

HISTORICAL SCIENCES

ENLIGHTENMENT IN TRANSCAUCASIA IN 19TH CENTURY

Bayramov A.

*PhD student, Department of History,
Hacettepe University, Ankara Türkiye
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10655320>*

Abstract

Despite its rich cultural and historical legacy, Transcaucasia has been on the global agenda due to political and military conflicts in the last 30 years. The conflict in Abkhazia and Ossetia, as well as the Nagorno-Karabakh Wars, have overshadowed the region's rich cultural and economic heritage. However, when we look back at the historical past, throughout the empire age, we can see that ethnic groups in the region strove to highlight their own cultural and literary creativity. This literary and ideological development was led by the intellectual elite of Transcaucasia. Influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution and Russia's imperialist policies, Georgian, Armenian, and Turkish intellectuals struggled to resist the exploitation of their people by the major powers in the region (Iran, the Ottoman, and Russian Empires). In fact, after a thirty-year armed struggle during which Russia invaded Transcaucasia, realists took important steps by changing their methods to develop national ideas and enlighten the people. Despite the differences and similarities among the three ethnic groups, this process, which began with literary enlightenment in the second half of the 19th century, resulted in political organization, national identity formation, and the establishment of independent states. The study presents the literary enlightenment period in Transcaucasia by bringing together second-hand sources of Armenian, Georgian, and Azerbaijani historians along with other relevant individual studies on the subject.

Keywords: imperialism, enlightenment, literature, language, printing

Introduction

The region of Transcaucasia, located in the southern part of the Greater Caucasus mountain range, is surrounded by the Caspian Sea to the east, the Black Sea and Turkey to the west, Iran to the south, and Russia to the north. The Arabs refer to the region as the Language Mountain, and it resembles an ethnological museum in its entirety. For millennia, Georgians, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Ossetians, Abkhazians, Persians, Lezgians, Jews, and many different minority groups have lived alongside one another, speaking different languages and following different sects. Additionally, due to its geopolitical position and economic wealth, the region has always been a priority for major powers. Roman legions, Parthian and Sasanian forces, the Eastern Roman Empire and Arab Caliphate, the Safavids, the Ottomans, and the Russian empires have all fought for their interests in the Caucasus. Furthermore, expansionist peoples who invaded the territory from Derbent gradually integrated with the indigenous population and settled here. Only a few centuries of Transcaucasian history have passed peacefully. Inter-imperial wars and nationalist clashes remain a significant part of the region's history. Among the people mentioned above, only the Georgians, Azerbaijanis, and Armenians had become populous enough to have political significance by the beginning of the 20th century [23, p.13; 10, p.3]. Although these three peoples share the same geographical environment, their language, religion, and cultural peculiarities have always distinguished them. Georgians follow Orthodox Christianity; Armenians follow the Armenian Apostolic Church, while the majority of Azerbaijanis practice Shia Islam. If we look at the history of the penetration of these three languages into the region, Christianity managed to enter the Transcaucasia

region earlier. In the 4th century AD, despite their differences in sects, both Georgians and Armenians adopted Christianity around the same time. Azerbaijani historians also write about the spread of Christianity among the Caucasian Albanians, whom they consider their ancestors, around the same time. However, after Arab invasions, the people of this region were forced to accept the Islamic faith, and they are regarded the ancestor of modern-day Azerbaijanis. Many western historians trace the history of Armenia and Georgia back to before the Common Era, while for the other state in the region, Azerbaijan, they discuss the modern period starting from the establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in the 20th century. Most of these historians emphasize Iranian Azerbaijan when it comes to Azerbaijan. One of these historians, originally Iranian Azerbaijani Firuz Kazımzadeh, links the emergence of present-day Azerbaijanis to the political developments of the 15th century. Kazımzadeh emphasizes the rapid increase of the Turkic population in Transcaucasia during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods. He associates the emergence of the people in Azerbaijan, who speak a mixed Persian-Turkic language, bear Persian cultural heritage, and adhere to the Shia sect, with the 15th century [7, p.33; 3. p.20, 10, p.4-5]. Actually, this remains a debated issue in history. Because these three peoples' historiography contains many historical myths, identity formations, and territorial claims from the last century.

Despite their religious, linguistic, and cultural differences, these peoples coexisted for centuries under Muslim empires before being occupied by Russia. The expansionist policies of the Russian Empire in the Caucasus, which began during the time of Peter the Great and peaked in the 19th century, led to power struggles between the Russians and the Muslim states ruling the

region. These conflicts and battles had a profound impact on the region's current sociopolitical landscape. Especially following the Russian annexation of Transcaucasia in the nineteenth century, the Russian administrative system and the Enlightenment period had a substantial impact on the formation of the region's people and their national identity. Along with the revolutionary views of Russian intellectuals, ideological currents such as socialism, nationalism, and pan-Islamism began to be discussed among local intellectuals from the late 19th century to the early years of the 20th century. Many intellectuals, taking advantage of the concessions granted by Tsarist Russia in the press, played an important role in the spread of nationalist or socialist ideas among the peoples of the region, and they made significant progress towards establishing a nation-state through clandestine or legal organizations [13, p.236; 22, p.24; 6, p.3]. This study will focus on the role of the Enlightenment movement, which began with ethnic and cultural aspirations in language reform and literary writing and led to political and ethnic nationalism at the beginning of the 20th century.

Russian Occupation in Transcaucasia

After the reforms of Peter the Great and the wars that followed, the Russian Empire gained the imperial title. Despite constantly expanding its frontiers, Russia has always felt threatened since the 1700s. The period between 1700 and 1850 was crucial in shaping Russia's foreign policy. During these years, Russia brought numerous non-Russian peoples under its rule through countless wars, making internal reforms necessary to strengthen the central state for the Romanovs. The Eastern Question remained one of the most important aspects of Russia's foreign policy, with the Caucasus region serving as a focus point. Russia's attempts to seize these territories through diplomatic means were unsuccessful, leading to the necessity of resolving the issue through military means. The decision to pursue a military solution to the Caucasus issue pitted Russia against two Muslim powers, the Ottoman Empire and Persia. Furthermore, the commercial significance of the South Caucasus, with the demand for raw materials such as cotton, silk, and copper in the region, and the geopolitical importance of the territory against the Persian and Ottoman Empires, has always piqued the interest of the Russians [20, p.3; 26, p.29-32; 9, p.446].

During the conquest of the South Caucasus, the Russians collaborated with the Georgian nobility, Armenian clergy, and merchant elite under the guise of safeguarding the region's Christian people against the Ottomans and Persians. Furthermore, Muslim khanates like Karabakh signed treaties accepting Russia's protection against the Persian occupation. Among the three ethnic groups in the region, the Armenians were the first to establish contact with the Russians and sought liberation from Iranian and Turkish domination. However, Georgians were the first to seek asylum under Russian protection. The treaty signed on July 24, 1783, in Georgievsk between King Heraclius II of Kartli-Kakheti and the Russian commander General Pavel Potemkin declared the allegiance of the Georgians to the Russian Empire. In reality, these accords imply Rus-

sia's so-called protection as well as a loss of independence in areas such as foreign and internal affairs, as well as religious matters [3, p.33; 27, p.250-51]. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, the Russians conquered the majority of Georgia and occupied the final strongholds of Western Georgia during the Russo-Turkish War of 1828–29. The historical process brought about by the Russian occupation tore apart the fabric of the traditional Georgian society. Initially, the Tsarist administration addressed the resistance by encouraging the Georgian nobles to embrace the new rule. The rebellious and semi-independent dynasties of Georgia quickly turned into loyal service nobility to the Tsar. At the same time, wealthy Armenian merchants and craftsmen developed their commercial interests, leveraging the security provided by Russian arms to emerge as major economic and political players in Russia's Georgia. Additionally, the Georgian and Armenian churches made foundational and irreversible compromises with the new political order. However, shortly after, at the demand of Tsar Paul, the Tsarist administration organized the Georgian region into the Georgia Governorate (province), effectively abolishing the Georgian monarchy. During Alexander I's rule, Russia's aspirations for Georgia shifted, and Eastern Georgia was separated into five districts [17, p.63-66]. Despite certain concessions to the Georgians, the Tsarist administration's principal purpose was to destabilize the Georgian noble system and bring the province under central authority.

The people of Armenian, being a Christian population in the region, have pursued a strong nationalist policy to preserve their historical heritage despite being a minority living among other nations. Prior to the Russian occupation of the Transcaucasia region, Armenians lived as a minority within empires, predominantly alongside Muslims in Anatolia and the Caucasus, as well as in the Persian regions. The largest Armenian population was within the borders of the Ottoman Empire, with an estimated 2.4 million Armenians according to the Ottoman census of 1844. Armenians were a minority in the southern Caucasus, and even after the Treaty of Turkmenchay and subsequent immigration from Iranian and Ottoman lands, the Armenian community accounted for just 20% of the region's total population by 1866. Despite being a minority, the Armenians' desire to establish a state with a historical legacy led them to collaborate with the Russians. Following an agreement between the Georgian nobility and the Russians, the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin tried to construct an Armenian state between Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and Persia. Negotiations in St. Petersburg in 1796 between Armenian and Russian officials resulted in an agreement to establish an Armenian state with Russian assistance in exchange for Armenian uprisings in Muslim khanates. However, the Russians did not implement this plan; instead, after the Treaty of Turkmenchay in 1828, they established an Armenian province encompassing the regions of Yerevan, Nakhchivan, and Ordubad, which lasted until 1840. Additionally, for their imperialistic purposes, the Russians encouraged the Armenians living in Ottoman territories to revolt against

the Muslims and laid the groundwork for centuries-long hostility [19, p.37; 4, p.15-16; 15, p.218-19].

For the Muslims living in the South Caucasus, the Russian invasion process took a completely different course. Independent Muslim khanates in the region formed alliances with all three empires to fight Russian occupation and Persian pressure. Typically, the Sunni-majority khanates in the region sought to collaborate with the Ottoman Sultan, the Talysh khanate, which had a largely Shiite population had to move closer to Iran, and the Karabakh khan had to approach Russia in response to Iranian pressure. However, other Muslim khanates like Gence chose to resist the Russian invasion. In 1828 and 1829, under the command of General Paskevich, the Russian army, after defeating the Persians and Ottomans, managed to gain control over most of Georgia, a part of Armenia, and one-third of Azerbaijan through the Treaty of Turkmenchay and Edirne. According to Azerbaijani historians, after these treaties, Azerbaijan was permanently divided, with the north becoming part of Russia and the south remaining in Persia. Almost half of Transcaucasian Muslims who spoke Turkish fell under Russian administration, with the majority of Shiites located in northern and western Russian Azerbaijan and a sizable minority of Sunnis. During this time, Shiites remained loyal to Iran, while Sunnis turned toward Dagestan and, to a lesser extent, Ottoman [10, p.7; 21, p.211].

The occupation of the Caucasus not only created positive expectations for Russia's trade in Asian markets but also, by protecting the local populations, it gained not only a political ally but also won over the noble and merchant classes in the southern regions to develop the economy. Furthermore, by extending its frontiers up to the Kura and Aras rivers, Russia was fully aware that it would be closing its southern borders to Persia and Turkey, as well as England and France, both of whom had interests in the region. Moreover, the occupation of the South Caucasus provided Russia with an advanced outpost that would add to its influence and expansion in the Middle East and Central Asia. The annexation of Georgia, Northern Azerbaijan, and Eastern Armenia to Russia undoubtedly contributed to the faster development of the economy and culture of these peoples. The process of ethnic consolidation among the Azerbaijani people intensified, leading to the unification of many Turkish and non-Turkish Muslim ethnic groups under the name Azerbaijani in resistance to foreign occupation [26, p.33-34; 17, p.72-75]. The arbitrary and oppressive nature of Russia's occupation policy soon became apparent. A secret police force was established in the region, and heavy taxation was imposed. This policy of oppression led to uprisings among the Georgian, Azerbaijani, and Armenian villages between 1804 and 1830. In order to quell peasant uprisings and guerrilla activities in the region, Tsar Nicholas I appointed Baron Paul Hahn as the governor of the region. The program implemented by Hahn in the region in 1840 paved the way for forced colonization. Russian became the only language used in government offices, the influence of Georgian nobles and Muslim landlords was broken by appointing Russians to high positions,

and regional governance was reorganized to be centrally controlled as guberniyas (provinces) without regard for ethnic composition. However, Russia's program of forced Russification and colonialism paradoxically resulted in the rise of nationalism in the region and an upsurge in uprisings.

The involvement of the Muslim population in the South Caucasus in the imperialist mechanism was not very difficult because the mechanism to approach the Muslim population had already been developed by the imperial state apparatus in Russia to bring the Muslims living in its regions under its control. The situation was completely different for the Georgians and Armenians. On the one hand, due to the Christian religion that made them equal to the Russians, they supported the Russian army during the Russian invasions and officially accepted to become part of the Russian Empire of their own free will [25, p.147-48]. This is why this Christian population tried to be equal to the Russians, but failed in their attempt. The projected Armenian state was not established, and Georgia was annexed directly in 1801. All the members of the Georgian Bagratuni monarchy who were exiled to Russia experienced the same fate as the Khans in Azerbaijan. In addition, the Georgian Orthodox Church lost its catholicos and became subordinate to the Russian Church as a bishopric in 1817 [7, p.309].

Enlightenment and the Emergence of Intelligentsia in Transcaucasia

Georgian Enlightenment Movement

During the Enlightenment period in Transcaucasia and the rise of the national intelligentsia, the literary culture became widespread among all three ethnic groups, along with the activities of publishing newspapers and magazines. Furthermore, young people's education in Europe, as well as their exposure to European intellectual currents and literature, expedited the regional Enlightenment. Georgians were the first among these peoples to adopt Russian culture, owing to their affinity for European civilization. With the influx of Russian culture into the region in the 1820s and 1830s, the traces of Persian civilization were abandoned, and European-style clothing spread in urban areas. Additionally, among the Georgian aristocracy, French came to be spoken alongside Russian and Georgian. During this period, Georgian primary education schools, called gymnasiums, providing secular education became widespread. Georgian literature and theater became the focus of the aristocratic class. The first Georgian-language newspapers, *Sakartvelos* and *Tiflis Gazette*, were first published in 1819. The 1830s and 1840s were the Romantic period for Georgian literature. The first generation of the Georgian intellectual class was influenced by the translations of European literary and philosophical works, alongside the Russian poets. The melancholy, lyricism, nature, love, patriotism, and freedom of the Romantics were not alien to Georgian literature, as Georgians had previously composed lyrical songs and elegies reflecting these thoughts under the rule of the Turks and Persians. The first generation of Georgian intellectuals, inspired by European Romanticism and philosophy, eagerly read the works of writers such as Byron, Goethe, Schiller, Shakespeare, and Pushkin.

All members of this generation were of aristocratic origin, including Alexander Chavchavadze, Grigol Orbeliani, Grigori Eristavi, Nikoloz Baratashvili, and Vakhtang Orbeliani [18, p.121; 7, p.337-38]. The appointment of Mikhail Semyonovich Vorontsov as Viceroy of the Caucasus in the 1850s helped to boost Enlightenment and cultural activities in the region. Upon his arrival in Tiflis, Vorontsov quickly earned the allegiance of the Georgian nobility as well as Armenian merchants and craftsmen by making certain political and economic concessions. Furthermore, Governor Vorontsov's cultural policies inspired the region's emerging intellectual class. This intellectual class gradually embraced European culture and distanced themselves from the church. Vorontsov's actions resulted in the establishment of printing presses for the publication of theaters, public libraries, and the Caucasian Calendar and Kavkaz newspapers in Tiflis, resulting in the growth of literary culture in the region [17, p.93; 7, p.338-39].

The ethnic identity issue among Georgian intellectuals in the South Caucasus, like in other communities, has been related to the use of language. While Armenians had privileges and their own distinct Gregorian Church, the Georgian Orthodox Church was merged with the Russian Church. Moreover, in the 1860s, the status of the Georgian language was not only inferior to Russian in terms of influence and popularity, but also legally. Russian became a mandatory subject in all of the empire's schools, while Georgian was eliminated from the curriculum. The difficulties of the use of the Georgian language were first addressed in the Georgian magazine "Dawn (tsiskari)" published in 1852-53 by the playwright Giorgi Eristavi. Georgian intellectuals criticized the Russian administration through articles published in the newspaper, in response to the policy of Russification and the dominance of the Russian language. Furthermore, like intellectuals of other ethnic groups in the region, Georgian intellectuals also debated the simplification of the language, which was considered an important condition for nationhood. In 1861, Chavchavadze advocated for reforms in spelling and style through the publication of Revaz Eristavi's article *The Mad Woman* in the Dawn magazine. However, the conservative faction always opposed the reduction of the Georgian literary language to the spoken level. During the same period, democratic changes against the church's literary traditions and written language sparked disagreements and debates between Armenian and Russian intellectual communities [16, p.9; 17, p.129].

The process that began with industrialization, which resulted in increased trade, the rise of the bureaucratic class, and the emancipation of serfs, culminated in the expansion of cities and an increase in urban population. Urbanization led to the creation of a new Georgian working class and an intellectual class that supported bookstores, theaters, and discussion groups. During the reign of Tsar Alexander II, with the loosening of censorship, Georgian newspapers first became weekly and then daily, shaping the Georgian public opinion. The main magazine "Dawn," which was suppressed by General Muraviov, rose to popularity, while

the "Georgian Herald" gave way to the "Times" newspaper in 1866. Chavchavadze, who took over "Dawn," published translations of pieces by many philosophers, theorists, and writers, including Nikolay Chernyshevsky. Chernyshevsky's writings, as well as Nikolay Dobrolyubov's notions about Russian lethargy, apathy, inactivity, and hypocrisy, had a considerable impact on Georgia's educated class. Chavchavadze's popular newspaper "Iveria" began publication in 1877 and has continued for 30 years. Georgian intellectuals, who fought Russification and used modern Georgian for both public and private speech, reactivated the Society for the Spreading of Literacy in Georgian, hoping for a more effective use of the Georgian language. Some of Nikoladze's close friends established the "Times" newspaper in Tiflis, and Giorgi Tsereteli and Petr Umikashvili formed a group calling themselves the "New Youth" (Meore Dasi). This more radical group and its sympathizers became known as the "second generation" of Georgian intellectuals. Instead of promoting a single solution to Georgia's backwardness, this group proposed a variety of policies, ranging from state-regulated capitalism to various forms of unification and collectivism. Young Georgians from the second generation of the Georgian Enlightenment movement, such as Sergei Meskhi and Giorgi Tsereteli, valued equality over nobility and Orthodoxy. Both generations of Georgian intellectuals did not seek independence, but rather a progressive Russia that valued local languages, traditions, and universal human rights.

When Nikoladze returned to Tiflis in 1875, he initiated a massive press mobilization, founding journals such as "Collection," "Tiflis Herald," and "Rural Newspaper." In addition, he developed a municipal reform program and revived plans to establish a Noble Land Bank. Nikoladze sought to manage the bank with Chavchavadze, but was unsuccessful. Nikoladze sought to use the bank to develop Georgian agriculture and invest in new techniques and farms, whilst Chavchavadze attempted to use it to invest in educational and cultural organizations. The dispute between the two fragmented the Georgian intellectual movement, leading to the emergence of three main political tendencies. The leadership of Chavchavadze brought the nationalism of Georgian nobles to dominate Georgian social life until the end of the century. The reformist liberalism of Nikoladze and Giorgi Tsereteli took center stage, while Russian populism on the left and later Georgian revolutionaries influenced by Marxism completed the three main political tendencies [17, p.130-32; 27, p.303; 16, p.37-38].

Armenian Enlightenment Movement

As previously stated, Armenians existed as a minority in the domains of three empires: Ottoman, Iranian, and Russian. While the majority of Armenians in the Ottoman territories lived in villages, in Russia, most of the Armenian population were involved in trade and craftsmanship, and also represented the local population in the Tiflis municipal council. Furthermore, in comparison to Georgians and Azerbaijanis, Armenian intellectual movements trace back to the 18th century. The activities of Sivas-born Mkhitar and the Mkhitarist

Order in this century were a turning point in the awakening and enlightenment of the Armenian people. Mkhitar emphasized the necessity of studying Armenian history, language, and literature and drew attention to the need for European enlightenment. Mkhitar left various works to the Armenian people, including Classical Armenian and local grammars. In the nineteenth century, as Armenian intellectuals debated linguistic simplification, Mkhitar's works were extensively cited. In the eighteenth century, the printing press played a significant role in promoting both native Armenian culture and European ideas. Armenian intellectuals introduced French encyclopedists, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Voltaire, as well as the Russian intellectual class to the public [12, p.32-36].

The enlightenment among Armenians living in the Ottoman territories generally emerged in the major cities located in the western part of Turkey. Young Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were influenced by French, Italian and Western literary movements. Unlike Armenians in the Caucasus, Armenian intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire avoided revolutionary activities in favor of reformist and liberal progress. On the other hand, Armenians in the Caucasus, generally developed in a radical revolutionary direction due to their interest in the Russian populist movements, and these intellectuals conveyed revolutionary ideas to the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. From the second half of the 19th century, Armenian intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire experienced a political and national awakening resulting from class conflicts, the formation of the Armenian National Constitution, the proliferation of periodicals, a literary Renaissance, and the emergence of clandestine revolutionary groups. Both in the Ottoman territories and in Russia, the first generation of the Armenian intellectual class emerged between the 1830s and 1850s. A significant portion of the first generation intellectuals, who were educated in Paris, were greatly inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution. The Armenian intellectual class, spurred by the terms freedom, equality, and brotherhood, established the public education system and began to take an interest in the Ottoman Armenians' predicament by publishing magazines and literary works. For the first time, Armenian intellectuals recognized the importance of serving the people over the church. Additionally, these middle-class intellectuals also created a social tie with the Armenian lower class [4, p.17-18; 19, p.43; 11, p.145].

The first generation of Armenian intellectuals arose in the South Caucasus during the 1840s and 1850s, following the Ottoman Empire's Armenian Enlightenment Movement. This generation, which earned scholarships to study at European universities, was predominantly drawn from the offspring of affluent families. The Armenian primary and secondary school network was established in the South Caucasus and Russia during the latter half of 1836, with the backing of the Armenian clergy and funds from a few affluent benefactors. As the expansion of schools progressed from the second half of the 19th century, the second generation of the Armenian intellectual class also emerged. Peasant children, like middle-class children, were educated at these schools, and the most talented among

them were able to attend the Nerses Academy in Tiflis, the Gevorgian Academy in Etchmiadzin, and the Lazarev Academy in Moscow. These schools produced teachers, journalists, writers, and professional revolutionaries. The Armenian intellectual class accepted a revolutionary and patriotic mission, feeling obligated to the Armenian people to release them from the darkness of Asia and economic underdevelopment, as well as to restore their lost dignity over the centuries. Among the Iranian Armenians, the enlightenment movement generally aimed at education and mutual assistance. Although education existed among Iranian Armenians from the 1630s, these schools were mainly established to provide religious education to the children of priests and the wealthy class. Depending on the school's financial situation and teacher availability, the curriculum comprised courses such as Armenian, Persian, French, Russian, history, religion, geography, and mathematics. Girls' schools opened in 1858 and 1868, but they were closed after two years owing to ecclesiastical pressure. Subsequently, Armenian Women's Aid Societies were established in Jolfa and Tabriz in 1890s. These kinds of societies worked to support co-educational schools, provide assistance with educational fees for the needy, build reading rooms, and assist those in need during famines, epidemics, and other such events [11, p.147-48; 4, p.43-46; 19, p.101].

Another topic of discussion among Armenian intellectuals was language simplification. There was a recurrent disagreement between a new generation of secular-minded intellectuals who championed language simplification and the adoption of modern style, and conservatives who defended traditional religion. By the nineteenth century, the colloquial or vernacular language known as modern Armenian had diverged significantly from the written or classical language used by fifth-century writers. The increase in the literacy rate of the people and the development of literary efforts were determined by the discussion among scholars and clergy. The majority of people who understand the spoken language and have little opportunity to receive formal education have not been able to read or write. As mentioned before, the first grammar of the modern language was written by Abbot Mkhitar in the 18th century. Furthermore, Khatchatur Abovian's *Wounds of Armenia*, published in the first half of the nineteenth century, was the first significant work written in Armenian [12, p.49].

Along with schools, the press was crucial in shaping the Armenian intellectual class. did not devote much attention to Armenian history and culture. However, beginning in the 1840s, with the rise of magazines and newspapers, propaganda-driven nationalist publications spreading Armenian history and traditions emerged. Journalism and literature, along with the revolutionary movement, evoked a strong response among the Ottoman Armenians, while they were further developed by Armenian intellectuals and revolutionaries in Russia. Three prominent publications emerged in the first fifty years of the 19th century: *Ararat*, *Aurora Borealis*, and *The Eagle of Vaspurakan*. The publications addressed the difficulties of the Armenians living on Ottoman land, appealing for the defense of their rights

and encouraging them to strive for freedom against the oppressive regime. The *Mushak* (Laborer) periodical, which played a key role in Caucasian Armenian intellectual growth, was published in Tiflis between 1872 and 1920, growing in popularity as liberal ideals gained traction. This typically revolutionary and propaganda-filled publication depicted the Armenians' only way to salvation as aligning with the Russians during the Turkish-Russian War, urging Armenians to fight alongside the Russians against British and Turkish imperialism. The *Orient Press* was another publication that represented liberal ideas and supported Russia. Other nationalist journals emerged during the 1970s and 1980s, including the *Armenian Bee*, *Endeavor*, *Echo*, and *Fountain*.

In the 1980s, new ideas from the West brought about certain changes in the press, strengthening the trend towards atheism and agnosticism among intellectuals, leading to continuous pressure on the church. Inspired by the press, the novels of nationalist and European-influenced romantic writers became a source of inspiration for Armenian intellectuals. Among these novelists was Khaçatur Abovyan, who emphasized the difficulties faced by Armenians and the heroism of the people in his novel "Armenia's Wounds." Mikael Nalbadyan, another prominent Armenian writer and intellectual, received his education in Moscow and St. Petersburg and was influenced by the well-known Russian intellectuals Herzen and Chernyshevsky. Raffi (Melik Hakopyan), another prominent writer, was originally an Iranian Armenian who received education in Tiflis and was influenced by Russian intellectuals. Unlike the Ottoman intellectual class, Armenian intellectuals who acquired their education in cities such as Moscow, Petersburg, Berlin, and Leipzig were subjected to the same intellectual influences as their Russian counterparts. The Armenian intellectual class developed and flourished not just in Russia but also in other empires, resulting in the conclusion that Armenian cultural life was more cosmopolitan than Georgian culture [12, p.52-57; 4, p.21; 7, p.342].

Enlightenment Movement of Azerbaijani Turks

The movement of enlightenment among Muslims, who had a different religious and cultural stance than their Transcaucasia neighbors, evolved as a reaction to Russification policies, as it did among Georgians. Muslims were heavily influenced by Russian political and economic pressures, as well as Christianization, Russification campaigns, and discrimination laws. The Russian administration attempted to assert control over fields beyond its authority, such as religion and culture, although these pressures rarely resulted in Russification. Paradoxically, they resulted in Muslims fiercely holding to both their Islamic and Turkic cultural heritage, maintaining their alphabets and pining for ancient Asian empires. The majority of Transcaucasian Muslims, who belong to the same Oghuz tribe as Anatolian Turks, have formed an inseparable entity with their ethnic, cultural, and linguistic brothers living in northern Iran. Furthermore, they remained the region's largest community, and these Muslims have struggled hard to maintain ethnic and cultural ties with the subjugated

Muslim peoples of Anatolia, Iran, and Russia. The same language and culture defined before had a crucial role in the development of enlightenment and nationalization among Transcaucasian Muslims [1, p.39-40; 24, p.3-4; 6, p.175].

The first generation of Muslim intellectuals emerged in response to the Russification drive, having been born in Russian schools. Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Russians strove to create an educated generation in the region with Russian customs and morality through Russian-language instruction in schools. However, the Russification policy was not fully implemented in Azerbaijan. This was due to the inability to develop a mental and cultural connection between the rebellious people, who were deeply connected to their national and religious ideals, and these intellectuals, who were educated in Russian and were familiar with Russian culture. This condition resulted in the rise of the intelligentsia, education in the national language, discussion over national spiritual ideals, and the formation of national consciousness [14, p.51-53].

In Azerbaijan, the intellectual class was defined as individuals who acquired Western-style education while those who attended traditional Muslim schools were not included in this class. Initially, this class was limited to Russian military and civil service personnel. Subsequently, developments in literature and journalism produced very successful persons in the sphere of ideas and thinking among the intellectual class. According to Alstadt, "*the Enlightenment period in Azerbaijan, which was shaped by the literary group, was similar to the European Enlightenment movement*". Inspired by the West, intellectuals interacted with the intellectual classes, who lived under Ottoman and Iranian authorities, as well as the Turkish populations in Russia. These intellectuals began to conceptualize the Eastern Caucasus in terms of language and regional unity, and the development of a national identity began. Efforts were undertaken to build an educated, cultured, and committed to national values society free of ignorance and superstition via a variety of means, including classrooms and theater. This Enlightenment period, which occurred in the last part of the nineteenth century, also marked the birth of a movement against monarchy and imperialism. After a thirty-year struggle in which Russia occupied Azerbaijani areas, realists searched to develop national concepts and enlighten the public by altering their techniques. Bakıhanov, Ahundzade, and Zerdabi established new national goals, while second-generation intellectuals such as Hüseyinzade, Ağayev, and Topçubaşov effectively shifted from populism to nationalism. Mehmet Emin Resulzade was able to transform this national awakening ideology into a type of thought [20, p.14; 2, p.1-2; 8, p.2].

Muslim enlightenment movement can be traced back to the simplification of the language and the establishment of secular schools. In the 1830s, Mirza Muhammed Ali Kazembek and Abaskulu Agha Bakikhanov addressed these subjects, which had been discussed among Azerbaijan Turk intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth century. Kazembek started to study Azerbaijani Turkish dialects while he was an academic at Kazan University. Grammar books designed

in the 1840s paved the way for school textbooks in the 1850s. In the subsequent years, Mirze Fetheli Ahundzade made significant contributions to language changes. Ahundzade, a pioneer of the Enlightenment movement, tried to communicate national cultural ideals to the public, whether through writing or theater. He worked on crucial issues such as simplifying the Arabic script for the advancement of national civilization and people's thinking, and he shared ideas with colleagues from both the Ottoman Empire and Iran. Bakikhanov, who holds an important place in the history of Azerbaijan, undertook the reform struggle in primary schools. His education proposal included eleven items that envisioned the establishment of training and teaching courses in both Azerbaijani Turkish and Russian. The purpose of these schools was to educate a loyal bureaucratic class, as well as scientists and teachers, for the empire. However, his attempts to bring Muslim children to school along with the Russians were unsuccessful. Muslim parents were reluctant to send their children to a Christian school, therefore Islamic culture had an enormous effect. To preserve their Islamic traditions, the Muslims continued to send their children to modern-style schools established by Crimean Tatar Ismail Gasprinski [1, p.50, 54-55; 22, p.23-24].

Literature and the press played a significant part in the propagation of the local language and the advancement of the Enlightenment movement. One of the most significant achievements of this period was the replacement of Persian literature with Turkish literature. Furthermore, modern communication instruments such as the press and theater were upgraded, and the network of Jadid schools was extended. Intellectuals such as Abbasgulu Agha Bakikhanov, Mirza Shafi Vazeh, Ismayil Bey Gutgashinli, and Mirza Fatali Ahundzade, who were knowledgeable about Russian and Western Orientalists and poets, established a strong connection between Azerbaijani literature and Russia and the West. The first newspaper in Azerbaijani Turkish was *Akinchi* (Ploughman), published by Hasan Bey Zerdabi between 1875 and 1877. The newspaper immediately established itself as a popular platform for discussing European intellectual currents. In addition, its language was supplemented with Turkish accents that contrasted with Persian. In addition, *Akinchi* made successful gains in instilling contemporary civilization and Western knowledge in the people, as well as political themes. However, the Tsarist administration shut down the publication shortly after, claiming *Akinchi*'s ties to the *Narodnik* in Russia and its pro-Turkish position during the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War. In the 1880s, the *Kashkul* (Darwish Bowl), journal, published by the Sunni segment of Azerbaijan, became the first publication to use the term "Azerbaijani Turks" instead of "Caucasian Muslims." However, attempts to move away from Persian cultural traditions and to simplify the language were vehemently criticized by conservative elements, and even some Western-influenced intellectuals. In the 1890s, Ahmet Bey Agayev, a famous second-generation Azerbaijani intellectual and later a strong promoter of Turkish nationalism, emphasized the relevance of Persian culture while criticizing the *Ekinci* group as lost individuals. These disagreements were comparable to the Armenian and Georgian Enlightenment and Innovation movements. Despite this criticism, most Azerbaijani intellectuals were able to

convey their commitment to secularism and significantly reduce religious disputes, avoiding becoming a divisive force. After the closure of *Akinchi*, the Russian administration imposed a ban on publishing in Turkish until 1904. As a result, until that time, the most popular newspaper in the Azerbaijani press was *Kaspi*, a liberal newspaper published in Russian by Ali Merdan Bey Topchubashov. After 1904, newspapers and periodicals primarily written in Ottoman Turkish and reflecting political preferences were published, including *Sharq-i Rus* (Russian East), *Fuyuzat* (Abundance), and the dailies *Hayat* (Life) and *Irshad* (Guidance). Furthermore, socialist journals in Armenian and Azerbaijani Turkish, such as *Tekamul* (Perfection), *Terakki*, and *Davet Koch* (Call), called on the people to unite against imperialism and despotism while simultaneously condemning nationalism and discrimination. Popular satirical journals including *Molla Nasreddin*, *Arı* (Bee), and *Şark Dünyası* (Eastern World) aimed at challenging societal issues like ignorance, reactionism, and a lack of education [21, p.213; 22, p.23-24; 1, p.52].

The current Azerbaijani capital of Baku experienced an influx of Western investors, architects, and bankers in the 1870s as oil production expanded and industry developed. Because of their common relations with Westerners, the Azerbaijan Turk aristocratic class was directly impacted by Europe. Azerbaijani Turkish students who obtained education in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Paris, and Istanbul were additionally affected by the ideas brought about by the French Revolution. During the Enlightenment in Azerbaijan, Russian and European literature had a tremendous impact. The literate people translated and read significant novels by Pushkin, Turgenev, and Tolstoy. Additionally, Azerbaijani intellectuals became acquainted with the works of German philosophers Hegel and Schiller. Azerbaijani students who studied in Europe and Russia also read Belinsky, Herzen, Chernyshevsky, and Marx. Eventually, in the early twentieth century, Azerbaijani Turkish intellectuals started a political struggle while adhering to both nationalist and socialist concepts [2, p.5-6].

Conclusion

Transcaucasia has long been home to three ethnic groups living as neighbors; although having separate languages, religions, and sects, they share cultural similarities. These peoples, who have long lived under Muslim Turkic control, have constantly resisted external occupations, beginning with the Russian occupancy of the region and continuing until the present day. They were also caught up in civil wars, which resulted in massacres. The process that began with the Enlightenment in the nineteenth century evolved into nationalism and mutual hostility in the first quarter of the twentieth century. When we examine the Enlightenment processes of the three peoples, we notice both similarities and differences. The enlightenment movements of all three ethnic groups generally coincided on the same dates. These movements were influenced by both Russian intellectuals and political and philosophical currents in Russia, as well as intellectual currents and philosophy in Europe. All three movements included ethnic aspirations, linguistic simplification, the fight against ignorance and obscurantism, and the emphasis on the local language. Enlightenment movements started with literature and publishing before progress-

ing to cultural nationalism, ethnic nationalism, and politicization. Additionally, their struggle also opposes foreign occupation and imperialist policies. While Azerbaijanis and Georgians commonly opposed Russification and Russian imperialism, Armenian intellectuals' primary purpose was to liberate Armenians from Ottoman persecution. When compared to the Georgian movement, the Armenian and Azerbaijan Turk movements are regarded as more cosmopolitan. During that period, Armenians existed mostly in Ottoman lands, as well as in Russian and Iranian territories. Representatives of the Armenian people living in these three countries initially struggled for their freedom from captivity and darkness through literature and the press. Later, these intellectuals attempted to realize their goals through the formation of political organizations and military struggle. Azerbaijan Turks have occasionally communicated with their Iranian brothers of the same bloodline, and there have been statements of desire for unity, particularly in the twentieth century. Georgians, like Azerbaijan Turks, struggled with Russification policies to preserve their faith, language, and cultural heritage. Among these ethnic groups, socialism was more prominent than nationalism among the intellectuals, and these intellectuals were even bold enough to discuss the federation thesis for the Caucasus. These intellectuals' works reflect ethnic and religious aspirations, as well as concepts from the French Revolution and European philosophy. In short, the age of the rise of the Enlightenment and entelechy serves as the foundation for the later process of nationhood and the formation of nation-states.

References:

- Altstadt Audrey, *The Azerbaijani Turks; Power and Identity under Russian Rule*, Hoover Institution Press, California 1992.
- Altstadt Audrey, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet Azerbaijan 1920-1940*, Routledge, New York 2016.
- Bayramov Amrah, *Sovyetler Dönemi Dağlık Karabağ 1920-1991*, Gece Kitaplığı, Ankara 2021.
- Berberian Houri, *Armenians and The Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911*, second published, Routledge, New York 2018.
- Ceferov Nazim, *Milli-İctimai Fikir Tarihimizden, Azərbaycan Devlet Neşriyatı*, Bakü 1993.
- Fouse Gary, *The Languages of The Former Soviet Republics: Their History and Development*, University Press of America, New York 2000.
- Forsyth James, *Kafkasya (çev. Timuçin Binder)*, 2. Basım, Ayrıntı, İstanbul 2021.
- Hasanli Jamil, *Foreign Policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan; The difficult road to Western integration 1918-1920*, Routledge, New York 2016.
- İşçi Onur, "Making Sense Of Russian Imperialism: Warfare, Domestic Reform, And Absolutism, 1700-1856", *Tarih İncelemeler Dergisi*, C.31, S.2, 2016, p.445-470.
- Kazemzadeh Firuz, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia (1917-1921)*, Templar Press, Birmingham England, 1951.
- Minassian Anahide Ter, *Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)*, Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change (ed. By Ronald Grigor Suny), The University of Michigan Press, 1999.
- Nalbandian Louise, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement, The Development Of Armenian Political Parties Through The Nineteen Century*, University of California Press, 1963.
- Pryde Philip, *Environmental Resources and Constraints in the Former Soviet Republics*, Westview Press, San Francisco 1995.
- Rezulzade Mehmet Emin Seçme Eserleri 2; *Sürelî Yayınlarıdaki Yazıları, El Yazmaları* (ed. Yavuz Akpınar), Ötüken Neşriyat, İstanbul 2020.
- Sezgi Erdal, "Ermeni Kilisesi'nin Ermeni Toplumu Üzerindeki Gücü Ve Ermeni Devletinin Kurulmasındaki Rolü", *Kafdağı Dergisi*, C.6, S.2, 2021, p. 205-233.
- Stephen Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors, The European Road to Social Democracy 1883-1917*, Harvard University Press- Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2005.
- Suny Ronald Grigor, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, second edition, Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Suny Ronald Grigor, *The Emergence of Political Society in Georgia, Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change* (ed. By Ronald Grigor Suny), The University of Michigan Press, 1999.
- Suny Ronald Grigor, *Ararat'a Bakmak; Modern Tarihte Ermenistan* (çev. Ebru Kılıç), Aras, İstanbul 2015.
- Swietochowski Tadeusz, *Russian Azerbaijan 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1985.
- Swietochowski Tadeusz, *National Consciousness and Political Orientations in Azerbaijan, 1905-1920*, Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change (ed. By Ronald Grigor Suny), the University of Michigan Press, 1999.
- Yaqublu Nesiman, *Musavat Partisinin Tarihi*, Adiloglu, Baku 1997.
- Асланов Айдын, *Из истории взаимоотношений государств и народов Кавказа, История и идентичность: Южный Кавказ и другие регионы, находящиеся в переходном периоде, Министерство иностранных дел Финляндии* 2010.
- Балаев Айдын, *Азербайджанская Нация: основные этапы становления на рубеже XIX-XX вв*, Москва 2012.
- Бухрашвили Паата, *Русское колониальное сознание и закавказская этнополитическая реальность, История и идентичность: Южный Кавказ и другие регионы, находящиеся в переходном периоде, Министерство иностранных дел Финляндии* 2010.
- Оганесян Айказ, *Очерки истории Южного Кавказа; чего больше – общности или разочарований? История и идентичность: Южный Кавказ и другие регионы, находящиеся в переходном периоде, Министерство иностранных дел Финляндии* 2010.