

A BSTRACTS

RETHINKING THE SOUTH CAUCASUS. INTRODUCTION

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Introduction to a thematic issue of the same title. The social sciences in the South Caucasus are politicized, marginalized, and institutionally weak. This is due to four factors: lack of professional training, lack of a professional community and widely accessible journals, low academic salaries, and a brain drain to local offices of international organizations. Local nationalisms preclude scholarly diversity and dissent. Western studies of the Caucasus are gradually shedding Orientalist preconceptions. Anthropologists in particular have done pioneering research in Georgia and Armenia, though less so in Azerbaijan. They speak the local languages and spend extended periods of time in the field. However, Western scholars are often excluded from local debates because their knowledge of Russian is poor. This issue presents research by young social scientists from the Caucasus in order to launch a debate with Russian-speaking colleagues. *In Russian and English.*

NEW LIFE IN OLD BOOTS: MAKING ONE'S HOME IN A NEW VILLAGE AFTER COLLECTIVE RESETTLEMENT

Sevil Huseynova, Sergey Rumyantsev

In 1989, during the Karabagh conflict, the inhabitants of an Azeri village in Armenia, Kyzyl-Shafag, and an Armenian village in Azerbaijan, Kerkendj, performed a peaceful population exchange. Drawing on participant observation and biographical interviews, this paper analyzes how the Azeri settlers made their new home in Kerkendj. It focuses on the preservation of the old cemetery and the creation of a new one, the use of the new houses as repositories of a memory of the exchange, and practices of acquiring local knowledge. We conclude that the population exchange was a means of preserving the social structure and integrity of the village community. The successful adaptation of the settlers was facilitated by the preservation of their customary social ties. Although many settlers moved on to Baku, those who remained managed to avoid a ghetto effect. *In Russian, summary in English.*

“SHOW ME RESPECT”: DISCOURSES ABOUT THE PARALLEL ECONOMY, KINSHIP, AND CORRUPTION IN CAUCASIAN COMMUNITIES

Nona Shahnazarian, Robert Shahnazarian

Following the downfall of the Soviet administrative system and the collapse of the ruble, trust in official social institutions fell sharply among people in the Caucasus region. The role of informal economic activity in the strategies of households and individuals has increased to the point where it is now a key survival mechanism. The institutional vacuum has given a new impulse to “rooted” social relations and personal support networks. This paper uses anonymized description to provide a general analysis of these practices as observed across the Caucasus. Examples are drawn from Abkhaz, Georgian, Megrelian, Azeri, Kurdish, Lezgin, Meskhetian Turkish, Armenian, Karabagh Armenian, Hemshin, Ossetian, Udi, Ingilo, Yezidi, Talysh and some other communities. The subjects of our analysis are kinship groups (patrilineal households) and other quasi-kinship structures or units, the dynamics of reciprocal relations within them, and their micro-economy in the late Soviet period. *In Russian, summary in English.*

THE FEMINIZATION OF LABOR MIGRATION FROM GEORGIA: THE CASE OF TIANETI

Tamar Zurabishvili, Tinatin Zurabishvili

In 2006, we performed a census of all 1,061 households of Tianeti, an immigrant-sending community in North-Eastern Georgia, and conducted 23 in-depth interviews with returned emigrants, family members of current emigrants, and prospective emigrants. The overall number of emigrants was 413, or 13.5% of Tianeti’s permanent population. Only 32% of emigrants were male. Due to poor economic conditions, a shortage of well-paid jobs, and a lack of social services, emigration from Tianeti is almost exclusively labor-oriented. Unlike the national average, emigration is mostly toward Western Europe, Israel, and the United States. The paper analyzes the socio-economic profile of emigrants from Tianeti and investigates the reasons for the feminization of labor emigration from this community: (1) social acceptance of female labor; (2) increased demand for female labor in target countries; (3) avoidance of identity checks in target countries; (4) a sense of responsibility for the family. *In Russian, summary in English.*

THE TEXT OF DEPORTATION AND TRAUMA IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING: THE DIARY OF ARPENIK ALEKSANIAN

Elza-Bair Guchinova

This article is an analysis of the diary of Arpenik Aleksanian, published in 2007, which documents the deportation of Armenians from Tbilisi and their everyday life as

“special settlers” (*spetspereselentsy*) in Siberia in 1949–53. The paper shows how the trauma of ethnic deportation is constructed in autobiographical writing. It pays attention to the stigmatization of Armenian identity and the dehumanization of the deportees as well as to changing gender roles. The diary chronicles the deportees’ everyday life and provides a micro-account of how repression was experienced. Its essentialist understanding of ethnicity notwithstanding, the diary demonstrates the constructed and instrumental nature of Armenian identity. To preempt censorship, the text was written in Russian. Despite self-censorship and avoidance of topics such as the female body, the diary employs a traumatic vocabulary of pain and fear. *In Russian, summary in English.*

“RECONSTITUTING” RELIGION: NEO-PAGANISM IN ARMENIA

Yulia Antonyan

Like other new religious movements, Armenian neo-paganism shifted from exploring alternatives to Soviet ideology to searching for a national religious identity and spiritual salvation. The movement’s organization was founded in 1991 by Slak Kakosyan, a returned exile who also wrote the movement’s central book. It is loosely organized, but has up to 100 members and several hundred followers. The neo-pagans draw on—and reinterpret—pre-Christian deities, Armenian nationalist mythology, and ancient historiography. They have invested the reconstructed Hellenistic temple of Garni for their rituals. Striving for national religious unity, they also incorporate elements of Armenian Christianity into their beliefs and practices. The article describes the Armenian neo-pagan movement, drawing on interviews and ethnographic observation. *In Russian, summary in English.*

PREMARITAL VIRGINITY: THE CULTURAL CODE OF THE GENDER ORDER IN CONTEMPORARY ARMENIA (THE CASE OF YEREVAN)

Anna Temkina

This paper aims to reconstruct the preservation of women’s premarital virginity as the central cultural code of Armenia’s gender order. I analyze normative and deviant practices of female premarital sexuality in relation to this code. The study is based on 42 biographical interviews with residents of Armenia, mostly Yerevan, as well as 13 expert interviews. I use the concept of a “paradigm script” to designate the rules that regulate the gender and sexual practices of men and women throughout their lifespan. I find that the paradigm script is on the retreat in Armenia, and new

actors such as family members or doctors are enlisted to protect it. In post-Soviet comparison, Armenia constitutes an intermediate case between countries with very liberal sexual practices, such as Russia, and Central Asian societies, where traditional norms of sexual behavior and communal control are still in force. *In Russian, summary in English.*

ANTHROPOLOGICAL NOTES ON A CITY THAT SURVIVED AN EARTHQUAKE

Gayane Shagoyan

The city of Gyumri experienced a devastating earthquake on December 7, 1988, not long before Armenia's independence. This article analyzes how perceptions of Gyumri's urban space changed in the aftermath of that experience. The paper draws on a range of sources to address historical, mythologized, and existential levels of perception of that space, the latter based primarily on the international avant-garde art biennales that have taken place in Gyumri since 1998. The article also discusses the transformation of Gyumri residents' identity through an analysis of public discourse about images of the city before and after the earthquake. Each of the city's historic names (Kumairi–Gyumri–Aleksandropol–Leninakan) is associated with a certain image and championed by different groups of residents. Comparisons with capitals and "second cities" in Armenia and elsewhere serve to place Gyumri on different discursive maps. *In Russian, summary in English.*

STREET LIFE IN TBILISI AS A FACTOR OF MALE SOCIALIZATION

Evgeniya Zakharova

In addition to socializing institutions such as the family, school, and army, contemporary Georgian urban society also recognizes the socializing function of the "street"—a public environment that enables boys, teenagers, and young men to escape adult control. Georgians often perceive the "street" as an agent of socialization that introduces young men to organized crime. "Street" life is concentrated in the *birzha*—small groups of male teenagers or young adults who regularly assemble in public spaces. It is regulated by a customary code of social norms and roles that distinguishes between "old guys," "honest guys," and "mama's boys." The "street" is seen as a school of masculinity. The period of active involvement in "street" life, *bichoba*, usually ends when young men start higher education or find employment. The functions of the *birzha* are now being displaced due to recent changes in Georgian society. The study is based on 29 interviews with those formerly involved in "street" life, and with other Tbilisi residents. *In Russian, summary in English.*

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE CAUCASUS AND ITS SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Sergei Arutiunov in conversation with Alexander Formozov

Sergei Arutiunov, director of the Caucasus Department at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, discusses the institutional organization of the study of the Caucasus since Soviet times. In the Soviet Union, the South Caucasus was mainly studied by local ethnographers who were required to publish their work in local languages. Unlike the literature on the North Caucasus, much of the literature on the South Caucasus has remained inaccessible to Russian scholars. In the early 1980s, Moscow-based ethnosociologists began to study "interethnic relations" in the Caucasus, but political constraints limited what they could publish. Nowadays, contacts are hampered by the difficulty to obtain locally published literature, by constantly changing institutional arrangements in Caucasian academia, and, increasingly, by a new language barrier that is due to a decline in local students' knowledge of Russian. *In Russian, summary in English.*

THE "WILD WEST" IN AZERBAIJAN: NOTES ON LATE-1980s SOVIET ETHNOSOCIOLOGY

Viktor Karlov in conversation with Alexander Formozov

In the mid-1980s, Viktor Karlov, a Moscow-based ethnologist, led an ethno-sociological study in Azerbaijan. The aim was to survey samples of all of Azerbaijan's ethnic groups and ethnographic regions in order to gauge levels of modernization and Sovietization, as expressed through indicators such as ethnic self-identification, values, gender roles, and attitudes toward traditional customs. The survey had to be abandoned in 1987 due to ethnic tensions, and the data were never fully analyzed. Karlov discusses observations from the field on ethnic and religious identification as well as political obstacles faced by the researchers. Corruption and payment to obtain employment were rampant. There was an oversupply of labor, leading to hidden unemployment. The resulting frustration was vented in interethnic clashes. Local authorities sometimes interfered with the survey work in order to mask critical attitudes or ethnic diversity. *In Russian, summary in English.*

OURS, BUT DIFFERENT, OR THE (NON-)EXISTENCE OF ABKHAZIA

Oksana Zaporozhets

Part of a series of essays by Russian sociologists who took part in a two-week "fieldwork school" on both sides of the Russian-Abkhazian border in 2005, this paper

recounts the author's attempts to decipher the ways in which Abkhazia's image is constructed by Russian visitors. A range of metaphors and associations is available to describe the Caucasus as a whole, drawing on Soviet-era stereotypes of the Black Sea coast's attraction as a tourist destination as well as post-Soviet perceptions of violence and danger. Abkhazia is rarely singled out in such descriptions. Locally-produced images of Abkhazia addressed to Russian visitors tend to stress historical and cultural commonalities, whereas constructions of a separate Abkhaz identity are mostly directed at local residents and use tourists only as passive sounding boards. Visitors experience otherness due to the often clumsy and parochial ways in which touristic images of Abkhazia are presented, regardless of the content of these images. *In Russian, summary in English.*

TIME, FORWARD!

Olga Brednikova

Part of a series of essays by Russian sociologists who took part in a two-week "fieldwork school" on both sides of the Russian-Abkhazian border in 2005, this paper discusses how the passage from Russia to Abkhazia affects the experience of time. The first impression is that in Abkhazia, time has stopped or ceased to exist. Nature is taking over semi-destroyed man-made structures, creating a sense of death and timelessness. The second perception is that of a time lag, created by the ubiquitous presence of "Soviet" objects and practices that Russian observers associate with a timeless past. The third factor is nation-building. References to a glorious national past and to the recent war structure perceptions of historical time. Russia and Georgia remain the most important temporal references, as in the debate on whether to use daylight saving time, as in Russia, or remain on Georgian time. *In Russian, summary in English.*

BETWEEN ADLER AND GAGRA: THE BORDER MATRIX

Elena Nikiforova

Part of a series of essays by Russian sociologists who took part in a two-week "fieldwork school" on both sides of the Russian-Abkhazian border in 2005, this paper reflects on the multiplicity of borders that need to be crossed while working in the Russian-Abkhazian border zone. The state border between Russia and its (then) unrecognized neighbor is one of the few post-Soviet borders subject to manipulation by the Russian authorities. The border has also become a zone of piecemeal cross-border trade. However, the most significant border is between Abkhazia's self-image as a peaceful tourist destination and the ubiquitous and increasingly institutionalized

memory of the war. Visitors cross this border permanently, in both their physical movement around any Abkhazian town and their conversations with local hosts. Finally, unlike more solidified post-Soviet borders, Russians experience the Russian-Abkhazian borderland as an exotic territory where boundaries and rules are suspended. *In Russian, summary in English.*

AN ESSAY ABOUT THE BORDER

Nadia Nartova

Part of a series of essays by Russian sociologists who took part in a two-week “fieldwork school” on both sides of the Russian-Abkhazian border in 2005, this paper reflects on changing conceptions of borders and boundaries. Once seen as solid and impenetrable, borders are now often viewed as special kinds of social and cultural spaces that enable experiences of freedom and diversity. However, this romanticized view is often articulated by Western intellectuals who experience borders as open transit zones. Instead of contrasting open and closed borders, the author suggests the concept of “border regimes”—trade, tourist, military—that affect all borders at different times and in different ways. Rules, even informal ones, appear not to apply in the space that constitutes the Russian-Abkhazian border. The border is perhaps best understood as a hologram where individuals are caught in ever-changing situations. *In Russian, summary in English.*

MIMOSAS, BEACHES, MANDARINS, OR ONE YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE RUSSIAN-ABKHAZIAN BORDER

Olga Tkach

Part of a series of essays by Russian sociologists who took part in a two-week “fieldwork school” on both sides of the Russian-Abkhazian border in 2005, this paper attempts to reconstruct the annual cycle of transborder activity, focusing on three seasons of increased contacts. The first wave coincides with the summer tourist season, when both visitors and locals use cross-border contacts to find or sell services such as accommodation. The second wave begins in the late fall, when the usually haphazard transborder trade intensifies and reaches industrial levels due to the export of Abkhazian citrus fruits to Russia. Finally, a third wave begins in early spring, when Abkhazian mimosas are sold to Russia, with local producers often taking shipments to distant Russian cities in person. The seasonal nature of transborder activity structures the lives of residents both sides of the border, demonstrating that it is more real than sometimes assumed. *In Russian, summary in English.*

FIRST RESEARCH AND FIRST SPECIALISTS: THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES IN POST-SOVIET AZERBAIJAN

Sergey Rumyantsev

This review essay discusses the relatively meager scholarly output in the humanities and social sciences in post-Soviet Azerbaijan in its institutional and political context. Publications often aim to contribute to a new Azerbaijani identity, yet much of Azerbaijani academia remains organized along Soviet lines. Most of its output is normative, lacks scholarly rigor, and is poorly disseminated, as is that sponsored by Western foundations and local NGOs. Historians have debated the ethnic history of Azerbaijan, the context of the Karabagh conflict, and 20th-century political history. The study of Azeri identity and mentality form a separate domain of research, and there is related work on religious attitudes and ethnosociology, which includes the study of ethnic minorities. Analyses of topics such as labor migration or the formation of a middle class are rarely based on empirical research. There is also a considerable literature on religions in Azerbaijan, especially Islam and politics. *In Russian, summary in English.*