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# From Tergi to Volga: How Territory Matters in the Georgia-Russian Literary and Translational Encounters

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## Résumé

The paper locates language and territory within such dimensions as politics, minority, literature and identity and explores how these concepts are permeable and how the intermingle. Stephan Jones in his research: "The Role of the Cultural Paradigm in Georgian Foreign Policy" argues that the ideas and political behaviour of the new elites were profoundly affected by Soviet experience (Jones 2003: 87:2003). In her translation of the Georgian poet A. Kalandadze, B. Akhmadulina expands the geopolitical boundaries of the poem; her trajectory dislocates the national towards the Soviets. While Kalandadze refers to Georgia as her homeland, applying to the national toponyms: Tergi, Dariali, Rioni, Chorokhi, Mtkvari and Aragvi (rivers). Akhmadulina replaces them with the Volga, Dnepr, Donn, Amu Darya, and Sir Darya. Consequently, in lieu of Georgia, she refers to the Soviet Empire. Her translational subterfuge deliberately alters the spirit of the poem and turns it into a pro-Soviet ode. The creation and dissemination of an Oriental Caucasian and Georgian imagery emerged as a commonly acceptable enterprise for the Russian empire and Russian classic writers. These imagined identities have ever since perpetuated in the cultural, social and political domains. To proceed with his argument in the paper, and to find how the **translations that deconstruct the mental and physical demarcations between national and Russian, conform to the policy of Russification the paper** explores language use policy in the soviet literature and translation. Our paper follows the russification policy to understand its impact on the soviet territory and the language use based on the research: 'Mixed Marriages in the USSR' by A. Susokolov, who stipulates that if such marriages were extremely rare before, "the Soviet Union radically changed the psychological attitude towards mixed marriages. In 1925-27, the number of mixed marriages in Yakutsk exceeded 7%, while in Central Asia in 1936 it exceeded 70%. The share of local Central Asians themselves in the intermarriage was 70%" (p. 10). J. Sahadeo in his study 'Voices from the Soviet Edge: Southern Migrants in Leningrad and Moscow' approaches the concept "Blackness" in the soviet context: "In Imperial Russia and the USSR, this dark or black peoples (Caucasus and Central Asian peoples, Kh. B.) were seen as potential exploiters of vulnerable white locals, as well as symbols of backwardness (p.100). We interrelate the Sahadeo's concept 'black' and the literary imagination of the Caucasians and Georgians in Russian literature and translations; Pushkin's "Prisoner of the Caucasus" (1820-1821) depicts Russians as Europeans while presenting the Caucasians as savages. The reiterated word "dikii" (savage, wild) in the poem refers to the talent of inspiration, people, flowers, caress, riverbank, and even love.

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\*Intervenant

Following Pushkin, M. Lermontov (inspired by his poem as a fourteen-year-old), published his poem "Caucasian Prisoner" in 1828 in Moscow. Lermontov reinvents Pushkin's plot, also emphasizing the socio-cultural asymmetry between the "savage black-eyed Circassian girl" and the "European Russian captive". The Soviet translator O. Ivinskaya, partner of Pasternak, and an inspiration of his novel "Doctor Zhivago," conjectured a young girl in the poem by G. Tabidze as "dark-skinned" despite the original poem did not specify the skin color.

The paper examines each example as a metaphysical dilemma of misrepresentation.

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**Mots-Clés:** Georgian literature, identity, translation, language policy