasted to 30 deceased (ICHV 1, 30: 239).

However, since the military campaigns were not concluded within a few days and the siege of Anatolian fortresses took weeks and months instead, from time to time, the Russian public had to confront certain setbacks, which were then considered an opportunity to stress how "enormous the Turkish troops had grown in Armenia recently" for which the reasons were sought in Europe and especially in British foreign policy, which "convinced the Sultan to concentrate his troops in Asia" (ICHV 1, 21: 162). Then again, such setbacks were used to highlight the mighty opponent standing on the other side of the battlefield, making it even easier to bestow high praise for eventual victories. This can be seen in the solemn reports from the end of the war:

The storming of Kars, the heroic defense of Šipka, and the march across the Balkans deservedly stand among the greatest feats of all time and all peoples, and we have nothing to envy in the brilliant courage and audacious fearlessness of English and American seamen, for we have [Fëdor V.] Dubasov, [Ivan A.] Šestakov, [Nikolaj M.] Baranov and [Stepan O.] Makarov (ICHV 2, 78: 218).

All of these names of famous Russian generals and admirals were praised and idealized and by the time of the Russo-Ottoman War, the Caucasus region had become an equal source of heroism rather than inspiration. Thus, Prince Adjutant General Levan I. Melikov (1817–1892) received notification from Tsar Aleksandr II, a letter also re-printed in the Russian press, where his "courage and daring" demonstrated in the "pacification of the uprising in Dagestan" were extolled (ICHV 2, 74: 186). This is interesting, as the most-celebrated hero of the Russo-Ottoman War, Michail D. Skobelev (1843–1882), was honored for his command in Southeastern Europe in the very same manner and with very similar formulations (ICHV 2, 76: 202), which again shows that despite lesser

attention, the Caucasus region was an equal source of heroic narratives as the “struggle for the Balkan’s Christians.”

While the Crimean War and the Caucasus War had meant for a long time that the Russian Empire’s southern provinces were not associated with military glory, their perception among the Russian public had changed significantly by the late 1870s. The final conquest of the North Caucasus in 1864 and the triumph over the Ottoman Empire also on the Caucasus front in the war of 1877–1878 eventually made the region a symbol of military glory. No longer was the Caucasus perceived as a region of enormous peril, where Russian troops were continuously repelled in their aim to subdue the mountainous tracts, and no longer was it *terra incognita* to the Russian public. These developments had massive implications on the perception of the region and its inhabitants in Russian public discourse, which became visible during the Russo-Ottoman War in the late 1870s and especially in the Russian press coverage of that time.

First of all, the simultaneous uprisings in the North Caucasus were hardly considered a major event to report on, especially with all eyes turned to what was happening on the frontlines in Southeastern Europe and to a lesser extent in Anatolia. It is nonetheless interesting to note that the narratives accompanying the Russo-Ottoman War and the Russian presence in the Caucasus did not merge. One would have assumed that the anti-Muslim narrative or, to be more precise, the emphasis on Russian Christianity might have led to a common narrative encompassing both theatres. Despite the fact that the allegation that peoples from the Caucasus and especially Caucasus emigrants collaborated with the Ottoman enemy at all levels and by all means solely to harm the Russian Empire was one of the most important with respect to media coverage in 1877–1878, this simply did not happen. Thus, it is fair to conclude that the Caucasus *topos* was still very much on the Russian radar as it was not merged with the *topos* of a Christian-Muslim dichotomy. The fact that the CDA of the Russian press hardly showed an othering in either nomination or attribution strategies supports this argument. While the Caucasus was indeed perceived as a region caught between the two dominant denominational poles in the Russo-Ottoman War, the region’s native population was not described as primarily “Muslim rebels” but as “Caucasus rebels,” even during the proclamation of a new imamate during the parallel resistance. The latter designation was also the dominant point of nominative reference during that time, for in spite of the increasing Russian knowledge on the region’s ethnic diversity, the subsuming of different ethnic groups under a common denominator was just enough to stress a point of Caucasus alterity. The CDA furthermore showed hardly any characteristics and

features particularly attributed to these anonymous “mountaineers,” which were on the one hand not needed due to a high probability of automatic connotations after decades of opposition, and on the other hand were substituted by the already well-established arguments employed.

Collaboration with the enemy, specifically “Circassian” atrocities, and war-related masculinity including a reduction of military capability are all dominant arguments that were openly expressed and intensified by visual support in what would become a turning point in Russian media history. All of these accusations were well-established by the 1870s, for which one can hardly speak of a developing discourse but rather of the essentialization of the Caucasus and its native population as semi-civilized and fundamentally different to the Russian self-image, which ultimately helped to reinforce two aims: on the one hand, Russian dominance and rule over the region and over its non-Russian population sought legitimacy; on the other, the Caucasus had finally become a surface onto which a distinctly Russian heroism was projected. Concealing or anonymizing the other in favor of strong emphasis of oneself helped to achieve this and fomented the view that groups like the “Circassians” were not believed to have played a decisive role in the region but only from the outside, making them outsiders even in a geographical sense. By the late 1870s and by the end of the Russo-Ottoman War, the many ethnic groups of the North Caucasus who were not willing to fully comply with Russian policies conducted in their native lands finally had the “noble” descriptor in “noble savage” stripped from them.

CONCLUSION

In today's Russia, the Caucasus is a potent point of reference, to which many emotions, images, and stereotypes are attached. The Chechen Wars of the 1990s and 2000s, the Moscow theater hostage crisis in 2002, the Beslan school siege of 2004—all of these events contributed to a process of cultural and socio-political alienation between Russia and the republics that compose the Russian Federation's North Caucasus region. In the direct aftermath of these events, Eva-Maria Auch (2006: 38) wrote of the Russian perception of a person from the Caucasus as being perhaps less differentiated than ever before with the prevailing image of a cold-blooded rebel bringing terror to Russia's metropolises. The introductory example of the murder of Boris Nemcov being classified as "clearly a Chechen-style assassination" by a Russian journalist in 2015 shows that such images do not disappear very quickly, rather they potentially damage mutual perceptions on a long-term basis.

But the Caucasus and the designations for its many native ethnic groups have not always been emotive words in Russian language and culture. In the 18th century, the Russian Empire's southern borderlands were little more than a distant realm which were out of political reach because the Ottoman and Persian Empires had either active interest in or even control over the region. Contacts with the peoples living in the mountainous areas north of the mountain range were few and a Russian awareness of the region's diversity colored by antique accounts about the myth-enshrouded Caucasus rather than by contemporary exchanges. Thus, other realms such as the Crimea evoked much stronger sentiments and were in their time better suited for Orientalizing imagery. This already indicates that a search for *the* equivalent to the Saidian French and British Orient in the Russian context is a superfluous ambition, as no particular region has ever been the sole space of such projections. On the contrary, the notion of "Russian Orientalism" had always been related to the given stage of the Russian imperial project. Starting with Muscovy's struggle with the peoples roaming the steppe and ending with an empire that spanned the Eurasian landmass all the way from the Baltic Sea to the Sea of Ochotsk, Russia's imperial project meant that St. Petersburg would eventually come into contact with territories and more importantly peoples about which Russian knowledge was meager to non-existent. "Russian Orientalism" is therefore a very flexible concept which also correlates to the dynamics of Russian history.

Hence, the time of the Caucasus in this cycle finally came and by the 19th century, Russia finally became acquainted with the lands along the mountain

range running from the Black to Caspian Seas. Even before Russia discovered the Caucasus as a cultural point of reference, it spent several decades trying to lay claim to the region. Through settlement policies, the continuous construction of military outposts and fortifications, and not least proselytizing and Russification plans, Russia eventually became a powerhouse in the politically contested region. The annexation of Kartli-Kakheti in 1801 and the treaties of Bucharest and Gülistan in the 1810s, which effectively contained Persian and Ottoman resistance to Russian expansion at their expense, underlined Russia's plans to integrate the entire region into its empire. These plans were nonetheless strictly opposed by most of the North Caucasus native inhabitants, which were not willing to accept foreign domination. The Caucasus War broke out in 1817 and was not concluded until 1864.

With the imperial project taking root in the Caucasus, the region suddenly became prominent on Russia's cultural horizon. It is no coincidence that Aleksandr S. Puškin published his *The Captive of the Caucasus*, the narrative poem that initiated Russia's cultural acquisition of the Caucasus, only a few years after Russia had been able to geopolitically reinforce its position in the region and only five years into the Caucasus War. Once again, imagination went hand in hand with imperial expansion as the Russian public was eager to see the gaps in knowledge on these realms filled, for they were supposed to become the empire's newest territories. Russian musings about the Caucasus then began from scratch. Early poetry was able to invent ethnonyms to fit into their rhyming scheme because Russian readers had no actual knowledge about the peoples inhabiting the contested mountains in any case. This changed by the time imperial expansion into the Caucasus came to an end and Russian rule over the region was firmly established. Russians now had a clear conception of the peoples living in the Caucasus, regardless of whether they had ever been to the southern borderlands or they had only gained their knowledge about the region in the numerous accounts that accompanied Russia's endeavors to subdue it.

By analyzing these developments, the present study provides an answer to the search for the mechanisms which influenced the Russian perception of the Caucasus and its native population. At this point, I will go back to the five questions introduced at the very beginning and shed light on how imperial conquest correlates with imagined alterity.

Is it possible to speak of a homogenous Russian image of the Caucasus and its population at all times or to which developments and alterations is this im-

age subjected? Did the applied strategies lead to an image of differentiation or generalization?

The 19th century Russian Caucasus is the story of a region's transition from an idealized *terra incognita* beyond its borders to a fully incorporated province. What happened in between was continuous development and dynamics. The Russian imagination of the Caucasus was always flexible and cannot be reduced to one particular homogenous Caucasus image. Ambiguity was thereby a key word in the Russian portrayal of its southern borderlands. The range of interpretations and attributions was enormous and presented the Caucasus as a "new Parnassus," i.e. a realm of vitality and inspiration, but also as a culturally inferior cradle of savagery. This range also colored the Russian perception of the region's native population, who were subjected to an othering process stressing their imputed savagery. This idea of "the Caucasus savage" was even so considerably re-interpreted over the course of the 19th century. What had once been an expression of freedom and liberty, therefore idealized by Russians looking for alternatives to societal constraints, was eventually re-framed as cultural inferiority and doubts over the objectified people's inclusion into the common notion of imperial life. Both the Caucasus and more importantly its population therefore gradually lost their idealized appeal in Russia's perception.

Furthermore, there was sufficient space in Russian approaches to the southern borderlands for critical overtones. Lermontov's Caucasus gives the reader an account which challenges the narrative of a tsarist mission spreading civilization and culture by juxtaposing an idealized realm with murderous agony induced by the Russians. For the most part, Russian accounts of the Caucasus did not cast doubt on the imperial conquest's legitimacy at all. Despite an increasing understanding of Caucasus natives as not solely Russia's enemy but also victims of a brutal war, the reason behind that suffering was not questioned in its time.

The anonymized homogenization of "the Caucasus peoples" was also not questioned. Addressing them as such rather than by precise ethnonyms reflects, on the one hand, an initial lack of knowledge about the region, but, on the other hand, the continuity in these nomination strategies complies with the Russian emphasis of the many groups populating the mountainous territories between Black Sea and Caspian Sea as being all of a piece in the essentialized quality of their Caucasus descent. These generalization strategies were not even put to the test by growing scholarly interest in the conquered territories, for ethnography did not challenge the Russian Empire's cultural hierarchies and especially not the primacy of Russian culture over the smaller ethnic groups of the borderlands.

Strongly dependent upon the rapidly changing history of the 19th century, the Russian perception of the Caucasus and its population was neither a linear nor homogenous process and in fact many overlapping images co-existed. Only the multitude of discourses and strategies applied gives an approximation of how diverse Russian perceptions of the Caucasus and its population had been throughout the 19th century. Continuity, however, influenced the generalized use of *the* Caucasus and *the* Caucasus man or woman—terms which became emotive words in the Russian language.

How did the ongoing Russian conquest of the Caucasus correlate with the perception of the region's native population?

The imperial project had a massive influence on how Russia perceived its borderlands. It was the initial military conquest of the region that put the Caucasus on Russia's cultural horizon in the first place. Until then, hardly any image of the mountainous lands was present in the minds of the Russian people and they certainly did not trigger elaborate associations. Before Russian troops managed to bolster their position in the Caucasus, other regions and peoples such as the Crimea and the Crimean Tatars were at the forefront of the Russian imagination. With only few contacts between certain ethnic groups living in the Caucasus and the Russians, there was no dominant image of the former prevailing in Russian culture. The growing conquest changed all this. When the Caucasus became a *topos* in Russian culture, the non-Russian ethnic groups living in the mountains became points of reference for the Russians. All of a sudden, the "Circassians" but also the Chechens appeared on the Russian radar. Over the decades of Russian conquest, other ethnic groups were more frequently addressed, but the initial focus on the "Circassians" and the Chechens, as set forth in early Russian Caucasus poetry, remained. Within a framework of generalization, the two proved responsible for the imagined "Circassian beauty" and the "Chechen bandit"—two sides of the same coin that underline the ambiguity of Russia's imagined Caucasus.

The tighter imperial grip on the Caucasus challenged imagination and placed a new focus on exertion. The more Russian rule was asserted over the region, the more imagination became a subordinate approach to the representation of the Caucasus natives. Gradually increasing knowledge helped overcome unrealistic displays of Caucasus life, but since Caucasiology was part of an imperial scholarly network in which knowledge and authority were closely interwoven, the constant need for legitimization of the conquest was then supported by allegedly factual information. Ethnographic accounts on the Caucasus population

did not engender a view of culturally equal peoples, but rather sought to enhance the narrative of Russia as the carrier of culture and civilization. Russo-centric ideas brought with them newly elaborated descriptions of peoples who were either already subjects or on the brink of becoming citizens of the Russian Empire. Genocidal warfare and expulsions were not entirely omitted but subjected to mitigation strategies and re-interpreted accordingly. By the late 1870s, when Russian rule over the Caucasus was firmly established and virtually unchallenged, strategies for presenting the non-Russians as culturally inferior and semi-civilized were even stronger than at the beginning of the conquest, once again underlining an understanding of supposedly justified plans to make the southern borderlands an imperial province. In this line of argumentation, the peoples of the conquered Caucasus were thereby subjected to a different othering process than it had been the case in the imagined Caucasus.

Which characteristics, qualities, and features stood in the center of presentation of the Caucasus and its population as the “Other” to the Russian Empire? Which particular alterity was thereby employed to construct a Russian identity?

Since the Russian discourse on the Caucasus was ambiguous and flexible, the characteristics, qualities and features attributed to the region’s native population were quite different, depending on the respective socio-political and temporal context of the source in question. However, a constant in the Russian portrayal of the Caucasus non-Russians was an imputed lower level of civilization. Already from the earliest poetic musings onward, the native character roaming through the Russian imagination was a semi-civilized savage, lacking the cultural rationality of his or her Russian counterpart. This savage alterity reinforced the idea of a Russian identity based on (European) culture and civilization. The occasional understanding of the Caucasus being an “Asian” realm, from which one could dissociate oneself, supported the Russian claim of defining a Europe-oriented identity. Furthermore, the imputed savagery legitimized claims for the region’s conquest as it could then easily be framed as a “civilizing mission.”

As ambiguous as the Caucasus image was, the constant of ascribed savagery was still subjected to different interpretations. Early on, the semi-civilized Caucasus also served as a template for how to overcome social restraints. The Russian identity was therefore also dominated by an understanding of being caught just within these limits. Thus, the characteristics, qualities, and features were also carried by an expression of respect and even admiration for the counterpart’s liberty and levity. The idea of Caucasus originality was furthermore supported by ascribed (feminine) beauty and (masculine) virility. The “noble sav-

age” of the Caucasus opposed the Russian bringing civilization but also sought escape.

With savagery a constant, the manifestation of a multitude of related invectives remained. Intellectual simplicity, thoughtlessness, and ontological violence continued to be in the primary focus of Russian descriptions. With musing substituted by experience, the wild, bellicose and predatory native living in the mountains gained ground against perceptions of a free-thinking eros. The subjugation of this wilderness helped the Russians imagine themselves as the civilized, stabilizing and rational factor in the region, claiming legitimacy throughout the late, ugly conquest and also presented the Caucasus as a stage for Russian glory and heroism. Increasingly, Caucasus savagery was no longer viewed with ambivalence but rather considered a nuisance. The image of Puškinian beautiful and virile Circassians was replaced by Dostoevskij’s murderous Circassians.

What role did the religious affiliation of different ethnic groups play in the Russian perception of the Caucasus? Were Christians, Muslims, or other religious groups subjected to different strategies as set forth by the DHA?

The question of religion is an interesting case in Russia’s conquest and imagination of the Caucasus. While one would have assumed a strong emphasis on religion as an integral parameter of an othering process, this was certainly not the primary strategy. Stressing denominational differences only played a role in the early stage of Russia’s imagined Caucasus, when knowledge was scant and even less widespread and when poets formed the Russian public’s conception of what the southern borderlands would be like. In the Caucasus works of Bestužev-Marlinskij and Lermontov in particular, one can find frequent references to the Muslim faith of their characters and to Islam as an explanation for the inherent savagery of these people. Tolstoj did not assume this narrative, nor did the burgeoning scholarly field of Caucasiology. This, however, hardly signified a decrease in pejorative attributes to Muslim influences on the Caucasus and even less so a reflection of growing religious tolerance in the Russian Empire. It simply means that the “Caucasus” designation had become stronger than the “Islam” designation by the time the Russians had become thoroughly familiar with the region. Referring to the Caucasus descent of a man or woman was a more potent way to establish alterity than by stressing his or her Muslim belief.

This insight from literary and ethnographic accounts is firmly supported by the Russian portrayal of the Caucasus during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. Even though the war was framed as a clash between the leading political

powers representing Islam and Orthodox Christianity, the emphasis on many Caucasus peoples being of Muslim confession remained remarkably weak. The idea that the Caucasus was something fundamentally different from Russia not only survived the end of the Caucasus War and its subsequent integration into the tsarist empire but also a narrative that applied a potential marker of alienation only to the enemy in the war but not on the new Russian citizens of Muslim faith. Neither did the Russians draw a clear-cut distinction between Christian and Muslim peoples inhabiting the Caucasus region, as this was not the line that separated Russia from the Caucasus in their view. What had once started with the articulated objective to save fellow Christians and Armenians from the Ottomans and Persians did not last for long. As soon as the balance of power in the Caucasus had successfully tilted in St. Petersburg's favor, the Russian view of the Caucasus Christian peoples shifted to the very same imperialistic attitude. Regardless of whether the Ossetians or Armenians were in focus, the strategies reveal that the narrative of co-religionist brotherhood was no longer valid for the Caucasus and did not spare them from being subjected to the very same invective that cast a pall over the region's Muslim inhabitants. The intensified strategy of stressing Russian Orthodoxy furthermore indicates that religion was still a factor in imagining Russia but within the empire's borders, it was confined to the preservation of a self-image.

With the "Caucasus" designation so dominant in the Russian perception of its borderlands and the fact that it had not merged with the narrative of a Christian-Muslim dichotomy during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, the cessation of warfare in the region went hand in hand with the Caucasus becoming a region in between. While the region was fully integrated into the Russian Empire on an administrative level, its population was broadly left out of the common imperial collectivity. The Caucasus descent of an individual rather than his/her Muslim faith emerged as the grounds for Russian associations of savagery, which no longer signified a noble freedom from societal constraints but doubt over the inclusion of these people into a common imperial order through citizenship [*graždanstvennost'*] (Yaroshevski 1997).

Based on a thorough analysis of the Russian image of the Caucasus, what role did the Caucasus actually play within the imperial Russian state and within imperial Russian society? Does it make sense to consider Russia's authority over and representation of the Caucasus within a distinct discourse—within Caucasianism?

Russia's preoccupation with what can be translated as both "East" and "Orient" and is often understood as Russia's encounters with "Asia" most often went hand in hand with its positioning within or toward the concept of the "West," but is also related to self-reflections about distinctly Russian qualities and features. Thus, the question of whether the Caucasus was distinctly "Asian" at some point helped to enforce an understanding of stressing the notion of a "European Russia." On the other hand, longing for the idea of an independent Russian historical development, set off against Europe in a triangulation consisting of Europe, Russia and the Caucasus, made the latter an idealized realm representing a societal alternative to the constraints dominating Russia.

Any concept of a "Russian Orient" was on the one hand a chance to stress the legitimacy of territorial claims or already established imperial rule and, on the other, to enforce a Russian self-image which most often sought to position the empire within or against Europe at the expense of the imagined "Orient." The Caucasus is thereby no exception. As Russian identity was constantly subjected to debate, change and re-interpretation, representations of the peoples inhabiting the empire's southern borderlands were equally the target of flexible strategies to support imperial claims. These strategies were not part of a linear development but co-existed to support different goals for creating legitimation or heroics. What had once been framed as a civilizing mission eventually became a playground of heroism, strengthening the narrative of imperial glory so bitterly needed after a series of military setbacks in the Crimean War as well as in the Caucasus War.

It is this transitory character that makes the Russian perception of the Caucasus an interesting case. Unlike the British and French concepts of their "Orient," the realms Orientalized by the Russians were at the very same time already conquered and incorporated into the empire. Thus, the context of constant exchanges between Russia and its southern borderlands can hardly be explained by Said's Orientalism alone and projections were constantly intermingled and undermined by an increasing level of experience that replaced imagination. As imperial Russia tightened its grip on the Caucasus, the latter ceased being the primary target of Orientalizing projections. Through the colonial conquest and the progressing level of "internal colonization" (Etkind 2011) as Russia's imperial experience, the initially prevailing romantic image of a Caucasus which comes closest to Said's "Orient" notion and which presented the Caucasus as something fundamentally different was soon replaced by the understanding that it was a region in between. The Caucasus became Russian by imperial conquest but a perception of it as semi-civilized and semi-Asian, thus semi-Oriental, was retained. Furthermore, this transition was accompanied by a shift in the gender

emphasis on the Caucasus. What had once been a realm of both masculine virility and feminine beauty (but also masculine Eros) increasingly became a male-dominated realm dominated by tales of senseless raids and slaughter. It is this gradual transition of imagined opposition to imputed ambiguity which shaped the Caucasus in 19th century Russian culture and left a mark on conquest and integration when imagination and colonial warfare overlapped in a “Borderlands Orientalism.”

Hence, the idea of “Caucasianism” is closely connected to what I call “Borderlands Orientalism.” This concept not only stresses the fluidity of frontiers but also aims at bridging the development of a Russian Caucasus that stands between the imagined “Orient” which Said had in mind and the role of an integral periphery of incomplete ambiguity as conceived by Todorova when she addressed the Balkans’ role in Europe. The five questions set forth in the “Discourse-Historical Approach” (DHA) of critical discourse analysis support the notions of fluidity, processuality and development continuously circling around Russia’s perception of the Caucasus. Increasing Russian involvement and knowledge of the peoples living beyond and eventually within the empire’s borders show that linguistic references, attributed characteristics and the arguments employed are constantly subjected to alteration and reinterpretation. The oscillating imagery between romanticizing imagination and imputed savagery and inferiority is what I understand as “Borderlands Orientalism”—a concept very much valid for Russia’s incorporation of the Caucasus but not necessarily confined to it, as the ambitions of other empires to annex and integrate their borderlands together with their native populations may indeed show similar results in rhetoric and representation.

The question of who would have the authority to define the “Other” by essentializing it remained, and throughout the 19th century, the Caucasus continuously helped Russian ideas gain legitimacy, but just as the Balkans became “the convenient presumption of the unbridgeable cultural gap between West and East” (Todorova 1997: 147), the Caucasus acquired a similar role within Russia culture as soon as it had been fully incorporated and was no longer a contested realm. The implications of these developments shaped the relationship between Russia and the Caucasus up to the present. By means of essentialization in attributive strategies, many persistent images of brutal savages found their way into Russian cultural memory and are ready to be re-activated in any given context today. The Caucasus and its population have become potent emotive words already in the 19th century, and not just since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Already in the 19th century, being from the Caucasus constituted a stronger

level of alienation from the common Russian identity than being Muslim—an understanding which influences Russo-Caucasus relations to this day.

As a result, the Caucasus should no longer be considered the plain Russian equivalent to a Western-style conception of the Orient, and neither should the 19th century's wars be retrospectively interpreted as inevitable clashes of Russian Orthodox Christianity and North Caucasus or Chechen Islam. The key to understanding the role of the Caucasus in Russia's cultural memory lies in the observation of its long-term representation of its southern borderlands rather than the occasional and generic cherry-picking of snapshots. When doing the latter, one runs into the danger of focusing on either imagination or colonial warfare rather than stressing that these two factors inevitably overlap in "Borderlands Orientalism." The present work has shown that the Caucasus stands in between: not physically in between Russia and the "Other" but in between Russian reveries and Russian imperialism.

In this study, the reader has therefore been presented with a variety of fields and discourses that shaped the Russian Caucasus image and was simultaneously an expression of it. While I stress the need to overcome a monodisciplinary and canonical confinement when addressing the question of how the perception of a certain realm developed, I do not consider the emphasis set forth by this study as complete or as superior to other fields of interest. Just like poetry, ethnography, military diaries and the press, other discourses such as in folklore, music, architecture, travelogues, visual ethnography and many others equally contribute to the heterogeneity of the image of the Russian Caucasus and present the latter as a different realm within the same borders. Given the high level of alienation in today's Russian Federation and given the all too present xenophobic sentiments and stereotypes burdening anyone with roots in the Caucasus, this problem continues to be far more than a mere historical anecdote.

ABBREVIATIONS

GPIB ORK	Gosudarstvennaja publiĉnaja istoričeskaja biblioteka, Otdel redkich knig [State Public History Library, Department of Rare Books]
ICHV	Illjustrirovannaja chronika vojny [Illustrated Chronicle of the War]
SEA	Saqartvelos erovnuli arqivi [Georgian National Archive]
SVR	Sbornik voennykh razskazov [Collection of War Stories]

GLOSSARY

Abrek	A designation from the Ossetian <i>abræg</i> [thief, bandit] for a refugee, migrant, or outcast in the Caucasus region.
Adat	(Arab. <i>'ādāt</i> , “customs”) Customary law.
Aul	A word of Turkic origin indicating a native village, often fortified, as found throughout the mountainous parts of the Caucasus region.
Başıbozuk	Also Bashi-bazouk (literally “damaged head”). An irregular soldier of the Ottoman army.
Bek	Also Beg or Bey. A title of an indigenous notable.
Dhikr	(Arab. <i>dhikr</i> , “reminding oneself”) Also zikr. A method of prayer, which includes the tireless repetition of a litany. It is particularly utilized in Sufism, where it is possibly the most frequent form of prayer.
Ghazawat	(Arab. <i>ghazawāt</i> , “raid, military expedition”) A reference to a religious (Muslim) connotation of warfare, which in the context of the North Caucasus refers to the war between the local population and the Russian troops and was understood as a “holy war” of Muslim fighters against a Russian Orthodox invasion.
Imam	(Arab. <i>imām</i>) Title of a religious leader of a Muslim community (<i>umma</i>), most commonly used in the context of the prayer leader of a mosque. In the context of the North Caucasus also the title of a political leader of an Islamic state—the imamate (Arab. <i>imāmah</i>).

Inorodcy	A legal term used to designate a set of imperial Russia's ethnic minorities, who comprised a distinct legal category from 1822 to 1917.
Jihad	(Arab. <i>ǧihād</i> , "striving, struggling, persevering") A struggle for an inner spirituality as well as an outer struggle against enemies of Islam. Often controversially translated as "holy war."
Khan	The designation for the supreme ruler of a Turko-Mongol people.
Madrasah	(Arab. <i>madrasa</i> , "a place to study") Literally referring to any type of educational institution, the term usually refers to specifically Islamic schools and colleges.
Muhajir	(Arab. <i>muhāǧir</i> , "refugee, immigrant") A term going back to the Prophet Muhammad's journey (<i>hiǧra</i>) from Mecca to Medina in 622. In the context of the Caucasus region, the term refers to the resettlement of Muslim peoples in the Ottoman Empire after the Russians had conquered their native lands.
Mulla/h	A term of respect for an educated Muslim.
Murid	(Arab. <i>murīd</i> , "the committed one") Disciple of a Sufi order.
Naib	(Arab. <i>nā'ib</i> , "deputy") Historically used for local leaders in some parts of the Ottoman Empire. In the context of the North Caucasus, the term refers to Sheikh Šamil's deputy commanders.
Naqšbandiyya	(Arab. <i>naqšbandī</i>) Also called "Muridism" by the Russians. Named after its Buchara-based founder Bahā' -ud-Dīn Naqšband (1318–1389), the Naqšbandiyya are one of the most influential Sunni spiritual orders of Sufism. Originating in Central Asia during the twelfth century, the order spread widely in the Caucasus by the end of the 1820s, also due to charismatic leaders such as Sheikh Šamil'.
Paşa	A higher rank in the Ottoman Empire's political and military hierarchy.
Qadiriyya	(Arab. <i>qādirī</i>) A Sufi order named after its Baghdad-based founder 'Abd al-Qādir al-Ġīlānī (1078–1166) in the 12 th century.
Šamchal	The title of a Kumyk ruler in Dagestan between the 8 th and 17 th centuries.

Sharia	(Arab. <i>šarī'a</i> , “law”) The religious legal system in accordance with the Islamic faith.
Sheikh	(Arab. <i>šāīḥ</i>) An honorific title in Arabic and the designation of a religious leader among the Sufi.
Stanica	Cossack fortified village.
Strel'cy	Units of Russian guardsmen, armed with firearms. Initially created by Ivan IV in the mid-16 th century, the standing forces of the strel'cy reinforced Russia's mounted noble militia in wartime until the 18 th century.
Sufism	(Arab. <i>taṣawwuf</i>) A collective designation for orders focusing on the inner mystical dimension and spiritualism in Islam. Its followers are called Sufis (Arab. <i>šūfī</i>).
Uzden'	A title of lesser nobility among the Kumyks and other Turkic peoples of the Caucasus region.
Waqf	(Arab. <i>waqf</i>) A pious religious endowment in Islam.

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