Aufsätze

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"History Speaks Our Language!" A Comparative Study of Historical Narratives in Soviet and Post-Soviet School Textbooks in the Caucasus

Abstract

Long before the demise of the USSR, Western Sovietologists had noted the fact that in the Soviet Union the official version of history changed frequently. However, there is something that has passed almost unnoticed by the majority of scholars; namely, the debate about which version of history should be considered as true, and accepted as the official version to be included in school textbooks in the Soviet autonomous republics. This paper deals with several aspects of this process and its legacy by examining the way in which the distant past is presented in Soviet and post-Soviet school history textbooks. The author reveals the conflicting ethnic historical narratives in the textbooks of rival ethnic groups, focusing on the use of linguistic arguments to link ethnic identity to the territory controlled by the 'titular' ethnic group, and on the justification of the historical legitimacy of claims to territories by neighboring rival ethnic groups.

Introduction

The past is more difficult to predict than the future
(Popular Soviet aphorism)

Using a Marxist approach for the examination of historical sources,
[Soviet] historical science establishes the only truth,
which may correspond to none of the known sources
Tamaz Natroshvili, "The Knight of Truth",
Soviet Georgian Journal *Literaturnaya Gruziya* 12 (1990), 127.

Recently, researchers have taken a renewed interest in the process of history writing and the production of official narratives by the state, including school textbooks in the Soviet Union. However, in most cases, the subject of inquiry is the changes in the representation of the history of relations between Russians and non-Russian ethnic groups, where the former refers to the "titular" nationalities of the union republics.[1]

1 See, for example, the proceedings of the conference "Russia and the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Baltic region, South Caucasus and Central Asia: Old and New Images in Contemporary History School Textbooks", Moscow, 13–14 November, 2003. Published in: *Rossiia i strany Baltii, Central'noj i Vostochnoi Evropy, Iuzhnogo Kavkaza, Central'noi Azii: starye i novye obrazy v sovremennykh uchebnikakh istorii*, Moscow: Fond Fridrikha Naumanna, AIPO-XX, 2003, 352.

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Less attention has been paid to the issues involved in the teaching of republican and regional histories of neighboring ethnic groups.[2] One of the reasons for this lack of attention is that the debates usually took place out of sight of the general public, in the regional party offices and during academic meetings *in situ*. At the same time, it was not uncommon that the changing of the official version of history caused mass protest in one of the autonomies of the Soviet Union.[3] This happened because, according to the Soviet political context, (pseudo-)historical justification was a very important argument in disputes concerning the status of ethnic groups in the Soviet Union.

In this paper, we pay particular attention to the place devoted to language in historical narratives. In the Soviet Union, a distinct and unique language was considered to be the key property of an ethnic group. In most previous studies, authors have assumed that the sharing of a common language is real or that it has been successfully achieved. In this paper, however, we propose a model according to which a shared *political myth,* with an intangible factor like language at its core, plays a very important role. Moreover, we will show that language, as a symbolic factor, is a significant component in conflicting ethnocentric historical narratives in textbooks published in the Caucasus.

In this study, we limit our examination to the Russian-language versions of the textbooks, all of which (with the exception of the Abkhazian ones) are also available in the native languages. Despite this limitation, historical narratives in the Russian language proved to be of sufficient value for our research agenda, since they provided the core source of versions of official histories advocated by the rival parties. In addition, we will examine textbook samples in three different ways. First, we will compare historical narratives concerning the history of the USSR in the unified textbooks with the versions of history, and the way history was taught, in the non-Russian Soviet regions; second, we will compare the versions of regional histories published locally in the Caucasian autonomies during the Soviet period; third, we will examine historical narratives in contemporary textbooks published in some of now independent (although not always recognized) former Soviet territories in the South Caucasus. State production of official histories in the Caucasus, however, cannot be viewed in isolation from the political environment in these territories. For this reason, before proceeding with the comparative examination of the textbooks, it is necessary to review some specific characteristics of Soviet nationality policy. We also need some kind of conceptual framework, such as the notion of 'ethnic enclosure', which can accommodate – from a theoretical perspective – the subsequent description of the content of the textbooks.

Ethnic Enclosure

The concept of ethnic enclosure attempts to explain nationalism using the ethno-symbolic approach. The central idea of the symbolic politics theory is that people make political choices in response to symbols.[4] This theory is extended to explain ethnic

2 One of the pioneering books is Victor Shnirelman's *Who Gets the Past? Competition for Ancestors among Non-Russian Intellectuals in Russia*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

3 For example, a mass protest took place in Abkhazia in 1954 in relation to the publication of a book containing a new version of the official history (V. Shnirelman, *Voiny pamyati: mify, identichnost' i politika v zakavkaz'e*, Moscow: Akademkniga, 2003, 271).

4 M. Edelman, *The Symbolic Use of Politics*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967.

rivalries on the assumption that, if the emotional appeals to nationalistic themes cause one ethnic group to blame another, then such appeals may arouse feelings of anger and hostility that are very likely to motivate people to support the ethno-nationalist movement.[5] According to Anthony Smith, nationalism is "a definite ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, identity and unity of a social group"[6], and ethnic identity is "a sense of belonging to a certain social group, whose members believe they share (or are thought by others to share) a common group name, ancestors, collective memory, language and an attachment to a specific territory".[7] At the same time, when analyzing inter-ethnic relations in the Soviet Union, we must reserve a very special place for the examination of the use of linguistic arguments; it is through the use of language as a symbol that the powerful "history-territory-ethnic identity" link is constructed, and the establishment of this link is pivotal in cases of ethnic competition in the Soviet Union and within the post-Soviet geopolitical arena.

In the USSR, only a limited number of ethnic groups were given the right to the highest form of autonomy, that is, were granted a supreme form of ethno-territorial unit, a Union Soviet Socialist Republic.[8] These ethnic groups became "titular" nations in their republics. Other ethnic groups had to settle for one of the lower forms in the hierarchy of the Soviet ethno-territorial structure – an autonomous republic, an autonomous region or an autonomous district.[9] Some ethnic groups were not granted any such status at all. However, the ethnic groups that felt discriminated never gave up the struggle to upgrade their status, and sometimes they needed to protect the status they already had from being downgraded.[10] The political standing of their language was one of the most important indicators of how well the ethnic group was doing on this usually bloodless,[11] but very peculiar, ethnic battlefield. At the same time, in the Soviet political context, language was considered to be the "primordialized" property of an ethnic group. In order to be identified as an authentic ethnic group – a *sine qua non* for acquiring the desired status – it was necessary to show that the ethnic group in question had continued to use its own, distinct language for a significantly long period of time.[12] In addition, with the exception of Russians, all ethnic groups in the Soviet Union had to prove that they

5 S. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic Wars*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

6 A. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation,* Oxford: University Press, 1999, 189.

7 A. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, 109–110.

8 I.e., in 1940, fifteen out of more than 120 officially recognized ethnic groups. See R. Suny and T. Martin (Eds), *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, 5.

9 20 autonomous republics, 8 autonomous regions and 10 autonomous districts in 1940. See Ibid., 5.

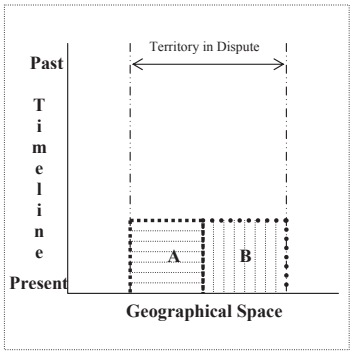
10 The record of the changes in status was an important element of the historical narratives in the textbooks published *in situ*. For example, the only significant difference between the 1971 and 1973 editions of the textbook on the geography of Checheno-Ingushetia was that the 1973 edition of the textbook dedicated an entire paragraph to a detailed description of the changes to the region's status while the previous book did not include much detail on this issue. See V. Ryzshikov, et al. (Eds), *Geografiya Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR,* 5th edition, Grozniy: Checheno-ingushskoe izdatel'stvo, 1973, 3–4.

11 Of course, it was 'bloodless' only until the end of the 1980s.

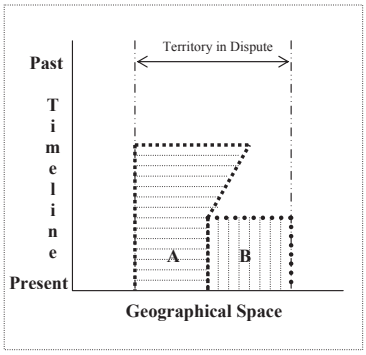
12 A *nation* in Soviet terminology. According to Stalin, "a nation is a historically evolved, stable community based on a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture". See J. Stalin, "Marxism and the National and Colonial Question", in: J.V. Stalin, *A Collection of Articles and Speeches*, London, 1941, 51, original 1913.

had continued to use their own language since the very beginning of their existence as an ethnic group. Thus, the task they faced was to find a historically proven link between the area inhabited by the ethnic group and the language of the ethnic group. A successful combination of the notion of the continued use of language and the principle of the first settlers in the territory in question was the essential means by which ethnic leaderships maintained or upgraded their ethno-territorial status. As we will see later in this article, this became the main component of the historical narratives of textbooks which dealt with the distant past of ethnic groups. Therefore, it is not surprising that changes to the official version of ethnic history often coincided with changes in the political status of the language in question. For instance, the change of the official version of Abkhazian history in the 1930s and 1940s coincided with the ban of the Abkhaz language in political spheres in this Caucasian autonomous region, and with the downgrading of the ethno-territorial status of Abkhazia. The fate of the Ossetic language is another example.

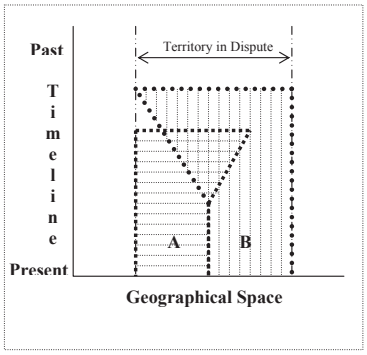
Figure 1 Stages of Ethnic Enclosure
(A = version of history of Group A, B = version of history of Group B)



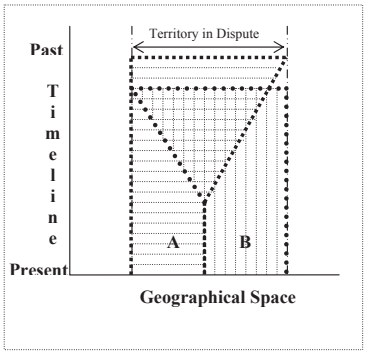
Stage 0: Before enclosure begins



Stage 1 of enclosure: Groupe A advances



Stage 2 of enclosure: Group B advances in return to the enclosure by Group A



Stage n of enclosure: Group A advances again

The use of the term "enclosure" to refer to social and political processes taking place in the Soviet Union is intended to generate associations with eighteenth century enclosure in England. The historic enclosure presented a case of simultaneous exclusion and inclusion: in the process of enclosure, peasants were prevented from owning land, but at the same time the same land was fenced in and secured for farming and sheep grazing, that is, included. The process of ethnic enclosure can also be characterized by simultaneous exclusion and inclusion: there are non-titular ethnic groups who are expelled from the area in question, that is, excluded, and there is a titular ethnic group, which is included, that is, it is the only one remaining in the territory in question. In the Soviet Union, attempts to combine the arguments of the continuous use of language and the first settlers principle with respect to the territory in question often resulted in the emergence of two rival versions of ethnogenesis which reflected the distant past of both ethnic groups. Each version gave historical advantage to one ethnic group at the expense of the rival ethnic group and the latter was excluded from the area in question, such that the disputed territory became ethnically enclosed by only one ethnic group.[13] Figure 1 shows these mutual enclosure attempts schematically.

In principle, in the process of ethnic enclosure, various cultural properties may be used by rival ethnic leaderships in order to justify the enclosure. However, language seemed to be a very convenient element, not least because in many cases it is extremely difficult for professional historians and historical linguists to genuinely identify the language spoken in the area in the distant past. By placing emphasis on language as key historical evidence, the narratives of textbooks presented versions of history in which the "continued use of the language, or the language itself, becomes a primordial property, i.e., a property unchanged throughout history".[14] As a result of successful ethnic enclosure, an ethnic group acquired a language-territory complex – a particular way of collective remembering based on a strong correlation between the actual status of an ethnic group within the system of ethno-territorial division in the USSR, its language, and the historical past of the territory in question. This language-territory complex is characterized by the way it focuses on the importance which historical events have in the present, and reflects not only the historical-"linguistic" justification of a group's links to its disputed territory, but also the rejection of similar claims made by a rival ethnic group (see the above description of the model of ethnic enclosure). If a policy of ethnic enclosure has been adopted by ethnic leaderships of both groups (though not necessarily within the same time span), collective memory is always slow to change. Continuous attempts to implement ethnic enclosure led to a clash of language-territory complexes. On many occasions during the existence of the Soviet Union, and especially during the late 1980s and early 1990s, this strategy contributed to processes that resulted in violence. This is because people are likely to

13 The reference here is primarily to symbolic inclusion and exclusion, although there are plenty of cases when a symbolic enclosure was followed by forced migration of people belonging to non-titular ethnic groups.

14 V. Rouvinski and M. Matsuo, "The Clash of myths: A review of The Value of the Past: Myths, Identity and Politics in Transcaucasia by Victor A. Shnirelman", in: *Journal of International Development and Cooperation* 9 (2003): 112.

respond to ethnic symbols and be mobilized when a "widely known and accepted [ethnic myth] justifies hostility to the other group".[15]

According to existing scholarly studies, the most important function of an ethnic myth, in addition to its role in the maintenance of memory, is to establish the range of forgetting and to define which part of memory is made silent.[16] Most historical narratives found in school textbooks on republican and local histories published in the Soviet Union reflect precisely these kind of myths: these textbooks were supposed to present students with simplified versions of the distant past by carefully selecting events that have to be memorized or made silent. While this feature of simplification and limitation is perhaps common in the majority of school textbooks around the world, it had a special function in the non-Russian Soviet autonomous territories.

Teaching History at Schools in the Soviet Autonomies

The teaching of histories other than the history of the USSR and universal history was officially introduced to the school curricula everywhere throughout the Soviet Union, except for schools in the Russian Federation, in the academic year of 1960/61.[17] However, the actual teaching of local histories in the autonomies started much earlier, in the 1920s and 1930s, in the days when the teaching of history as a common school subject for all Soviet schools was replaced by *обществоведние,* the Soviet version of civic studies.[18] Students learnt their ethnic histories in the *краеведение*, or regional studies classes, and often material relating to the historical development of the area in question was also to be found in geography and literature textbooks. These subjects have remained part of the school curriculum ever since, including during the period when history as a subject was rehabilitated in Soviet schools in the second part of the 1930s. The directive introducing a "stable" (meaning "unified") all-Union history textbook was broadcast in a 1937 publication of *Pravda* with a letter signed by Stalin.[19] However, in contrast to history textbooks in the USSR, where students at any school in the Soviet Union used the only version of the textbook approved by the All-Union Ministry of Education, and where all the textbooks had to be replaced throughout the country as soon as a new edition was published,[20] the regional history textbooks had to be approved by republican or autonomous ministries of education, whereby local authorities had a significant degree of freedom in choosing the content of these textbooks.[21] These

15 Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic Wars*, 30.

16 See, for example: G. Schopflin, "The Function of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths", in: G. Hosking and G. Schopflin, (Eds.), *Myths and Nationhood*, London: Hurst & Co. Ltd., 1997, 19–35.

17 E. Kuzin, A. Koloskov, and E. Lavrov (Eds.), *Iz opyta obucheniya istroii souznykh respublik*, Moscow: Pedagogika, 1979, 3.

18 *Social Science in Soviet Secondary Schools; Syllabus of the New Course*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Office of Education, 1966.

19 G. Bordugov, G. and V. Bukharev, *Natsional'nye istorii v revolutsiyakh i konfliktakh sovetskoi epokhi*, Moscow: AIRO-XX, 1999, 36.

20 J. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 80.

21 This is one of the reasons why the textbooks published locally have different formats: some have maps but others do not, some provided students with chronological tables but others did not, etc. The poligraphic quality of books also varies greatly. Surprisingly, it seems that until the middle of the 1970s,

textbooks were often published in the titular or regional languages, though a Russian-language edition was always printed simultaneously or soon afterwards.

Moscow's official requirement for the authors of the textbooks about regional histories was "to convince students, based on the facts of republican or local history, that friendship of the peoples of the Soviet Union was forged far back in history in times immemorial".[22] However, since the end of the 1930s, the main concern of the central authorities was to make sure that the textbooks' narratives emphasize the "unbroken friendship" of the Russian people with respective ethnic groups over many centuries. A few attempts to break the rule were quickly halted.[23] As a result of this policy by Moscow, each group wanted to demonstrate its superior historical status on the basis of its links with Russians. The indigenous authors of the textbooks about republican histories were literally competing with each other to show whose ethnic group had closer and earlier contacts with Slavs, sometimes ascribing to the former or to the latter, or even to both, adventures that make the achievements of Alexander the Great appear paltry.[24]

On the other hand, central control over the portrayal of the relations between non-Russian ethnic groups in the distant past was quite different. Normally, party offices in the autonomies, regional ministries of education and academies had considerable freedom, and Moscow was usually reluctant to intervene unless there was a risk of an open protest in relation to the introduction of a new official version of regional history.[25] Moreover, the building of the *fabulae* of ethnic histories, on the principle that ethnic groups had to be first settlers and prove continuous use of their language, was never questioned. Since historical justification was an important element of symbolic ethnic enclosure, indigenous historians were strongly encouraged by their ethnic leadership to search the distant past for evidence of the continuity of the use of their language in the territory in question. At the same time, if the historians of one ethnic group happened to come up with some new theory which threatened the current status quo between rival ethnic groups, the opposition group felt obliged to encourage their historians to delve deeper into the distant past and find appropriate counter-arguments. This led to the successive writing and rewriting of ethnic histories (see Fig. 2).

The methodological recommendations for teaching republican histories in the Soviet Union required teachers to make extensive use of extracurricular material, and enabled lesson planning and curriculum design to be far more flexible than the requirements for teaching unified all-Union history. The teachers of non-all-Union

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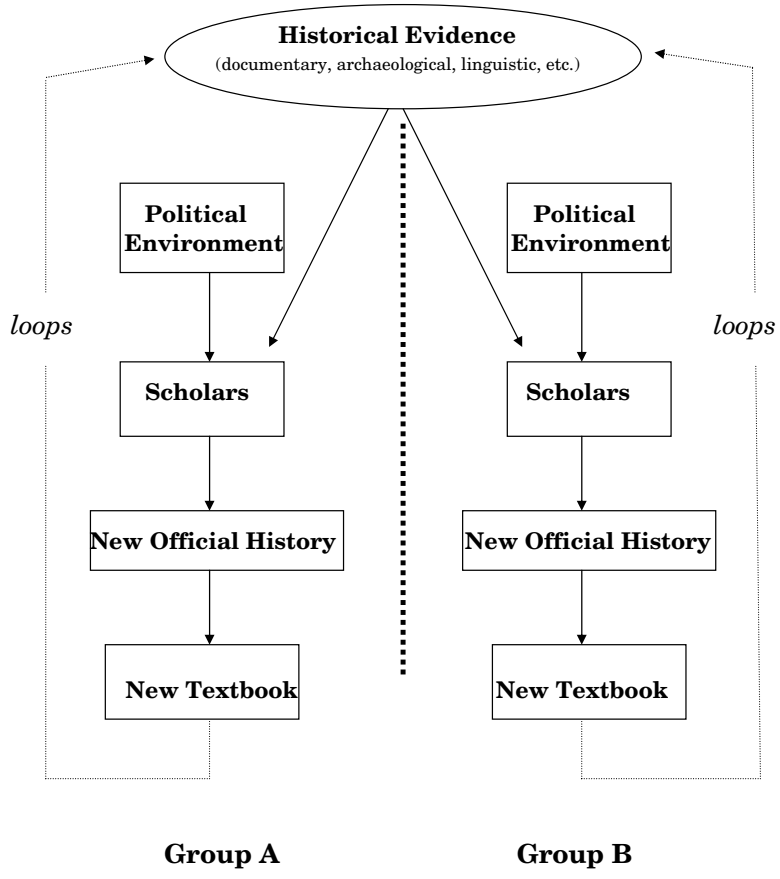
there was no detailed set of directives or rules approved at an all-union level, as might be expected in such a highly centralized structure as the Soviet Union, on the issue of regional histories. See, for example, I. Marykhuba (Ed.), *Abkhazskie pis'ma (1947–1989)*, Vol.1, Akua (Sukhum): El-Fa, 1994, 284–285.

22 Kuzin, Koloskov, and Lavrov, *Iz opyta obucheniya istroii souznykh respublik*, 3.

23 For example, in 1943, the entire printed stock of the *History of Kazakh SSR* was destroyed in Alma Ata because it mentioned tsarist Russia as the major and the most dangerous enemy of Kazakhstan. See Bordugov and Bukharev, *Natsional'nye istorii v revolutsiyakh i konfliktakh sovetskoi epokhi*, 52.

24 For instance, the 1950 edition of the textbook on Armenian history has a paragraph dedicated to the "broad links" between medieval Armenia and Kiev Rus. See Shnirelman, *Voiny pamyati: mify, identichnost' i politika v zakavkaz'e*, 76.

25 One of these rare cases is the prohibition of the publication of a book written by Prof. Turchaninov on the origins of the Abkhaz language in 1980. See Ibid., 353.



* The idea of the figure belongs to Masatsugu Matsuo (Adapted from Rouvinski and Matsuo 2003: 110).

histories[26] had more freedom when choosing themes and teaching methodologies, selecting questions for examinations, especially when dealing with the history of the remote past. Even in carefully edited Soviet publications, there is evidence of how different the teaching of supposedly unified republican histories was in various parts of the same republic. For example, in Ukraine, Ukrainian history was taught differently in Eastern, Central Dnieper and Western areas, where, according to the Soviet wording, teachers were "trying to reflect local specificities via exten-

26 These are generally the same people who taught the history of the USSR course.

sive use of regional extracurricular material"[27]. The authors of the methodological recommendations for teaching regional (republican, local) histories advised teachers to avoid duplicating the themes in the all-Union and local history course, especially when teaching ancient history, which in practice often meant replacing the themes in the all-Union history course with topics concerned with the history of the distant past of the territory in question. As the author of one of only a few reports on these issues published during the Soviet times cautiously acknowledges, "Themes related to regional history prevail".[28] Moreover, the teachers of regional history were allowed to allocate twice as much time to teaching the history of the remote past than was envisaged by the all-Union history curricula.[29]

The Soviet methodology applied to history teaching facilitated an easy absorption of a simplified version of history by the students. Teachers in the Soviet Union were taught that if historical data is clearly presented and concretely discussed, even small children can understand the most complicated generalizations of the historical process: focusing students' attention on single, important facts or events and making generalizations about the character of certain events or developments were some of the common techniques which Soviet history teachers were encouraged to use in their classrooms.[30] In the textbooks on the history of the USSR, there was very little information concerning early developments in the areas outside Russia proper. For example, the Short Course of the history of the USSR published in 1950[31] does not mention any significant events from the distant past in the Caucasus. The more recent editions of the all-Union textbooks of the history of the USSR contained more information about ancient history; in particular, they mentioned the closeness of the Scythians and the Slavs, the importance of the Alan state, and that modern Ossetians are descendents from the inhabitants of the Alan state.[32] On the other hand, these textbooks emphasized that smaller states in Transcaucasia were heavily influenced by Georgia and eventually became a part of the unified Georgian state.[33] In the 1985 edition of the textbook of history of the USSR, only Georgians (with the exception of all other non-Russian ethnic groups in the Soviet Union) are mentioned as "one of the peoples who created their own alphabet very early".[34]

The issue of school graduate examinations also requires further analysis. The lack of detailed information about the distant past in textbooks about the history of the USSR did not pose a problem for students at schools in Soviet autonomies, since the final exams on all-Union history contained few questions related to these

27 Kuzin, Koloskov, and Lavrov, *Iz opyta obucheniya istroii souznykh respublik*, 11 (all translations from the Russian originals are by the author).
28 Ibid., 8–9.
29 Ibid., 12.
30 W. Medlin, "The Teaching of History in Soviet Schools: A Study in Methods", in: G. Bereday and J. Pennar (Eds.), *The Politics of Soviet Education*, New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1960, 107.
31 M. Nechkina (Ed.), *Kratkii kurs istorii SSSR*, Moscow: Gospedizdat, 1950.
32 M. Rybakov (Ed.), *Istoria SSSR. Uchebnik dlya srednikh shkol*, Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1985, 10.
33 The territorial dispute between Georgians and Ossetians in the Soviet times is connected to the creation of South Ossetian autonomy within Soviet Georgia in April, 1922.
34 M. Rybakov, *Istoria SSSR. Uchebnik dlya srednikh shkol*, 12.

themes: the final state exam in the history of the USSR was devoted almost entirely to subjects of recent Soviet-Russian history and to the official history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.[35] However, exams concerning republican histories in many schools outside the Russian Federation were quite different. Graduates of these schools had to pass the exam, which contained questions about the early history of the territory in question,[36] and students were prepared for this exam by using the locally published textbooks. The representations of the history of the distant past in these textbooks were far less ideologically motivated than the descriptions of more recent events. Instead, as we will see in the following part of the paper, they were almost exclusively ethnocentric in nature.

Competing Textbooks: Armenia and Azerbaijan

The Caucasus is rightly called a crossroad of civilizations. Few other regions in the world can compete with the Caucasus in terms of the richness of its past. The other name – a fortress of languages – is also very appropriate since linguists say there are at least forty distinct languages found here.[37] At the same time, these two major characteristics of the Caucasus are the reason why the Soviet settings for the ethnoterritorial competition described earlier in this paper resulted in an enormous production of ethnocentric literature, which reflected the struggle between the ethnic leadership of the Caucasian autonomies for the maintenance and upgrading of the status of their autonomies in the administrative-territorial structure of the Soviet Union. The production of history and geography textbooks was an essential part of the process of ethnic enclosure in the Caucasus.

The first textbook sample we will examine is taken from Armenian and Azerbaijani books. One of the first indications of the approaching ethnic turmoil in the Soviet Caucasus occurred when the names Nagorno Karabakh and Nakhichevan made headlines in worldwide newspapers in the second half of the 1980s. However, a 'peaceful co-existence' of Armenian and Azerbaijani official ethnic histories was more than questionable during most of Soviet history.

We will start our comparison by examining the textbooks dedicated to Armenian ethnic history. Teaching the history of the Armenian people was officially introduced in Armenian schools early in the 1930s and was taught on a regular basis and without interruption to high school students throughout the entire Soviet period.[38] For this reason, the Armenian history textbooks stand apart not only from the Azerbaijani textbooks, but also from the textbooks published in other republics since, as the name of the course suggested, the textbook attempted to explain the historical development not of an ethnoterritorial entity, as in the case of other textbooks, but of the entire ethnic group, the "Armenian people". Of course, the plans for the unification of Soviet Armenia with the former Armenian territories outside the Soviet borders, which were on Moscow's agenda during a certain period of

35 See, for example: *Programmy srednei shkoly po istorii SSSR*, Moscow: Prosveshenie, 1957; Medlin, "The teaching of history in Soviet schools: a study in methods", 110.
36 Kuzin, Koloskov, and Lavrov, *Iz opyta obucheniya istroii souznykh respublik*, 4.
37 H. Glück, et al. (Eds.), *Metzler Lexikon Sprache*, Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 1993, 299.
38 Shnirelman, *Voiny pamyati: mify, identichnost' i politika v zakavkaz'e*, 73.

Stalin's rule, had much to do with this fact, but we also have to remember that, in contrast to the Azerbaijani historical school formed at the beginning of the twentieth century, the origins of the Armenian historiographical tradition dates back as far as the first millennium CE.[39]

The early Soviet textbooks on Armenian history followed the tradition of the prerevolutionary Armenian historical school by showing the migration of Armenian ancestors from the West to the East, their gradual colonization of the Armenian highland and their assimilation of indigenous tribes that happened to live there before Armenians.[40] However, with the strengthening of Azerbaijani historiography and the growing importance of the first-settlers dogma as a prerequisite for successful symbolic ethnic enclosure, on the one hand, and the growing tensions in Nakhichevan and Nagorno-Karabakh, on the other hand, the authors of the Armenian textbooks started to place more emphasis on the local Anatolian ancestors of the Armenians.[41] As a result, since the middle of the 1960s, the official version of Armenian history has viewed the Armenians as the only autochthonous inhabitants in the vast historical area of Asia Minor, and the only inheritors of the Urartu state.[42]

The 1972 edition of the Armenian history textbook is a good example of symbolic ethnic enclosure, if enclosure is understood in terms of the temporal and spatial expansion of the ethnic homeland (*Istoriya Armyanskogo naroda* 1972, whose Russian-language edition totalled 8,000 copies).[43] The textbook's narrative begins with the statement that Armenia originally occupied a vast territory from the Euphrates River in the East to the Mediterranean coastline in the West.[44] The students are then required to identify the borders of the original Armenian territory on a map. In order to create a link between Urartu people and modern Armenians, it is argued that while the traces of the Urartu culture have been found in the cultures of several modern ethnic groups, only Armenians can be truly considered to be the direct descendents of Urartians because the Urartu culture flourished on Armenian soil, and because Urartians transmitted their skills and customs to Armenians. On what evidence is this argument based? Modern Armenian vocabulary contains many words derived from the language of Urartians! An illustration showing Urartian cuneiform writing accompanies the discussion of the Armenian linguistic heritage.[45]

In the chapter entitled 'The Origins of the Armenian People', the author acknowledges that there exists no common interpretation of the issue of the Arme-

39 After all, in the second half of the 1940s, Stalin had similar plans with respect to Azerbaijan as well: he wanted to unify the Soviet and Iranian parts of Azerbaijan. See L. Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War: The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

40 Kh. Samvelyan, *Istoriya Armyanskogo naroda*, Erevan: Izdatel'stvo AN ArmSSR, 1944, 30–31.

41 A. Ioannisyan and B. Arakelyan (Eds.), *Istoriya Armyanskogo naroda. Uchebnik dlya 8 i 9 klassa srednei shkoly,* Vol. 1, Erevan: Izdatel'stvo AN ArmSSR, 1950, 21.

42 'Urartu' is the Assyrian name of an ancient country of southwest Asia in the mountainous region southeast of the Black Sea and southwest of the Caspian Sea, which is has been known since the early thirteenth century BCE. Urartians were succeeded in the area in the sixth century BCE by the Armenians. See Shnirelman, *Voiny pamyati: mify, identichnost' i politika v zakavkaz'e*, 74.

43 S. Pogosyan (Ed.), *Istoriya Armyanskogo naroda. Uchebnik dlya 8 klassa srednei shkoly*, Erevan: Luis, 1972.

44 Ibid., 3.

45 Ibid., 12–13.

nian ethnogenesis, and tales and that myths cannot be treated as accurate sources of information. However, he then immediately suggests that all the tribes who lived in Greater Armenia in the distant past spoke various dialects of one and the same language, that is, Armenian, and that this is clear evidence of the continuous use of the Armenian language everywhere in this territory.[46] The textbook refers to Strabon's observations and provides students with an extract from Strabon's writings on the spread of the Armenian language in the area in question.[47] According to the explanations provided by the textbook, when this territory was divided between Rome and Persia in 387 AD, the Armenian kingdom continued to play an important role, and the foundation of the Armenian writing system and literature was laid down as early as 405–406 AD.[48] The theme of the importance of the Armenian language for the fate of the Armenians continues throughout the narrative and the textbook devotes half a page to a photograph of the cover of the first Armenian book to be printed.[49]

When explaining the relation between Armenians and other ethnic groups, the textbook points out the cooperation between Armenians and Georgians but tends to emphasize the superior role of Armenians in these unions.[50] This position is very different from the one expressed in earlier textbooks,[51] when Armenian authors were willing to share the Urartu heritage with the Georgians and to acknowledge the presence of other historical groups. Thus, after the 1960s, in the Armenian textbooks, a huge part of the South Caucasus became ethnically enclosed by the Armenians.

While Armenian historians had to find a suitable solution for the first part of the rule according to which "first-settlers" and "the continuous use of language" were prerequisites for historical legitimacy, Azerbaijani scholars, who had to seek a solution to the second part of this rule, faced a somewhat more difficult task. Work on the first edition of the school textbook of Azerbaijani history started in 1935, but was interrupted in 1937 (the authors were arrested).[52] However, the historians appointed to this job managed to finish the draft of the textbook quickly, by the spring of 1939. As the enclosure technique was still being "tested" for Azerbaijani authors, they did not pay the necessary attention to the language issue, but instead uncompromisingly called all ancient tribes in the territory of modern Azerbaijan "Azerbaijanians".[53] The textbook's narrative was tolerant of the fact that these "Azerbaijanians" happened to speak the Armenian language before the Seljuk invasion forced them to switch to a Turkic language.[54] However, the case was different in the next edition of the textbook, which was published just two

46 Ibid., 16–17.
47 Ibid., 34–35.
48 Ibid., 47–48.
49 Ibid., 130.
50 Ibid., 54, 74, 93.
51 Samvelyan, *Istoriya Armyanskogo naroda*, 1944, 30–31; Ioannisyan and Arakelyan, *Istoriya Armyanskogo naroda. Uchebnik dlya 8 i 9 klassa srednei shkoly,* 1950, 19.
52 Shnirelman, *Voiny pamyati: mify, identichnost' i politika v zakavkaz'e*, 135.
53 The proper name "Azerbaijan" was adapted by historians as late as in the eighteenth century. See Shnirelman, *Voiny pamyati: mify, identichnost' i politika v zakavkaz'e*, 136.
54 *Istoriya Azerbaijanskoi SSR. Uchebnik dlya 8 i 9 klassa,* Baku: AzFAN, 1939.

years later. From this moment onwards, the Albanian alphabet[55] (introduced in the fifth century CE by the Armenian representative of the Enlightenment, Mesrop Maštots) was declared Azeri, thus giving this ethnic group the missing element – the gift of a writing system which could easily compete, in terms of its antiquity, with the Armenian and Georgian writing systems.[56] Later, Azerbaijanian historians attempted to erase the uncomfortable presence of an Armenian in the story with the Albanian alphabet. For example, the 1972 edition of the textbook of the "History of Azerbaijan" is presented as a new step towards writing a better textbook of the Azerbaijani history based on the latest achievements of modern Soviet science (*Istoriya Azerbaijana* 1972,[57] of which 40,000 Russian-language copies were printed). This textbook ascribes to Mesrop Maštots the modest role of a "digester" of the previously existing Albanian alphabet.[58] The photograph of an Albanian inscription occupies a central place on the section in the textbook which is devoted to explanations of the Albanian writing system.[59]

The 1972 edition of the Azerbaijani history textbook clearly indicates the extent to which authors of the textbook combined the first-settler principle with that of the continuous use of language, in comparison with the 1939 edition of the textbook. For understandable reasons the Azerbaijani historians could not avoid a discussion of the issue of the history of Nagorno-Karabakh. While in the previous editions of the textbook, the "existence of strong cultural and economic ties" was used to explain why Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh was included in Soviet Azerbaijan, authors of editions of the textbook in the 1970s managed to show (using language as evidence!) that Nagorno-Karabakh is originally an Azerbaijani land and that Armenians are the latecomers to the area in question. According to the author of the 1972 edition of the textbook, the area of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) was used as a shelter by the Armenian population, whose language mixed with the language of the local autochthonous Albanian tribes, resulting in the emergence of the "Karabakh dialect of the Armenian language".[60] A few pages on, in a passage which followed the previous description, Azerbaijani students learned that the population of Karabakh spoke the Albanian language and that the tribes which inhabited the area between the Kura and Aras rivers spoke the Aran language, which was given the status of an intermediary link between the languages of the Albanian tribes and the modern Azeri language, thus significantly expanding the territory under Azerbaijani control in the distant past.[61] It is obvious that the quest to ethnically enclose the disputed territory was eventually successfully carried out by the authors of Azerbaijani history textbooks.

55 The Albanians are believed to have spoken Udi, a language that belongs to the North Caucasian family of languages. The majority of modern Azerbaijanis speak Azeri, a Turkic language belonging to the Altaic family of languages.
56 *Istroiya Azerbaijana (Kratkii ocherk),* Baku: AzFan, 1941, 42.
57 A. Guliev (Ed.), *Istoriya Azerbaijana. Uchebnik dlya 7–8 klassov,* Baku: Maarif, 1972.
58 Ibid., 27.
59 Ibid., 26.
60 Ibid., 20.
61 Ibid., 23.

Competing Textbooks: Georgia and Abkhazia

We will now examine Georgia and Abkhazia, in another part of the Caucasus known as the land of mythical Colchis, and once the most prosperous autonomies during the Soviet period. As in the case of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the teaching of Georgian history and the history of autonomies within Georgia clearly reflects the processes which we have described as ethnic enclosure. The ethnic tensions between the Georgians and the Abkhazians have been reported since the very beginning of the last century, but became particularly severe in the second part of the 1980s prior to the Georgian-Abkhazian war in 1992–1993.

A textbook written by the academician Dzshavakhishvili was the first Soviet Georgian standard school history textbook; it was approved for use in Georgian high schools in the second half of the 1940s and published in both Georgian and Russian languages (*Istoriya Gruzii,* 1950,[62] is the Russian-language edition). The textbook was written during the time when Abkhaz, which belongs to a different family of languages, was declared to be a dialect of the Georgian language, and was prohibited from being taught at schools in Abkhazia.[63] The Georgian textbook's narrative traces the beginning of the history of a unified Georgian nation to a very distant past, declaring the state of Urartu to be an ancient Georgian state, and characterizes the Abkhazian Kingdom as a "Western-Georgian State". The authors of the textbook regard the extensive use of the Georgian language in Abkhazia as one of the central pieces of evidence for the dominance of Georgian ethnic roots in the history of Abkhazia.[64]

A new version of the Georgian history textbook was published in the Georgian language in 1958 and its Russian-language edition was printed a few years later.[65] The new edition was necessary partly because Moscow's policy toward Abkhazia had changed at the end of the Stalin era: the voices of Abkhazians were now heard by the central authorities, and schools in which Abkhaz was one of the languages of instruction had been re-opened.[66] However, another reason why this textbook was published is that it responded to the publication of the first textbook of Abkhazian history written by Abkhazian indigenous scholars and printed in Abkhazia proper (*Ocherki istorii Abkhazskoi ASSR,* 1960).[67] The authors of the new Georgian history textbook decided not to deny the fact that the population of Abkhazia in the distant past was multiethnic, but instead argued that the overwhelming majority of non-Georgian ethnic groups were ultimately linguistically assimilated by Georgians.[68] This idea was pervaded Georgian textbooks throughout the remaining Soviet era.

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62 I. Dzshavakhishvili, et al. (Eds.), *Istoriya Gruzi s drevneishikh vremen do nachala XIX veka*, Tbilisi: Gosizdat GSSR, 1950.

63 B. Sagariya, et al. (Eds.), *Abkhazia: Dokumenty svidetel'stvuiut 1937–1953*, Sukhumi: Alashara, 1991, 484–485.

64 Dzshavakhishvili, et al., *Istoriya Gruzi s drevneishikh vremen do nachala XIX veka*, 152–165.

65 Shnirelman, *Voiny pamyati: mify, identichnost' i politika v zakavkaz'e*, 330.

66 Marykhuba, *Abkhazskie pis'ma (1947–1989)*, 128.

67 G. Dzidzaria, *Ocherki istorii Abkhazskoi ASSR*, Sukhumi: Abgiz, 1960.

68 N. Berdzenishvili, et al. (Eds.), *Istoriya Gruzii. Uchebnik dlya starshikh klassov srednei shkoly,* Tbilisi: Gosuchpedizdat GSSR, 1962, 50–51.

An example of this is the seventh edition of the "History of Georgia", a textbook for the 7th to 10th grades, published in 1973 (*Istoriya Gruzii* 1973, of which 20,000 copies were printed in Russian[69]). The description of Georgia's distant past begins with the chapter entitled "Georgian Tribes and Their Neighbors", which is claimed to have occurred three thousand years ago. The authors acknowledge the linguistic differences of the ancestors of the modern inhabitants of Georgia, but linguistically link the majority of the ancient population to the modern Georgian language and to the common "root" of a "cohesive" Georgian nation. The mention of Abkhazians in this part of the textbook is made in relation to the description of a group of tribes, the majority of which inhabited neighboring territories and not Georgia proper; i.e., Abkhazians are presented as latecomers to the territory in question.[70] In order to illustrate the scope to which the Georgian language was used in the remote past, the authors decided to include a report by the classical Greek historian Xenophon, who had mentioned that the language of one of the Georgian tribes was heard being spoken in the Black Sea coastal area as early as 401 BCE.[71] When authors describe the extent of the political influence of the Kartli Kingdom[72] on Western Georgia (i.e., on Abkhazia), they also explain to students that the growth of the influence of the Kartli Kingdom resulted in the "cultural-ethnic" unification of the population of Georgia, a process which took place not only in the area of spiritual and material culture, but affected the language as well.[73] The illustrations in this part of the textbook include a large picture of a stone inscription in the Greek and Aramaic languages (Ibid: 28),[74] an ancient inscription in the Georgian language,[75] and a half-page picture of a table showing the development of the Georgian alphabet.[76] Clearly, the choice of illustrations reflects the desire of the authors of the textbook to underline the importance of language in linking territory from the historical past to present-day Georgian politics, in particular with regard to the Georgian enclosure of Abkhazia. Further on in the textbook, we find another picture, apparently chosen for similar reasons. This photograph depicts a bridge over the river Baslati, located near the Abkhazian capital Sukhum: the bridge has an inscription in the Georgian language, written in the twelfth century.[77] A third of all illustrations in the textbook are related to the issue of the Georgian language in one way or another.

As we mentioned earlier, the first Abkhazian school history textbook was published in 1960, and, in reference to Figure 1, this represented the second stage of ethnic enclosure (if we substitute group A for Georgians and group B for Abkhazians). When explaining to Abkhazian students the ethnogenesis of the Abkhazian ethnic group, the Abkhazian authors managed to combine very old

69 N. Berdzenishvili (Ed.), *Istoriya Gruzii. Uchebnik dlya 7–10 klassov,* 7th edition, Tbilisi: Ganatleba, 1973.
70 Ibid., 9.
71 Ibid., 13.
72 For the Georgians, the importance of the historical image of the Kartli Kingdom is the same as that of the Kiev Rus for the Russians.
73 Ibid., 27.
74 Ibid., 28.
75 Ibid., 30.
76 Ibid., 31.
77 Ibid., 65.

local elements of the legendary Colchis[78] with the cultural heritage of tribes that originated in Asia Minor, and argued that the latter mixed with local inhabitants in the territory of Abkhazia and transmitted to them their superior culture and language. All this, according to the textbook's narrative, took place as early as the second millennium BCE.[79] Thus, the textbook successfully enclosed the territory disputed with Georgians, excluded any Kartvelian-related group and ascribed the distant past exclusively to Abkhazian ancestors. Interestingly, however, the following chapters dealing with the more recent past of Abkhazia, in particular with the history of the Abkhazian Kingdom, adhered to the idea expressed in the Georgian textbooks: that they were written by a Georgian scholar.[80] The next Soviet edition of the textbook on Abkhazian history reflected this ambivalence, though the major objective of the enclosure was achieved: ancestors of Abkhazians are declared to be the first settlers in Abkhazia, which has been confirmed by postulating that the Abkhaz language has been in continuous use.[81] Moreover, while the textbook on the issue of Abkhazian history to be used at schools in Soviet Abkhazia was always the subject of very strict control by Tbilisi, Abkhazian teachers in situ were able to provide their students with additional information and interpretations that contradicted the Georgian version of regional history.[82]

Georgian control over textbooks on Abkhazian history disappeared at the end of the 1980s, when the processes that eventually led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union entered their final stage. The first day of September 1992 was to be the day when Abkhazian schoolchildren would begin to learn Abkhazian history using a new "emancipated" version of the textbook. However, almost all the copies of the textbook were destroyed in the flames of the Abkhazian-Georgian war, which started in the summer of 1992.[83] The textbook was nonetheless quickly reprinted the following year (by a Ukrainian printing house) while the conflict continued: five thousand copies of a school history textbook published during a war are a sure sign of how important this textbook was for the Abkhazian leadership. The introductory chapter to the textbook entitled "The Origins of the Abkhazian People"[84] was written by Vladislav Ardzinba, the Abkhazian leader at that time and a professional historian. The entire chapter is based on the combination of the postulation of the continuous use of language and the first-settlers principle. The author tells the students that "there are only a few sources that can shed the light on the issue of the Abkhazian ethnogenesis, but that here [the Abkhaz] language comes to the rescue".[85] The statement that, "(A)s is widely acknowledged, the Abkhaz language is one of the oldest languages in the world",[86] and that this lan-

78 Colchis is the name of an ancient region at the eastern end of the Black Sea south of the Caucasus. In Greek mythology, Colchis was the home of Medea and the destination of the Argonauts, a land of fabulous wealth and the domain of sorcery.
79 Dzidzaria, *Ocherki istorii Abkhazskoi ASSR*, 1960, 12–19, 34–35.
80 Ibid., 48–63, 68–71.
81 Z. Anchabadze (Ed.), *Istoriya Abkhazii*, Sukhumi: Alashara, 1986.
82 This is similar to the case with teaching regional history in Ukraine, described earlier in this paper (based on the author's interviews with Prof. Vasiliy Avidzba in Sukhum on August 3, 2005).
83 S. Lakoba, Yu. Voronov, et al. (Eds.), *Istoriya Abkhazii. Uchebnoe posobie*, Gudauta: Alashara, 1993.
84 Ibid., 5–12.
85 Ibid., 5.
86 Ibid., 6.

guage is truly part of the autochthonous culture located in the geographical space occupied by Abkhazians today, is supported by extensive explanations from the field of historical linguistics, including an examination of Abkhazian topography and vocabulary. However, the key idea of the chapter can be easily identified in the following sentence: "… in the modern Caucasus, there are two autochthonous families of languages: the North-Caucasian and the Kartvelian, *but [historically] they are not related to each other* [emphasis is mine]".[87] This refutes any linguistic claim that Abkhazia is a Georgian territory.

Moreover, each chapter of the new Abkhazian textbook devotes significant space to linking the Abkhaz language to the historical past of the territory claimed by Abkhazians when discussing, for example, the language spoken by the inhabitants of Abkhazia during the Iron Age[88] or explaining the origins of the words "Georgia" and "Kartvel" in terms of a "true ethno-political nomenclature".[89] When the textbook's narrative turns to the discussion of the Georgian language church inscriptions found in the territory of Abkhazia, it is emphasized that the Georgian language was the language spoken by an "internationalized Abkhazian elite" in addition to the Abkhaz language, and was not the language known to the majority of the "common Abkhazian people".[90] Therefore, the authors of the Abkhazian textbook do not shy away from illustrating this chapter with a photograph of the bridge over the Baslati river, already familiar to us, which bears a Georgian language inscription, and which was used in the Georgian textbooks[91] as one of the major historical proofs of Georgian rights to Abkhazia.[92]

The mention of a Georgian history textbook in the previous paragraph brings us back to the Georgian side of this peculiar "battle of the textbooks". How have narratives in the Georgian textbooks changed since the end of the Soviet era? According to a contemporary Georgian scholar, the content of Georgian history and geography textbooks has been significantly revised since the demise of the Soviet Union, in order to reflect an "indigenous Georgian world view".[93] However, as we shall see, the narratives of many of these new textbooks continue to follow the ideology of enclosure, which originated in the Soviet political and historiographic traditions, perhaps even more aggressively than during the Soviet times (representing, thus, the later stages of enclosure, as shown in Figure 1). For example, when describing Southern Georgia, the narrative of the textbook (for 4th graders) entitled "Motherland" tells students that "in the past, the territory of Georgia was much bigger than it is today, and the state border lay much further to the South. The enemies were constantly trying to tear away the southern part of Georgia, and partially achieved their objectives: some indigenous Georgian territory is now part of Turkey".[94] The narrative in the 1998 edition of the Georgian history textbook for

87 Ibid., 7.
88 Ibid., 31.
89 Ibid., 90.
90 Ibid., 101–105.
91 Berdzenishvili, *Istoriya Gruzii. Uchebnik dlya 7–10 klassov,* 1973.
92 Lakoba, Voronov, et al. (Eds.), *Istoriya Abkhazii. Uchebnoe posobie*, 1993, 103.
93 N. Mamukaleshvili, *Obuchenie istorii v shkolakh sovremennoi Gruzii*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Tbilisi, 1994.
94 D. Dondua, et al. (Eds.), *Rodina. Uchebnik dlya 4-go klassa,* 1st edition, Tbilisi: Intelekti, 1999, 83.

8th graders goes even further: it claims that extensive areas of "genuine Georgian lands" now form part of Azerbaijan and Daghestan, some of which Georgia lost as much as six hundred years ago.[95]

In the Soviet Georgian textbooks, despite Moscow's official recommendations,[96] the representation of relations between Georgians and other ethnic groups in the past were often characterized by animosity and competition. For example, Ossetians[97] have been portrayed as cruel enemies who first attacked, and later forced out, peace-loving Georgian peasants from their land: "Defeated by Mongols and finding refuge in the mountainous areas, the North Caucasian tribes started to mix with the tribes living on the south side of the Caucasian mountains. The leaders of Ossetian tribes took advantage of the political weakness of the Kartli Kingdom, forced out the Georgians and occupied their land".[98] In modern Georgian textbooks, the word "enemy" is frequently used as well. For instance, South Ossetia is not mentioned anywhere in the textbook *Rodina* (1999),[99] and Ossetians are described as latecomers who occupy Georgian land. Nevertheless, the textbook points out that it was an "insidious enemy that encroached on the friendship of Georgians and Ossetians" and caused them fight each other.[100] The "enemies" have also been blamed for "sowing hostilities between Georgian and Abkhazian people in order to detach Abkhazia from Georgia".[101] The task of explaining to 4th graders who these enemies are is left to teachers, since the textbook's narrative never provides an explicit answer to this question. However, the narratives of the textbooks for higher grades contain many references to the historic animosity of non-Georgian people toward Georgians (for example, when describing "the insidiousness of the North Caucasian mountain people", i.e., Ossetians: see *Istoriya Gruzii. Uchebnik dlya 9 klasse*[102]), in addition to the numerous references to the cruelty of Russians and Turks.

In modern Georgian history and geography school textbooks, language continues to be extensively employed in order to link the Georgian ethnic group to the past of the disputed territories. For example, the authors of the Russian-language edition of the geography textbook to be used by 8th graders equate the importance of studying geography to learning Georgian language and history.[103] In addition to the geographical names, which are included in the Georgian language throughout the textbook, authors include a map showing the spread of languages in the Caucasus. And they place this map before political and physical maps of Georgia! Not

95 N. Asatiani and M. Lortkipanidze (Eds.), *Istoriya Gruzii. Uchebnik dlya 8 klassa russkoi shkoly,* 2nd edition, Tbilisi: Ganatleba, 1998, 8.

96 Marykhuba, *Abkhazskie pis'ma (1947–1989)*, 284.

97 A detailed examination of the clash of the Georgian and Ossetian versions of the distant past is beyond the scope of this paper, but such an examination shows the same features, which are the major characteristics of Georgian-Abkhazian competition.

98 Berdzenishvili, *Istoriya Gruzii. Uchebnik dlya 7–10 klassov,* 94.

99 Dondua, *Rodina. Uchebnik dlya 4-go klassa,* 1999.

100 Ibid., 30–31.

101 Ibid., 80–81.

102 N. Asatiani, (Ed.), *Istoriya Gruzii. Uchebnik dlya 9 klassa russkoi shkoly,* Tbilsi: Ganatleba, 1998, 19.

103 N. Beruchashvili and N. Elizbarashvili (Eds.), *Geografiya Gruzii. Uchebnik dlya 8 klassa srednei shkoly,* Tbilisi: Ganatleba, 1998, introduction.

surprisingly, the Abkhaz language is listed in the same group as the Georgian language.[104] The other textbook, which begins by asserting the linguistic similarities between the language of the Urartu people and the modern Georgian language,[105] emphasizes the use of the 'Kartli (Georgian) language as the lingua franca of Western Georgia (i.e., the territory which, in the Georgian interpretation, includes Abkhazia) as early as 4th and 3rd centuries BCE.[106] Thus, following numerous mentions of the importance of studying the origins and history of the Georgian language, when the textbook turns its attention to the foundation of a new state in the north-western part of the Caucasus at the end of the 7th century CE, students should not be surprised to find that, according to the authors of the textbook, the new state was a "big Georgian state" called the "Abkhazian Kingdom".[107]

In another chapter, dedicated to the processes leading to the creation of a united Georgian nation, the authors argue that, at the beginning of the ninth century, the Georgian language prevailed in "every corner of historic Georgia" (i.e., including the territory of Abkhazia) and "started to spread to the northern Caucasus among Ossetians as well".[108] This chapter is followed by an assignment in which students have to answer the question, "What was the role of the Georgian language [in the process of the formation of the unified Georgian nation?".[109] Therefore, after reading a Georgian history textbook, readers are left with the impression that no other language has more historical links to the vast territory of the South Caucasus than the Georgian language.

Conclusion

Due to limitations of space, we have not been able to examine other textbooks published in the Caucasian autonomies, in particular, the post-Soviet Armenian and Azerbaijani textbooks.[110] Nevertheless, several important conclusions can be drawn from this comparative analysis of historical narratives in school textbooks. Firstly, the examination of both Soviet and post-Soviet textbooks shows that knowledge of the distant past is extensively used to construct contemporary ethnic identities. In all of the textbooks examined in this paper, the links between the "titular" ethnic group and the territory in question have been created by combining the argument concerning the continuous use of language and the first-settlers principle, and the majority of narratives in history textbooks is devoted to the discussion of linguistic arguments concerning the issue of the group's homeland. In addition, many geography textbooks discuss this topic. This strategy allows the authors of the textbooks to symbolically enclose the territory in question, and simultaneously exclude rival ethnic groups from the disputed area. This is why, despite the fact that the titles of all but the Armenian textbooks suggest that they

104 Ibid., 5.
105 Asatiani and Lortkipanidze, *Istoriya Gruzii. Uchebnik dlya 8 klassa russkoi shkoly,* 22–23.
106 Ibid., 26.
107 Ibid., 77.
108 Ibid., 99–101.
109 Ibid., 106.
110 We emphasize the persistence of the Soviet legacy in the case of Georgian-Abkhazian rivalry; contrary to the fate of the majority of the former Soviet autonomies, the status of Abkhazia remains uncertain.

are dealing with histories of a multi-ethnic territorial entity, their narratives are always centered on histories of "titular" ethnic groups only. Moreover, in their journey through history, the textbooks' narratives expand the territory in terms of both geographical space and the historical time that the territory was controlled by the "titular" group in the distant past by presenting language as a major proof of the existence of extended ethnic boundaries in the remote past, boundaries that go far beyond the borders that exist today and enter deep into territories which, in modern times, have been occupied by other groups.

Secondly, in many cases references are made to the same historical events or linguistic findings; only their interpretations differ. Since textbooks are written in the Russian language, one of the common techniques for increasing the value of the authors' arguments in the eyes of the Russian and non-titular students is to include in the textbooks' narratives a number of words from the indigenous language of the ethnic group as it is spoken in modern times, and to provide the Russian translation of these words. Thus they simultaneously link this indigenous lexicon to the corresponding historical description of the remote past of the ethnic group in question. This method seems to be of particular importance in the case of the translated versions of the textbooks originally written in the languages of "titular" ethnic groups, which address those "non-titular" students who do not speak the titular language. The inclusion of illustrations such as photographs of inscriptions, pages from books or manuscripts written in "titular" languages is another common method used to add weight to the linguistic component of the textbooks' narratives.

Finally, it should not pass unnoticed that, in many textbooks published after the demise of the Soviet Union (and sometimes even before), the neighboring ethnic groups which recently experienced conflict over a territory (or which are still in a state of rivalry over a territory) are presented as if they had been in a state of conflict for a considerable period of time. While, as we have mentioned before, the Soviet official approach to history writing required the authors of non-Russian history textbooks to emphasize historical friendship and cooperation between "the members of the friendly family of Soviet peoples", in many post-Soviet textbooks there is a clear tendency not only to renounce the notion of the "lesser evil", or otherwise positive impact of the Russian colonization on the historical development of non-Russian peoples, but also to highlight the cases of interethnic rivalry in territorial issues in the remote past.

Theoretically, examination of the representation of the distant past in Soviet and post-Soviet school textbooks confirms the appropriateness of the chosen theoretical approach when analyzing the emergence of ethnic boundaries in the Soviet Union as a process of inclusion and exclusion, i.e., as "ethnic enclosure". As a result of enclosure, the former Soviet ethnic groups can be characterized as people who possessed (and often continue to possess) acute historical awareness. For the authors of the school textbooks examined in this paper, and consequently for schoolchildren in the Caucasus, history always speaks the language of one's own ethnic group. This is why the analysis of historical narratives in school textbooks can lead to a better understanding of the way in which a myth of ethnogenesis is

constructed and changed with recourse to the first-settlers principle and the postulation of the continuous use of language in the territory in question.

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Zusammenfassung

Lange vor dem Niedergang der USSR haben westliche Sowjetunion-Experten darauf hingewiesen, dass die offizielle Version von Geschichte in der Sowjetunionhäufig einem häufigen Wechsel unterworfen war. Allerdings blieb dabei ziemlich unbemerkt; dasss es in diesem Land auch eine Debatte darum gab, welche Version der Geschichte bezüglich der Autonomen Sowjetrepubliken offizielle Anerkennung und letztlich auch Aufnahme in deren Schulbücher finden sollte. Dieser Aufsatz handelt von verschiedenen Aspekten dieses Prozesses und dessen Erbe, indem er die Art und Weise untersucht, in der die ferne Vergangenheit in sowjetischen und postsowjetischen Schulgeschichtsbüchern präsentiert wird. Der Autor macht die widersprüchlichen ethnisch-historischen Narrative der konkurierenden ethnischen Gruppen in den Schulbüchern deutlich; er legt dabei besonderen Wert auf den Gebrauch linguistischer Argumente, mit denen

die Ethnizität des von der "titularen" ethnischen Gruppe beanspruchten Territoriums belegt wird, und auf die historische Begründung von Gebietsansprüchen angrenzender rivalisierender ethnischer Gruppen.

Résumé

Longtemps avant la disparition de l'URSS, les soviétologues occidentaux ont noté les fréquents changements du discours historique officiel. Néanmoins, la plupart des chercheurs ont largement laissé de côté le débat portant sur la question de savoir quelle version de l'histoire doit être considérée comme vraie et approuvée comme version officielle dans les manuels scolaires des Républiques soviétiques autonomes. Le présent article passe en revue les différents aspects de ce processus et de son héritage en examinant la façon dont le passé lointain est présenté dans les manuels scolaires d'histoire soviétiques et post-soviétiques. L'auteur met en lumière les divergences conflictuelles des discours narratifs historiques contenus dans les manuels scolaires de groupes ethniques rivaux, en mettant l'accent sur la mise à contribution d'arguments linguistiques pour faire le lien entre l'identité ethnique et le territoire contrôlé par le groupe ethnique «titulaire» et la justification de la légitimité historique de revendications territoriales par des groupes ethniques rivaux voisins.

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