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Archival Sources on Russian Officers Studying North Caucasus in the Days of the Caucasian War

Abstract

The article addresses one of the little studied source studies issues of the Caucasian War (1817–1864). It reviews archival sources on the input of Russian officers to collecting data on the Caucasus and its inhabitants, while waging a military campaign against the highlanders. The archival sources studied in the article demonstrate how the Imperial boundaries were explored by the Russian military. The article makes a point of assessing primary sources stored in federal and regional archives, museums and libraries, and above all those from the Russian State Military History Archive (RGVIA). The article focuses on studying official documents that bring to light various aspects of making arrangements for and conducting research of the Caucasus: the Elbrus expedition of 1829, the description of the highlander peoples by V. E. Galyamin and I. F. Blaramberg. Of most import are the manuscripts of the military works concerning the North Caucasus, such as notes, field diaries, reports of reconnaissance officers,

historical and statistic reviews. The author concludes that personal interest in writing notes about the locals, which was at first a trick to fill up the blank spaces of time while at rest, became a focus area of the military activities in the region and one to be considered of great practical import and to be supported by the officials. Thus, glimpses of the Caucasus realities in officers' field diaries grew into historical and ethnological essays, military and statistical reviews containing diverse and reliable data on the new Russian boundary. Manuscripts preserved in the archives allow vividly illustrate the participation of the Russian military in the studying of the North Caucasus. They are an important part of the Caucasus studies source base.

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Keywords

Caucasian War source studies, military Caucasus studies, archival sources, field diaries, historical and ethnological essays, military and statistical reviews.

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