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LEZHAVA, NINO, ED. *IDENTICHNOST', VLAST' I GOROD V RABOTAKH MOLODYKH UCHENYKH IUZHNOGO KAVKAZA* [IDENTITY, POWER AND THE CITY IN THE WORKS OF YOUNG SOCIAL SCIENTISTS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS]. TBILISI: HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG, 2005. 495 P. ISBN 978-9-9928-9281-7.

LEZHAVA, NINO, ED. *IUZHNYI KAVKAZ: TERRITORII. ISTORII. LIUDI*. [SOUTH CAUCASUS: SPACES. HISTORIES. PEOPLE]. TBILISI: HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG, DIOGENE, 2006. 398 P. ISBN 978-9-9940-4549-5.

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These two volumes are anthologies of articles by young social scientists from the South Caucasus. The authors are grantees of a fellowship program created by the Regional Office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation (linked to the German Green Party) to support young scholars from this region. The fellowships are awarded each year to support research on topics generally neglected in South Caucasian societies. Hailing from the fields of history, sociology, ethnology, gender studies, urban planning, and economics, the young scholars work on a wide range of topics, including identity, gender, informal power structures, and urban development in the three countries of the South Caucasus. The 40 articles (22 in the first volume and 18 in the second volume) are interdisciplinary, employing qualitative methods—such as participant observation and interviews—as well as statistical analysis, archival research, and literature reviews.

Collective identity is a key subject in both volumes. Whereas the articles on Georgia and Azerbaijan show that religion plays an important part in the construction of national identity, contributions by scholars from Armenia focus on the genocide and the Armenian diaspora. In a historical study, Nesrin Alaskerovamit examines Islamization and the role of Islam as a religion, a culture and a way of life in Azerbaijan's national self-images. Irene Sulxanishvili analyzes the representation of religion as a savior of the Georgian nation in school history lessons. Ruslan Baramidze discusses the meaning and practice of Islam in two Adjarian communities in a historical and contemporary perspective. Manana Javakhishvili presents an oral history study of Catholics in Georgia. A striking feature of these two volumes is the authors' critical view of their own societies, and in particular of their attitudes toward ethnic and religious minorities.

In the second volume, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict prompts Azerbaijani scholars to dissect perceptions of ethnic Armenians in their country. Sevil Huseynova investigates the image and identity of the Armenian minority in Baku, while Leyla Sayfutdinova examines how different ethnic groups are contrasted in contem-

porary fiction. Ilham Abassov looks at how the Armenians are represented as “historic enemies” in Azerbaijani textbooks.

The articles from Georgia also pick up the problem of minorities. One example is Ia Tsulaia’s study of how self-representations have changed among the Kists, a Nakh-speaking ethnic group residing in the Pankisi Gorge of the High Caucasus, as a result of geopolitical changes and changing perceptions by the Georgian majority. Another study, devoted to the role of the Orthodox Church in structuring relations between Georgians and ethnic minorities, discusses the relationship between nationalistic forces within the clergy and fundamentalist tendencies in society at large (Anna Chelidze).

Compared with the debate between Armenians and Azeris about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, it is surprising that the experience of civil war in Georgia is hardly reflected in the volumes, nor are Georgian attitudes toward Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It appears that a social taboo is perpetuated here in the form of self-censorship, preventing scholarly engagements with this issue.

While the first volume is primarily a survey of different constructs of nationhood in the region, the second volume is dedicated to the differences between self and other within the contexts of the three countries. This focus on the dichotomous character of interethnic and intercultural relations is rooted in the social dynamics of the region after the demise of socialist ideology. The semantic pairing in the title of one chapter in the second volume, “The Self and the Other,” therefore, reflects the region’s most acute problems. The authors describe the social effects of this popular perspective. However, by criticizing these “mainstream” perspectives, they also confirm the image of the Caucasus as a fragmented region in crisis. Alternative approaches in politics, culture, and everyday life that strive to overcome this dominant view are thereby largely neglected.

Providing an extensive amount of empirical material, several chapters demonstrate the everyday difficulties post-socialist states have in organising administrative and power structures. Examples of this are the studies of work patterns in local administrations (Tamar Charkviani), of the difficulties of preserving socialist architecture (Natia Jokhadze), and of organizing public transportation while simultaneously preserving jobs in former industrial towns (Lilit Petrosyan). The problems of women in leadership positions are a further example, since the support of women is no longer part of the national ideology and their social role has changed (Anna Papyan).

As an anthropologist, I recommend the articles by Hayk Demoyan and Sergey Rumyantsev in the first volume, and Aysel Vazirova in the second volume. In his qualitative ethnographic study, Rumyantsev examines emigration and immigration to and from Azerbaijan, thoroughly describing their causes and effects on everyday life, politics, and economics. Demoyan’s exploration of place names reflects on the geographical and symbolic meaning of space in the three South Caucasian countries. It demonstrates the controversies surrounding space and its strategic use by a variety of actors. Prompted by conflicting statements about female believers wearing a headscarf as a religious symbol in Baku’s public spaces, Vazirova discusses contro-

versial concepts of freedom and dependence reproduced in the practices of everyday life through law and administration (e.g. the passport office) and in educational institutions.

Both volumes are published in Russian and contain English summaries. The books present a new generation of young scholars trained in two academic worlds. While drawing on Weber, Bourdieu, Anderson, Hobsbawm, Gellner, and Brubaker, many authors simultaneously rely on authors writing in Russian who are less well-known in the West, such as Shnirelman, Abrahamian, Voronkov, Malakhov, Arutiunian, and Brednikova. Thus the articles contribute not only to a better knowledge of the South Caucasus, but also to closing the gap between the parallel worlds of English- and Russian-language scholars.

*Authorized translation from the German
by Kareth Schaffer and Franziska Langner*