

The Nexus of Sexuality, Power-Knowledge, and Nation-building
in fin de siècle Russian Caucasus (1906-1915)

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgement is made in the form of bibliographical reference. I further declare that the following word count for this thesis is accurate:

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to understand how sexual categories and norms constituted a system of power-knowledge through the means of bodies. It investigates medical discourses around male same-sex relations and law enforcement of male sodomy and public moral statutes in the post-1905 Caucasus (1906-1915).

In doing so, it engages with Michel Foucault's concepts of care of the self and the other, power-knowledge, and "the art of living". Theoretical framework also incorporates Ann Laura Stoler's critique of Foucault's Europe-centric perspective on the history of sexuality in Western Europe, Susan Layton's understanding of Russian Orientalism, and Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry of colonial discourse. This thesis works with a range of previously unpublished and published primary sources from Georgia and Russia, such as criminal cases, medical articles, and imperial criminal codes.

I argue that sexual management was implicitly incorporated into assimilationist nation-building efforts through the discourses on the Russian civilizational mission in the Caucasus, which included sexual disciplining of the natives through legal means, as my analysis of the medical writings suggested. The gradation of otherness constituted the knowledge used in the process of nation-building. Within this gradation, sexuality emerged as a cultural and moral category that defined the civic status of Caucasian nationalities within the Empire. Simultaneously, discourses that constituted the gradation of otherness deployed mimicry as a strategy of power-knowledge.

Also, I will argue that higher branches of the imperial Georgian judiciary tended to rely on moral grounds found in imperial criminal codes to prosecute crimes associated with male sodomy rather than invoking sexuality as a cultural category. This was a result of two complementary factors: the autocratic and inflexible legal system and the destabilised authority of the medical discourse.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Page 3 Figure 1

Military Topographic Department of the Caucasian Military District (1870). *Kavkaz. Karta Kavkazskogo Kraja* [The Caucasus. The map of the Caucasus Kraj]. Retrieved from Russian National Library <https://vivaldi.nlr.ru/cm000010035/details>

Page 14 Figure 2

Prokudin-Gorskii, S.M. (1909-1914). [View of Tiflis from Botanic mountain]. Retrieved from the United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs division <https://loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsc.04434/>

Page 25 Figure 3

Ermakov, D.I. (1890s). *Dukhan i dva bol'shih burduka na arbe* [Dukhan and two big buns on the arb]. Retrieved from Russian National Library <https://vivaldi.nlr.ru/lh000000142/details>

Page 32 Figure 4

Morozov, I. A. (1915). *Zverstva turok i kudrov* [Atrocities committed by Turks and Kurds in the World War]. Retrieved from Russian National Library <https://vivaldi.nlr.ru/lt000070251/details>

Page 43 Figure 5

Media.az (2020). [Caricature from the issue of *Molla Nasreddin*]. Retrieved September 3d, 2023, from <https://media.az/interesting/1067771473/zhurnalu-molla-nasreddin-segodnya-ispolnyaetsya-114-let-foto/>

Page 48 Figure 6

Granberg Corporation (between 1904 and 1917). *Tatarskaya mechet' i most na Majdane* [Tatar mosque and bridge on Maidan in Tiflis]. Retrieved from Russian National Library <https://vivaldi.nlr.ru/lo000071112/details>

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY.....	4
1.1 Power-knowledge and biopolitic.....	4
1.2. The cultivation of the self.....	5
1.3. Sexuality beyond the metropole	6
1.4. Russian Orientalism	6
1.5. Mimicry.....	6
1.6. Sexual Ethics.....	7
1.7. Methodology.....	8
1.7.1. Sources.....	8
1.7.2. Data analysis.....	9
CHAPTER 2. EMBEDDING THE THESIS INTO EXISTING SCHOLARSHIP	10
2.1 Historical context.....	10
2.2. The production of knowledge on same-sex relations in the late Russian Empire	12
2.3. Global Politics of Sexuality	15
CHAPTER 3. ANALYSIS OF MEDICAL ARTICLES ON MALE SODOMY IN THE CAUCASUS (1904-1906)	19
3.1. Ernst Erikson (date unknown–1913): a Polish doctor at the Russian frontiers.....	19
3.2. Erikson’s Gradation of Otherness.....	20
3.2.1. Georgians and Kartvelians	22
3.2.2. Armenians and Azeri Tatars.....	26
3.2.3. Mimicry of imperial discourse.....	27
3.2.4. Erikson as an agent of nation-building.....	29
3.3. Male sodomy and care of female Others.....	33
3.4. Grigory Iokhved (dates unknown): a member of imperial medical networks	34
3.5. Male sodomy and care of the self.....	34
CHAPTER 4. IT IS NOT UP TO A SATIRICAL JOURNALIST TO DEFEND MORALITY. THE CRIMINAL CASE OF <i>MOLLA NASREDDIN</i> (1913-1914)	37
4.1. A prophet and a gymnasium student.....	37
4.2. A satire or pornography? The 1914 appeal to the Tiflis Trial Chamber.....	39
4.3. Sexuality, imperial civilising mission, and nation-building	44
CONCLUSION	49
APPENDIX 1. The list of criminal cases used for analysis.....	51
BIBLIOGRAPHY	52

INTRODUCTION

On July 5th, 2021, Tbilisi, Georgia could have witnessed its first-ever Pride March. However, the day took a violent turn as anti-Pride protesters, primarily associated with the pro-Russian far-right activist group Alt Info, launched an aggressive attack on both the march participants and Georgian journalists. Fast forward two years to July 8th, 2023, and a déjà vu unfolded. Alt Info once again led the charge, this time targeting the venue of the Pride Month festival near Tbilisi's picturesque Lisi Lake. The anti-Pride activists vandalized installations and, amidst burning LGBTQ+ flags, performed traditional Georgian dances and songs (Fabbro et al., 2023), (Shoshiashvili, 2021). A few days before, the Georgian Orthodox Church called for the introduction of the “queer propaganda ban”, similar to that introduced in Russia in December 2022 (Sauer, 2022; Shoshiashvili, 2023).

These three events point out homosexuality as a focal point of symbolic politics in modern Georgia. This stands in contrast to the late Russian Empire where male same-sex eros “never served as a vehicle for symbolic politics” (Engelstein, 1994, p. 58). Tbilisi Pride, the activist group behind the Pride Month festivities in Georgia, features the figure of *kinto* (კინტო) in its logo. *Kinto* were a class of small traders and entertainers in Tiflis (now Tbilisi) in the late Russian Empire, who supposedly worked as male prostitutes in various Tiflis establishments, including restaurants and bathhouses, while locals refrained from viewing male same-sex relations as pathological or indecent (Gabunia, 2009, p. 2).

In his work *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault (2020, p. 31) compared writing the history of the prison to “writing the history of the present”, summarizing his genealogical approach to the history of the prison as the modern phenomenon. Impressed by this theoretical premise, I started to reflect on the origins of the rise of modern homophobia in Russian and Georgian societies. My exploration led me to the insightful writings of Dan Healey, namely his books *Sexuality in Revolutionary Russia* (2002) and *Russian Homophobia from Stalin to Sochi* (2018). Healey posited that Russian homophobia as a tool of public control had its roots in the upper echelons of the Communist Party during the 1920-1930s which members developed a disgust toward male same-sex relations during their time in Russian imperial prisons, where individuals labelled as “paederasts” held the lowest positions within the prisoner hierarchy. However, I found Healey's argument to be somewhat incomplete, missing out on other factors, such as Georgian culture or Russian imperial practices of criminal prosecution of male sodomy. This curiosity ultimately became the driving force behind the focus of my thesis.

This thesis investigates medical discourses around male same-sex relations and law enforcement of male sodomy and public moral statutes in the post-1905 Caucasus (1906-1915).

Its objective is to understand how sexual categories and norms constituted a system of power-knowledge through the means of bodies. The analytics of power-knowledge by Michel Foucault (1978, 2020a) is an overarching theoretical framework of this research. My thesis aims to contribute to the stream of research that challenges the Russo-centric focus of research on the history of homosexuality (as in Healey, Stella, & Clech, 2021). Ann Laura Stoler's critique to expand the history of sexuality of European nations beyond European metropole has been a source of immanent inspiration for me (Stoler, 1995, 2002). To fulfill the objectives of this thesis, I explore the ways medical experts construed the sexuality of the Caucasian nationalities as a moral and cultural category in Chapter 3. It addresses the following research question:

what were the views of imperial medical experts on same-sex relations in the Caucasus in the late Russian Empire? How did they argue for these views?

Here, I engage with Foucault's concepts of care of the self and care of the other (2020b), Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry of colonial discourse (1984) as a strategy of power-knowledge, and Susan Layton's understanding of Russian Orientalism as a process of mutual influence (1994) to characterize how a narrative about the civilizational mission of the Russian Empire in the Caucasus managed the native bodies. In Chapter 4, I focus on law enforcement of public morals and male sodomy statutes and engage with the concepts of Russian Orientalism, discipline-principle, and nation-building. It answers the following question:

how did imperial legal practitioners in the Caucasus construe proof of conviction in the case of *Molla Nasredin*?

I structure the thesis in the following way. Having covered theoretical framework and methodology in Chapter 1, I embed my thesis in existing scholarship on the history of homosexuality in the late Russian Empire and global politics of sexuality in Chapter 2. I proceed with two empirical chapters which outline my findings. Chapter 3 is centered around the analysis of medical articles while Chapter 4 examines law enforcement of sodomy and public morals statutes in criminal cases, followed by the Conclusion which presents my findings from a comparative perspective. Appendix 1 outlines criminal cases analyzed in this thesis.

Figure 1

Kavkaz. Karta Kavkazskogo Kraja [The Caucasus. The map of the Caucasus Kraj].



Note. By Military Topographic Department of the Caucasian Military District (1870). Retrieved from Russian National Library <https://vivaldi.nlr.ru/cm000010035/details>

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The chapter outlines theoretical concepts I employ in my research to examine how medical imperial practitioners in the Caucasus engaged in power-knowledge production about homosexuality and specifically male sodomy, as it was criminally prosecuted in the Russian Empire. I engage with Michel Foucault's concepts of care of the self and the other, power-knowledge, and "the art of living". My theoretical framework also incorporates Ann Laura Stoler's critique of Foucault's Europe-centric perspective on the history of sexuality in Western Europe, Susan Layton's understanding of Russian Orientalism, and Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry of colonial discourse.

I synthesize these theoretical constructions to argue that medical professionals construed male homosexuality in the Caucasian population as a culturally inhibited "sexual vice" that could be rehabilitated only in the exercise of its civilizational mission (care) in this region by Russia. In its turn, mimicry of this imperial civilization discourse buttressed the assimilationist model of nation-building in the Caucasus, centred around the imposition of Russian Orthodox sexual ethics and cultural Russification instead of the civil model which recognized the role of local cultures and histories in the construction of pan-Russian national identity.

1.1 Power-knowledge and biopolitic

In this research, I look beyond institutions to better grasp how sexual categories and norms constituted a system of power relations through the means of bodies. It is to reflect on the ways the political technology of the body operated at the Southern frontier of the late Russian Empire. In other words, I examine how power-knowledge determined the formation of knowledge about homosexuality at the frontiers of late imperial Russia and how it turned the bodies and souls of homosexuals into objects of knowledge through the means of science and law. I engage with discourses produced by legal and medical practitioners to uncover how differently they employed and produced knowledge in relation to power.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (2020a, pp. 21-22) argues that both law professionals (judges) and practitioners of science (such as medicine or criminal anthropology) whom he called "parallel judges" or "subsidiary authorities" became involved in the relations of power-knowledge since the XVIII century in Western Europe. Regulatory and punitive functions to trained professionals, such as practitioners of law, medicine, pedagogy, or theology. Practitioners of science played an important role in power-knowledge as they provided "the

wide dispersion of devices” to speak about sex and incite and regulate discourses about sex (1990, p. 34). Professionals provided knowledge for the “specification” of different kinds of individuals and their sexualities (Foucault, 1978, p. 44). In my thesis, I engage with the knowledge “of the criminal, one’s estimation of him, what is known about the relations between him, his past and his crime, and what might be expected of him in the future” (Foucault, 2020a, p. 18).

1.2.The cultivation of the self

- **The care of the self**

In my thesis, I use this concept to explain why some imperial medical professionals in the Caucasus insisted on a public discussion on sexuality and even on the decriminalization of male sodomy among Caucasian nationalities. I see these actions as part of their project to cultivate the Russian imperial self in the Caucasus. Russian authorities saw its role in the Caucasus as civilizing, which resulted in their efforts to turn locals into more ethical subjects. According to Foucault’s analysis of ancient Greek writings, care of oneself is a component of an integrated model of cultivation of the self because taking better care of oneself will allow one to take better care of others. Perfecting oneself occurs through the exercise of the body and the soul. It is the process of “gaining access to oneself” or “monitoring oneself” (Foucault, 2020b, p. 66). Its purpose is to seek pleasure within themselves, to turn themselves into an object of pleasure which means becoming a more ethical object (Foucault, 2020b, p. 66). But, for care of the self to work out, one has to recognise an area that needs to be perfected in oneself (Foucault, 2020b, p. 56).

- **The care of the other**

According to Foucault, taking care of others means to take the “attention one devotes to the care that others should take of themselves” (Foucault, 2020b, p. 53) and it is a crucial part of the cultivation of the self. Care of the other should consider both the other’s body and soul as they are interconnected (Foucault, 2020b, p. 55). The failing of the soul and the body “can communicate with one another and exchange their distresses: the bad habits of the soul can entail physical miseries while the excesses of the body manifest and maintain the failing of the soul” (Foucault, 2020b, p. 56). In this research, I refer to this concept to show how some imperial medical professionals imbued homosexuals in the Caucasus with the soul to present them as subjects of care and argue for the eradication of carnal punishment for male sodomy. This way, I can argue that taking care of the sexual other was a tactic of the Russian imperial civilizing strategy in the Caucasus. I see this strategy as a process of the cultivation of the

imperial self through the interaction with the Other from culturally distinct frontier territories of the Empire.

1.3. Sexuality beyond the metropole

To look at the history of (homo)sexuality in the late Russian Empire from the perspective of its frontiers, I engage with Ann Laura Stoler's critique of Foucault's Europe-centric perspective on the history of sexuality in Western Europe. In her book *Race and the Education of Desire*, historian Ann Laura Stoler argued to examine the history of an empire as the history of imperial formations. She urged to look at sexuality beyond centre/metropole, or "the analytic field confined to the metropole... not only deeply rooted in a self-referential western culture but bounded by Europe's geographic parameters" and examine the history of European sexuality through the history of empire (Stoler, 1995, p. 5, pp. 13-15). According to Stoler (1995, p. 5), discourses of sexuality defined "moral parameters of European nations" through non-European subjects, or "the externalized Others". This approach allows me to argue that imperial medical professionals urged Russian authorities to take care of the sexual Other in a form of civilizing, reforming "savage" locals as they saw it as a way to articulate Russian imperial self in the Caucasus in a period of intensified social relations of the beginning of the XX century.

1.4. Russian Orientalism

I adopted an understanding of Russian orientalism developed within critical scholarship on Russian classical literature from the postcolonial perspective. Susan Layton (1994, p. 82) characterized the relation of Russia to the Caucasus as a process of mutual influence: "In Russian experience, the cognitive boundary between 'us' and the oriental 'others' often grew blurry because Asia interpenetrated Russia so extensively in geographical, historical, and cultural terms." This understanding of Russian Orientalism allows me to argue that Russian medical and legal discourses on male sodomy attempted to distance Russia from the "Asiatic" part of its identity, for instance by evaluating the perfectibility of the local Caucasian nationalities through the gradation of otherness, which only reinforced the existing bond between Russian European and Russian identity.

1.5. Mimicry

The civilizational rehabilitation of the Caucasians was inherently mimical. The cultivation of the imperial self in the Caucasus depended on the presence of the Others, but the care that empire texts of its Others can only make them recognizable but will never re-educate or civilize

them completely. The civilising process itself is never complete and is always partial. It never aims at the creation of a truly ethical art of living as the initial concept of the cultivation of the self. Mimicry enables only partial imitation of the self, so the Other becomes only a part-object of presence. As it creates a threat to the success of a reforming civilising mission and “normalised” knowledge, surveillance and subjugation of the colonised Other remains justified and needed (Bhabha, 1984, p. 127). To demonstrate this, I rely on the concept of mimicry developed by a leading postcolonial thinker of Indian-British origin, Homi Bhabha. Bhabha considered mimicry the most effective strategy of colonial power and knowledge. He defined it as “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*” (Bhabha, 1984, p. 126). In other words, mimicry emphasizes an inconsistency or ambivalence of colonial discourse in proliferating the Other as both different and not quite different.

However, according to Bhabha, mimicry of colonial discourse due to its partiality always leaves space for a counter-narrative to power. In other words, the partiality of the Other that the colonizer seeks to maintain in their imagination is what simultaneously deconstructs this narrative. Mimicry as a discourse is “as such both against the rules and within them” (Bhabha, 1984, p. 130). I refer to this characteristic of mimicry of colonial discourse in this thesis when I demonstrate that local legal practitioners in late imperial Georgia tended to be more lenient than the highest imperial courts in Georgia when punishing crimes associated with male sodomy. As I will argue, the ways they understood differences between Caucasian nationalities echoed the imperial discriminatory gradation of otherness, evident in imperial medical writings on male sodomy in the Caucasus. This way, imperial discourses still held the authority to define differences (Bhabha, 1984, p. 130).

1.6. Sexual Ethics

Foucault linked the cultivation of the self to the development of ethical subjectivity and a certain “art of living” in the first centuries of our era in the Greek world. “Art of living” is where one can find shelter and protection from a force that can exploit one’s weakness. Thus, in order not to succumb to this force, one cultivates the self (Foucault, 2020, pp. 67-68). Sexual pleasure is this force, and therefore sexual pleasure is an ethical matter. Medical practitioners urged Russian European nationalities to cultivate the self by taking care of themselves and their sexual Others. To take care of sexual others for medical practitioners in the late Russian Empire meant to re-educate their sexual desires to make them less “Asiatic” and more

modern/ethical. The preservation of their own way of life within an imperial order in a way that would be comfortable for them was what inspired the agents of caring power.

1.7. Methodology

1.7.1. Sources

Historians use various primary sources to restore the history of homosexuality from the times when same-sex relations between men were prohibited through legal means. Letters from private archival collections (Roldugina, 2019), personal diaries (Healey, 2018, pp. 73-92; Lipša, 2021), and oral histories (Clech, 2021) proved irreplaceable in research on the subjectivities of Soviet homosexuals. Medical and legal sources (as in Engelstein, 1994, pp. 57-71; Healey, 2002, pp. 77-99) and minutes of party meetings (as in Alexander, 2021) helped to uncover legal debates on the decriminalization and psychologization of homosexuality in late imperial Russia and the USSR. Forensic textbooks offered insights into informal practices of prosecution of same-sex relations (Valodzin, 2020, pp. 4-5).

This thesis examines the original medical and legal sources that I retrieved from one institution in Russia and two institutions in Georgia, I obtained most of them during my fieldwork in Tbilisi in April 2023 which the Central European University Foundation of Budapest kindly supported with a research grant.

Legal documents. Even though my limited sample does not allow me to draw generalized conclusions about law enforcement of sodomy and public morals statutes in the late Russian Empire, my thesis contributes to existing research by uncovering previously unpublished sources. Those are five criminal cases filed between 1908 and 1913, which consist of criminal and appeal records, prosecutor's proceedings from the office of the Tiflis District Court Prosecutor and Second Criminal Department at the Tbilisi Trial Chamber (see Appendix 1). I retrieved these cases from the Central Historical Archive in Tbilisi, Georgia and analyzed them in Chapter 4. Moreover, I refer to the 1866 and 1903 imperial Criminal Codes which I obtained at Russia's National Electronic Library.

Medical articles. In Chapter 3, I analyze two medical articles from 1906 which I retrieved from the Lenin State Library in Moscow, Russia. One more medical article that I used can be found online. To contextualize these articles, I supplemented them with a few publications by the Emperor's Caucasian Medical Society from 1900 to 1913 retrieved from the Parliamentary Library of Georgia. Previously, some of these articles featured in Laura Engelstein's book *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (1994) and Dan

Healey's *Homosexuality in Revolutionary Russia* (2002). Engelstein cited Grigorii i Iohkved to make an argument about the cultural relativity of moral standards by which imperial legal experts judged male sodomy (1994, p. 69). With both Iohkved's and Erikson's articles, Healey (2002, pp. 97-98) illustrated his argument that Russian intellectual society saw homosexuality among Caucasians as a cultural category but considered male sodomy among European Russians a medical deviancy. What differs in my use of these articles is that I analyze them to connect sexuality to the process of nation-building in the late Russian Empire.

1.7.2. Data analysis

This thesis adopts critical discourse analysis as conceptualised by Fairclough (2003), who was inspired by Foucault's understanding of discourse (1982). For Foucault (1982, pp. 59-61), power-knowledge is reproduced through discourses in which he included written texts and social practices. Fairclough (2003, pp. 21-22) sees discourses as parts of social events, therefore, they are a part of social life and are not a purely linguistic category but a category that blurs "the division between language and 'non-language'". In other words, my analysis of different types of texts transcends into an analysis of social reality that concerns imperial sexual management in the Caucasus. The purpose of critical discourse analysis in my thesis is to challenge "the truth", i.e. discourses that appeared natural, common, or scientifically led. Foucault termed this feature of a discourse a discipline-principle (Foucault, 1982, p. 61). For him, a discipline includes "true" objects, methods, propositions, rules, and definitions which form "an anonymous system at the disposal of anyone who wants to or is able to use it", i.e. without a firm link with its author. The important implication of discipline-principle is that all propositions to be considered valid and true have to belong to a certain discipline and fit into its existing discourse (Foucault, 1982, pp. 59-61). In my analytical section, I will demonstrate that imperial medical and legal practitioners constructed knowledge about sexual subjects by rooting their arguments in "existing conceptual instruments and theoretical foundations", embodied either by imperial criminal codes (Chapter 4) or then-existing medical and anthropological scholarship (Chapter 3). The discipline-principle allows me to highlight how imperial medical and legal practitioners engaged with existing knowledge and construed sexuality as a cultural and/or moral category while their discourses seemed to "belong" to specific institutions and domains of power that nurtured them, not necessarily interacting and enhancing each other. In doing so, my thesis argues that the outdated Russian imperial juridical system was not particularly keen to deploy modern medical scientific knowledge to prosecute male sodomy among the Caucasian nationalities.

CHAPTER 2. EMBEDDING THE THESIS INTO EXISTING SCHOLARSHIP

Introduction

This thesis aims to extend our understanding of what imperial medical and legal practitioners in the Caucasus thought about male same-sex, argued for their views, and justified the prosecution of male sodomy in the late Russian Empire. In this section, I outline the historical context for my research. I proceed with a review of the existing scholarship on the global politics of sexuality, focusing on how professionals and institutions in various spatiotemporal contexts produced knowledge on (homo)sexuality and sexualized and racialized categories, highlighting the role of medicine, law, culture, and the “Other”.

2.1 Historical context

In 1699, Peter the Great revolutionized the Russian military by importing European military and technological techniques aimed at modernizing the country and securing its future imperial status (for example, see van der Oye & Menning, 2004). This transformation led to the establishment of a professional standing army and uniform training, but also to the deprivation of civil rights for soldiers. Engelstein (1994, p. 58) argued that to regulate a new social network of recruits, the Tsar introduced the earliest secular anti-sodomy legislation in Russia. In 1716, Peter prohibited any sexual relationships between members of the army and the navy. This new statute banned male same-sex relations when the army was "located at the same place unoccupied for some time," categorizing such relationships as part of the public domain of life (Military Charter of Peter the Great, 1716, Arts. 165).

In 1836, Nicholas I expanded the ban on the private lives of civilians, in line with his other conservative and reactionary policies (Eremin & Petrovich-Belkin, 2022, p. 292). A specific penalty, introduced 30 years later by Article 995 of the 1866 Code of Punishment (*Ulozhenie o nakazaniyach ugovolnych*), punished "противоестественный порок мужеложества" ("unnatural vice of male sodomy") with disfranchisement, property expropriation, and exile to Siberia (The 1886 Criminal Code, 1876, p. 429). The 1903 Code, on the contrary, demanded a milder punishment for мужеложество (male sodomy), namely imprisonment from 3 months up to 8 years (The New Criminal Code, 1903, pp. 164-165). Experts concur that law enforcement of sodomy statutes was more lenient compared to criminal codes and public morals. Healey (2002, pp. 21-49) explains the leniency of law enforcement by the impact of homosexual culture that thrived in the imperial capitals of Saint-Petersburg and Moscow in late imperial Russia. According to his argument, an understanding of male same-sex eros as a

specific type of sexual desire and medical deviance also facilitated this leniency. Moreover, Eremin and Petrovich-Belkin (2022, pp. 292-293) connect mild law enforcement to the fact that some male members of the Romanov family maintained same-sex relations, which led Alexander III and Nicholas II, Russia's two last emperors, to largely neglect homosexuality as an issue.

However, these interpretations do not address the imperial policy towards male homosexuality at the frontiers of the Russian Empire in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Dan Healey made significant contributions to this topic in his book *Homosexuality in Revolutionary Russia* (2002). Based on volumes of state statistics, Healey (2022, p. 96) insists that there was a surge in convictions for male sodomy in late imperial Russia, indicating "a shift of enforcement of the sodomy statute away from St. Petersburg and Moscow toward the towns of rural districts of southern Russia and the Caucasus." He found that in 1913, the number of registered sodomy convictions among Caucasian nationalities (Georgians, Armenians, Tatars, and modern North Caucasus ethnic groups) reached 78% of all cases across the empire, even though in 1905, this number was only 14% (Healey, 2002, p. 297). According to Healey (2002, p. 8), These statistics reflected Russia's peculiar "geography of perversion" which differentiated between same-sex eros of European Russian subjects and that of the Caucasian nationalities along national and ethnic lines. He argued that imperial medical and legal discourses construed same-sex relations between the Caucasians as a cultural and moral depravity rather than a disease. For imperial experts on anthropology, the homosexuality of native subjects seemed a cultural and moral category, rather than that of medicine (Healey, 2002, p. 97). The results of my analysis confirm these findings. In Chapter 3 (3.2. Erikson's Gradation of Otherness), I expand on them by introducing the notion of the gradation of otherness and exploring the relationship between male sodomy and "women's rights". In Chapter 4, I evaluate medical discourses from the perspective of law enforcement of male sodomy and public morals status, using unique and previously unpublished materials from the Georgian Central Historical Archive.

Furthermore, the most recent research by Zekhni (2022) highlights the "gendered and sexualized form" of the Russian imperial civilizing mission in Central Asia. Zekhni (2022, p. 154) argued that cities in Central Asia appeared "as an arena for signifying and proving imperial superiority and capacity to civilize oneself and the Other". This understanding of Russian Orientalism echoes my argument about the mimicry of imperial civilizing discourse which I will make in Chapter 3 (3.2.3. Mimicry of imperial discourse). According to Zekhni, imperial administrators in Turkestan reserved themselves a right "to see, know, and access the indigenous communities" beyond the privacy of the natives' homes. On the one hand, this

finding speaks to the argument that conservative Russian state administrators denied the demarcation between the private and the public about the regulation of sexuality (as shown by Engelstein, 1994, p. 63). On the other hand, this finding resembles the position of Grigorii Iokhved who argued for public discussion of the “sexual vice” of male sodomy among the Caucasian natives, refusing them a right to privacy for the sake of the implementation of the Russian civilizing mission in the Caucasus (3.5. Male sodomy and care of the self).

The purposes of prosecuting male sodomy in the Russian Empire evolved and changed over two centuries. While Peter's legislation aimed at disciplining men in the public domain, later laws used the language of morals ("unnatural vice of male sodomy") to justify prosecution, thereby regulating the private domain of life. In intellectual circles, a Russian European male subject with same-sex desires emerged as an object of medical knowledge, with his "vice" being perceived as a medical deviancy. In contrast, a Caucasian native male subject involved in same-sex relations emerged as an object of cultural knowledge and moral politics. However, existing research does not yet explain the mechanisms through which sexuality emerged as a cultural and moral category in the Caucasus.

2.2. The production of knowledge on same-sex relations in the late Russian Empire

Western scholars and Russian students of queer history affiliated with Western academic knowledge production concurred that Western European writing on psychiatry and forensics made a significant impact on Russian medical professionals who specialized in mental illnesses, to which the most progressive ones attributed same-sex relations. Healey (2002, p. 103) argued that that was possible thanks to numerous translations for Western scholarship which were published as separate publications (books or brochures) or within volumes of thick thematic medical magazines with no commentary on the content of published materials whatsoever (for instance, as in *Современная клиника* to which I will refer in 3.4. Grigory Iokhved (dates unknown): a member of imperial medical networks). This way, Russia's literal public received a chance to familiarize themselves with Hirschfeld's ethnographic description *Berlin's third sex*, published in Russian just four years after the German original, as well as Havelock Ellis's study of “sexual inversion” after 1909 (Healey, 2002, p. 104). Also, Roldugina (2021, pp. 453-454) emphasized that Russian enthusiasts translated into Russian the works of Albert Moll and Richard von Krafft-Ebing on same-sex relations. Nevertheless, Healey (2002, p. 82) revealed that forensics became the only field of medicine that state prosecutors referred to. Russian forensic doctors claimed to prefer the categorization of forensic medical indications of sexual crimes among males designed by Johann Ludwig Casper

of Berlin, while in fact, they blended Casper's viewing with those of the Parisian forensic doctor Ambroise Tardieu. My analysis of legal documents and medical writing from the Caucasus confirms Healey's finding.

However, both Healey and Engelstein traced how state administrators ensured that only a small limited circle of professionals could enjoy relative freedom of speech in relation to modern psychiatric research. Healey made an example of the Moscow Committee of Press Affairs which prosecuted publications about same-sex relations in cheap press available to a mass audience from lower classes under the pretext that they corrupted public morals (Healey, 2002, p. 105). Engelstein (1994, pp. 19-24) highlighted how the outdated imperial legal system disabled liberal civil society from entering the field of politics as state administrators and the Romanovs could not tolerate the thought of sharing power with civil institutions. According to her, imperial legal practitioners remained deaf to contemporary medical research and operated the language of moral and religious terms when prosecuting male sodomy among Russian European subjects (Engelstein, 1994, p. 40). I speak to this finding when arguing that legal practitioners in the Caucasus employed discipline-principle to construct proof of conviction by referring to legal knowledge, while seemingly ignoring the existing medical psychiatric expertise (Chapter 4).

There is another stream of research on the history of homosexuality in medieval Russia which I am not referring to in my research but is still worth mentioning. By revisiting the church and theological documents of premodern Russia, Nick Mayhew (2020, pp. 82-83) problematized the works of Dan Healey and Laura Engelstein. He argued that their extensive focus on legal documents extended Western meanings over the distinct Russian legal terms for male sodomy (*sodomia*, *muzhelozhestvo*) while the Russian term for male sodomy, *muzhelozhestvo* (мужеложество) did not imply only male-to-male relations. By tracking the etymology of the words in the Greek Bible, Mayhew argues that Healey's and Engelstein's interpretations of male sodomy erased the differences in connotation of sodomy terms medieval canon law and modern/late imperial decrees of late XIX – early XX centuries. Even though addressing the shades of different connotations of legal terms lies beyond the scope of this thesis, I attempted to address Mayhew's critique by juxtaposing my findings with similar perspectives from Georgia, the Ottoman Empire and Persia when analyzing my primary sources.

Figure 2

View of Tiflis from Botanic Mountain, between 1909 and 1914



Note. By Prokudin-Gorskii, S.M. (1909-1914). Retrieved from the United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs division <https://loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsc.04434/>

2.3. Global Politics of Sexuality

In my thesis, I employ Foucault's notion of power-knowledge, which refers to regimes of knowledge and methods of scientific knowledge applied to a specific population, to investigate how Russian imperial practitioners in the Caucasus framed homosexuality as a crime. To do so effectively, it is essential to grasp how existing scholarship has addressed the disciplining of knowledge and the politics of (homo)sexuality in different spatiotemporal contexts.

Stoler argued that the production, modification, and transformation of categories defined colonial rule in the Dutch Indies and French Indochina (2002, p. 43). She demonstrated how perversion and backwardness marked the Otherness of the colonized, whereas reason, whiteness, and homogenizing unity defined Europeanness. According to Stoler, the management of male sexuality and the production of racial categories determined the ratio of men to women in the Dutch Indies. As the number of European men without families prevailed, the system of concubinage with local women and prostitution prospered. This system was considered a "necessary evil" for colonial authorities as it prevented carnal relations between men. Moreover, it prevented the impoverishment of European men, which difficulties in ensuring "a properly appointed lifestyle fit for European wives" could potentially cause (2002, p. 30). Surprisingly, colonizers did not perceive any interaction with locals, including sexual relations, as problematic as long as the colonizers had not assimilated by borrowing bodily practices from the locals. While allowing for the interaction with the locals under certain pretexts, imperial politics of sexuality and race produced discourses that divided colonizers from colonized, "metropolitan observers from colonial agents, and bourgeois colonizers from their subaltern compatriots" (Stoler, 1995, p. 8).

In contrast to Stoler, Anderson (2006, pp. 1-6) argued that natives populating the humid regions of the Philippines in the 1900-1920s were deferred from obtaining American citizenship rather than being excluded from broader American society. The colonizers grounded this deferral in medical arguments, promising it would last until the point when the "infantile and immature" natives, perceived as contagious germ-carriers, would be disciplined through cultural means, including "the development of 'republican virtue' and self-restraint." Anderson thus demonstrates how American colonizers instrumentalized modern science, particularly bacteriology, and hygienic, bodily, and behavioural reforms, for the cultural improvement of the Other. Despite being framed as the deferral of rights, the exclusion from citizenship was deemed indefinite, justifying the civilizing and purifying role of American colonizers toward their "newly acquired part of Orient."

Imported Western European scientific developments in medicine, sexology, and psychiatry also influenced the politics of intimacy in non-European imperial formations. In China, a binary understanding of sex and sexuality emerged as an object of empirical knowledge under the influence of Western sexological texts, concepts, and styles of reasoning, as argued by Chiang (2018, pp. 1-9). By historicizing the term "*xing*" (sex), which initially meant "visual connotations of male and female biology," he demonstrates how Western biomedicine made sex a pillar of Chinese modernity through translations of Western texts and the presence of Western missionaries in China from the second half of XIX century, as well as through the adoption of globally circulating ideas and practices of sex in the 1920s.

If the transformation of sexual categories, whose meaning was influenced by medical sciences, endured over time, their role in a legal context displayed radical flexibility in response to the particular spatiotemporal contexts they were embedded within. In the early XX century American context, Shah (2005) demonstrated how ambivalently the US justice system understood the category of Hindu marriage. He details how an Asian man named Don Sing, accused of male sodomy about an 18-year-old American white male, significantly reduced his imprisonment by appealing to European/American sexual morality and presenting himself as a devoted husband adhering to the traditions of Hindu marriage. His attorney "cultivated the right sentiments" among the jury by likening a Hindu man's marriage to the image of a respectable white American manhood—a practice of self-restraint and containment of desire for the sake of responsibilities that come with marriage and procreational sex. Sodomy, in that context, was coded as a practice of unmarried men "prone to unregulated behaviours and ruled by irrational passions" (Shah, 2005, p. 128). However, the case involving the inheritance of the property of a deceased husband between two women—an American and an Indian—was resolved in favor of the former. Both women claimed to be married to the same man. The defence of the second, American wife presented Hindu marriage as a tradition of marrying children, unlawful according to American legislation, which deprived the first, Hindu wife of legal standing in the eyes of the jury.

The logic of deferral and flexibility in juridical sexual categories remains a key tool in managing the politics of sexuality in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Kulpa (2014, p. 432) analyzed official documents from the European Parliament and conceptualized the contemporary political relationship between the West/Europe and CEE as "leveraged pedagogy," which represents a didactical and cultural hegemonic power dynamic. In this dynamic, CEE is seen as a transitional ('not liberal') region with homophobic tendencies, mutually connected to the homoinclusive West/Europe. According to Kulpa, power relations

across the West/East divide are characterized by the opposition of the superior liberal West/Europe and the permanently 'post-communist' CEE, which is seen as distant from the European ideal. In other words, in the concept of leverage pedagogy, the West reinforces Said's oriental dichotomy by framing it along the lines of liberalism, capitalism, and progress, while the colonial nature of these power relations persists, as Kulpa concludes. In her analysis of juridical discourses within the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights on LGBTQ+ issues and promotion, Ammaturo (2015, p. 1151) argued that the EU actively promoted LGBTQ identities while creating "a dichotomy between tolerant and intolerant countries within the borders of Europe." In this dichotomy, tolerance and open-mindedness towards LGBT individuals in EU states are central to European citizenship and oppose homo- and transphobic elements within and outside of the EU borders. Ammaturo contends that contemporary EU legislation, which instrumentalizes identities centred around a person's self-understanding of their sexuality, promotes a homonationalist understanding of European sexual citizenship. As a result, European sexual citizenship in the juridical discourse of the European Court of Human Rights "may echo political strategies aimed at fostering emerging models of Euro-nationalist Queer Citizenship based on exclusionary membership of a transnational community," downgrading the complex debates on the issue in national contexts (Ammaturo, 2015, p. 1116). In other words, Ammaturo emphasizes the contemporary exclusion of individuals, communities, and states, either based on their sexuality or their relation to the sexuality of others, within the logic of European power that extends beyond the EU's immediate borders while also undermining local conceptualizations and developments. Nevertheless, as Kulpa and Mizielińska (2011, p. 23) argued, this exclusion is not due to the inherent 'backwardness' of CEE that endangers LGBTQ people. Instead, it is a result of a specific temporality that CEE is experiencing. They introduce the concept of "time of sequence/time of coincidence" to contrast these temporalities. While the Western self-image is built on a "continuous and linear, progressive" temporality, CEE is experiencing LGBT/queer/homophile politics "more coincidentally than sequentially" (Kulpa & Mizielińska, 2011, p. 15), or as experiencing "everything at once." This perspective challenges the notion of linear progress and highlights the complex interplay of various temporalities in shaping contemporary debates and policies regarding LGBTQ issues in CEE and the broader European context.

Summary

In this chapter, I outlined a stream of research on the global politics of sexuality relevant to my topic, highlighting the ways actors have deployed disciplining knowledge to rule people's minds through their bodies in history and nowadays. My review demonstrated various examples of the relations of power/knowledge in relation to the management of sexuality in colonial and imperial contexts of the Russian Empire and the Caucasus (Engelstein, 1994; Healey, 2002; Zekhni, 2022), the US and the Philippines (Andrson, 2006) or India (Shah, 2005), France, the Netherlands and the Indochina (Stoler, 1995, 2002), Cina and Western Europe (Chiang, 2018), as well as of the EU and CEE (Ammaturo, 2015; Kulpa, 2014; Kulpa and Mzielinska, 2011). Furthermore, I pointed out how my analytical chapters speak and contribute to existing research on the history of (homo)sexuality in the late Russian Empire.

CHAPTER 3. ANALYSIS OF MEDICAL ARTICLES ON MALE SODOMY IN THE CAUCASUS (1904-1906)

Introduction

This chapter addresses the following questions: What were the views of imperial medical experts on same-sex relations in the Caucasus in the late Russian Empire and how did they argue for these views? To accomplish this task, I examine articles written by imperial medical experts in 1904-1906 through the lens of Bhabha's concept of mimicry of colonial discourse. Michel Foucault's concepts of power-knowledge, the cultivation of the self, and the body politic also were crucial in analyzing these materials.

3.1. Ernst Erikson (date unknown–1913): a Polish doctor at the Russian frontiers

Ernst Vilgel'movich Erikson, a medical practitioner, worked in the Caucasus supposedly in 1894-1904 and most likely developed an interest in researching sexual behaviour among Caucasian "tribes" while studying at the Military Medical Academy in Saint-Petersburg.¹ In 1900, Erikson defended his doctoral dissertation in the field of mental illnesses. During this period, the institution was headed by Vladimir Bekhterev, a psychiatrist and one of the leading researchers of male homosexuality in late imperial and early Soviet Russia. This association with Bekhterev may explain why Erikson chose to focus on male homosexuality among the local population during his assignment to the Caucasus. It also provides an insight into Erikson's scientific views. He shared Bekhterev's belief that the environment was where sexual perversions originated. But while Bekhterev used the terminology of Karl Kraft-Ebing to describe same-sex relations between European Russian males (Healey, 2002, pp. 90-91), Erikson insisted that the Caucasian natives borrowed same-sex sexual practices from the Muslim population of neighbouring Persia and the Ottoman Empire rather than arguing that "paederasty" was a result of mental illnesses which the environment nurtured.

Due to the nature of his professional duties, Erikson had limited opportunities to visit Tiflis, a Russian administrative capital of the South Caucasus, but he travelled a lot throughout the Caucasus region. This assignment provided him with full anthropological access to the subjects of his research interest. As evidence of his involvement in the local scholarly community,

¹ I restored major events in his biography from several volumes of *Works and Protocols of the Emperor's Caucasian Medical Society* that I retrieved from Georgian National Parliamentary Library during my fieldwork in April 2023.

Erikson was elected as a full member of the Emperor's Caucasian Medical Society in April 1894 (Works and Protocols of the Emperor's Caucasian Medical Society, 1901-1902, p. 532). Furthermore, Erikson published quite frequently in the Society's journals as well as in the professional press in St. Petersburg.² I analyze his article titled "О половом разврате и неестественных половых отношениях в коренном населении Кавказа" ("On sexual perversion and unnatural sexual relations in the native population of the Caucasus"), published in *Вестник общественной гигиены, судебной и практической медицины* (The bulletin on public hygiene, forensic and practical medicine) in 1906.³ I also use another piece by Erikson "Об убийствах и разбоях на Кавказе" ("On murders and banditry in the Caucasus") published the same year in *Вестник психологии, криминальной антропологии и гипнотизма* (Bulletin of psychology, criminal anthropology, and hypnotism). Erikson contributed to the efforts of the Caucasian Medical Society in climatology, writing several articles on the climate and environment of Batumi, Georgia's Black Sea resort. Based on my research on the journals of the Emperor's Caucasian Medical Society, Erikson departed from the Caucasus in the mid-1900s, practised medicine in Warsaw, but died in 1913 due to reasons I have not established yet.

3.2. Erikson's Gradation of Otherness

In this subsection, I provide a concise summary of what I term the gradation of otherness, its utilization of sexuality as a category, and its role within the nation-building framework of the late Russian Empire (first examined in Efimova, 2023). Following this summary, I delve into a detailed analysis that leads to my overarching conclusion.

I posit that certain imperial medical practitioners in the Caucasus introduced the gradation of otherness based on the national traits of the local nationalities to assess their capacity to be disciplined by legal means. These attributes included ethnicity, religion, historical background, temperament ("disposition of mind"), physical appearance, belligerence, chivalrous qualities, and predisposition to criminal behaviour (such as robbery, theft, and kin/honor killings within the population). This gradation thus evaluated the traits of Caucasian nationalities to gauge their aptitude for contributing to the Empire or their perfectibility. As argued by Stoler (1995,

² Almost none of Erikson's texts concerning male sodomy in the Caucasus, Persia, and Turkey, which I am not citing here, are available online.

³ I retrieved the article titled "On sexual perversion and unnatural sexual relations in the native population of the Caucasus" from Lenin State Library in Moscow, Russia by requesting a paid service. It included filling out a request to scan the pages I needed, followed by payment that my family helped to arrange, as my foreign bank account stopped operating in Russia after February 24th, 2022.

p. 8), “Assessment of these untraceable identity markers could seal economic, political and social fates”.

Within this gradation, sexuality emerged as a cultural and moral category that defined the civic status of Caucasian nationalities within the Empire. Erikson attributed various forms of male sodomy to corrupted local morals, supposedly shaped by prolonged exposure to specific cultural environmental factors, particularly the influence of "Arab, Persian, and Turkish law practitioners and scholars" (Erikson, 1908, p. 6). While admitting their alleged environmental origins, he did not seem to notice that he simultaneously considered sexual "vices" among the locals as implicitly inherent within the "gradation, making it inherently mimicable, as per Bhabha's concept. Furthermore, even though the gradation of otherness aimed to assess the perfectibility of the Caucasian populace concerning Russians/Europeans and each other, the development of sexual ethics within the local population through legal means was deemed to never be achieved, the absence of sexual ethics laid down the foundation for the civilizing mission of Russia in the Caucasus in the first place.

In my understanding, the gradation of otherness characterized the limits of caring power over Oriental Others. This care was intrinsically connected to the spread of certain sexual ethics among “savage” and “culturally deprived” Caucasian nationalities. It made sexuality, or, to be more precise, savage immoral sexual practices of the local population, a target of the imperial body politic. For medical professionals such as Erikson, caring power was a means to establish the regime of power-knowledge in the Caucasus through legal means. However, the effects of disciplinary power in the late Russian Empire were limited as tsarist authorities and the emperor Nicolas II were unwilling to “allow alternative sources of custodial influence” (Engelstein, 1993, p. 348). Unlike in Western Europe where scholars and medical professionals gained the status of “subsidiary” or “secondary judges” and played a crucial role in the development of a humanitarian approach to punishment (Foucault, 2020, p. 21-22), Russian imperial medical professionals did not have such an impact on juridical power and law enforcement agencies. While legal disciplining of the Caucasian men dramatically increased in the last decade before the Great War, local legal practitioners would rather rely on the language of public morals to prosecute male sodomy among the Caucasian natives rather than employ scientific knowledge, my analysis suggests.

As stated in my theoretical framework, Foucault linked the care of others to the process of the cultivation of the self. Here, I understand the process of self-cultivation cultivated by medical practitioners in the Caucasus, such as Erikson, within the context of Russia's search for national identity since the late XIX century. Tolz (2005) distinguishes two models of nation-building in

the late Russian Empire. In the eyes of some experts, belonging to the Russian European culture granted access to full civic rights in the empire (Mamedov, 2014, p. 149). Evdokin Lachinov, a downgraded officer and a Decembrist, wrote in 1876: “You wild peoples, who have not yet distinguished yourself by a capacity to citizenship” [grazhdanstvennost’] [or] by your cultural level: you mean to be sure that your turn will come to shine of the world stage” (Lachinov, 1876, pp. 129-130 as cited in Mamedov, 2014, p. 149). The assimilationist model, influenced by racial theories, involved the assimilation of the native population through cultural Russification, often ignoring the local context. A pan-Russian identity model, on the other hand, considered the preservation of native cultures and languages as essential components of Russian civility. However, imperial administrators, including those in the Caucasus, largely disregarded this model, mostly due to concerns about the rise of nationalism. I argue that Erikson appears to align with the first, assimilationist model of nation-building, as he evaluated Caucasian nationalities based on their symbolic proximity to Russian European culture.

The care of Oriental Others (or the attention to what would be good for Oriental others) aimed to impose certain sexual ethics over the local population, using these ethics as a means of social control in the region where cultural and national diversity maintained more than one model of sexual behaviour. In other words, the adherence to particular sexual ethics would signify a certain “cultural level” which would open up a way for Caucasian nationalities to civil rights. Official and religious discourses in the Russian Empire would consider any sexual relations sinful. Erikson’s gradation thus denied civic rights to different Caucasian nationalities partly due to their perceived “savage” and “rampant” sexuality. Hence, I view the gradation of otherness as a component of the nation-building model that imperial medical professionals suggested in the Caucasus in the early XX century, in which sexuality played a significant role in the nation-building process.

3.2.1. Georgians and Kartvelians

Georgians occupied a top position in Erikson’s racialized hierarchy. According to Erikson, Georgians were more cultured and more capable of good service to the empire as local state administrators than other Caucasian nationalities. In XIII-XIV centuries, the Georgian population of the Tiflis district was “one of the most cultured nationalities in the Caucasus” which achieved “quite a high level of civilization” (Erikson, 1906b, p.1). Erikson attributes this characteristic to the spread of Christianity in Georgia in the IV-V centuries. In his words, Christianity brought “a pursuit of moral self-perfection in general and of sexual life in particular” to the Caucasus (Erikson, 1906a, p. 1872). The focus on religion is crucial for

Erikson. In Russian orientalism, imperial experts purposefully stressed an "ancient origin" of Caucasian natives to imply their original belonging to the Christian world (Gutmeyr, 2017, p. 161). However, the period when Georgia lost its statehood and disassembled into several princedoms facilitated the "demoralization regarding sexual [relations]" under the influence of the Muslim world in the XIV century (Erikson, 1906a, p. 1876). According to Erikson, local "aborigines" saw it as a trading opportunity that Turks put their eyes on local "handsome boys", and the abduction of teenage boys and their trafficking to Turkey for sexual purposes unfolded in Georgia ever since. Over time, residents of Georgia's Black Sea regions, neighbouring the Ottoman Empire, learnt to satisfy their Turkish clientele's tastes and earned money of "fabulous size, up to a few dozens of thousands Turkish liras" per deal (Erikson, 1906a, p. 1876). Here, Erikson implied that Caucasian males borrowed the habit of same-sex relations themselves from their clientele. As for the Turks, even their "perseverance of manners and speeches" and European education failed to eradicate their "harem habits and shameful vices" (Erikson, 1906a, p. 1883). Up to this day "urban Persians and Turks are much more civilized and delicate (*vospitannie i delikatnie*) than, for instance, Georgians or Armenians, but at the same time shock [Europeans] by their surprising passion for boys and girls" (Erikson, 1906a, p. 1882). However, Georgians still had an opportunity and predisposition to have sexual vices eradicated from their behaviour. Erikson pointed out that in the XX century, "unnatural sexual intercourse" were already "not typical" among Georgians and "Kartvelian tribes" due to their close cooperation with Russians. In regard to the sexuality of "true Georgians", Erikson employs what Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995, p. 96), a Haitian-American anthropologist, called a formula of erasure. Erikson never got to mention instances of same-sex relations among Russians in the Caucasus or among Georgians, while extensively elaborating on male sodomy among Armenians, Azeri Tatars, and Muslim Kartvelian subethnic groups. The medical professional defined "true Georgians" as those living within the geographical limits of the Tiflis district. It seems that in Erikson's imagination, the geographical proximity of 'true Georgians' to the Georgian capital of Tiflis, a centre of Russian administration in the Caucasus, intersected with symbolic proximity to Russian European civilization and culture, while the geographical distance of Kartvelians of Western, "Ottoman" Georgia exacerbated their cultural and religious distance from European Russians. This narrative resembles a Georgian discourse that opposed literate "Russian" Georgian 'public', or intelligentsia ("Georgians, that is, readers of *Droeba*") to illiterate Georgian folk, or "people" of different localities, such as Guria or Megrelia in Western Georgia, which "Russian" Georgians saw as "Asiatic" to opposition to themselves as "European" (Manning, 2012, pp. 95-97). Even though "true Georgians", or as Manning (2012,

pp. 95-97) termed them, “Russian Georgians”, “belittle themselves” to civilized nations like Russians and take pride in serving them, they still belong to a Kartvelian nation.⁴ Their perfectibility was far from being unquestionable for Erikson due to the practices of the abduction of young boys for sexual pleasure and male sodomy among Ottoman Georgians (Erikson, 1906b, p. 2).

Underscoring “true Georgians”, Erikson simultaneously makes their “advance” in relation to other Caucasian nationalities mimical, as he desired to present Georgians as “a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha, 1984, p. 126). What Erikson posited was a process of re-education in which the imperial disciplining of native bodies (e.g., through military service or the imperial legal system) will induce a particular form of imperial sexual subjectivity and reform them, making them civilized. Erikson produced knowledge of the Russian civilizational role in the Caucasus as a key environmental factor leading to progress and change. Its role conflicted with the ability of the locals to re-educate which, as Erikson argued, depended on a particular inherent “ethnopsyche” of each Caucasian nationality. In suggesting that disciplining of native bodies faced a natural restriction in the form of a certain ethnical, “psychoanthropological” organization of each nationality, “inherited from a generation to generation”, Erikson mocked his own assumption that forms of sexual behaviour were induced environmentally, not “from birth” but “since child’s age”, and therefore could be altered through the external effort (Erikson, 1906a, p. 1890). In doing so, eventually, he violated a central tenet of his argument, a certainty in the civilizational role of the Russian Empire in the Caucasus.⁵

⁴ Erikson called them *kartvely*. This Russian word is synonymous to Georgian “*kartvelebi*”, ქართველები which means “Georgians”.

⁵ Erikson's assertion that Georgians utilized their historically developed skills and culture to integrate into the Russian Empire underscored their position in his racialized hierarchy of Otherness. Mamedov (2014, pp. 160-161) associates this exceptional position of Georgians in the Russian imperial imagination with a geopolitical crisis that led to the Crimean War (1853-1856) in the second half of the 19th century. During this period, the importance of the Caucasus as a bulwark of the Russian Empire against the West was underscored. The relatively close proximity of Georgians to Russians, as emphasized by Erikson in the 1900s, bore some similarities to the position of the Georgian diaspora as “familiar strangers” within the Soviet empire of diasporas. In the Soviet Union, Georgians who migrated to Moscow rose to prominence in Soviet culture. They integrated into Soviet culture by strategically leveraging their “Otherness” and effectively blending aspects of their own culture with that of others (Scott, 2019, p. 39).

Figure 3

Dukhan i dva bol'shih burduka na arbe [Dukhan and two big buns on the arb].



Note. By Ermakov, D.I. (1890s). Retrieved from Russian National Library
<https://vivaldi.nlr.ru/lh000000142/details>

3.2.2. Armenians and Azeri Tatars

Erikson attended the discipline of the locals to their readiness to obey imperial law, commitment to the interests of the empire, and acknowledgement of the progress that Russia brought to the Caucasus. The discipline meant loyalty to the Empire to him. Erikson portrayed Armenians as the hardest Caucasian nationality to deal with, worse than Azeri Tatars whom Erikson called the “most criminal tribe” in the South Caucasus and who undoubtedly occupied the lowest position in his gradation of otherness (Erikson, 1906b, p. 4). In his narrative, the Russian administration failed to discipline them through legal means. Armenians refused to obey Russian laws and committed more murders of representatives of the Russian administration than any other Caucasian nationality (Erikson, 1906b, p. 6). He went as far as saying that Armenians “egotistically” refused to take interest in anything that would not potentially bring them personal profit or restore the ancient Armenian kingdom, instead of taking pride in “wearing military uniforms and weapons” and in serving in the imperial army like Georgians and Kartvelians (Erikson, 1906b, p. 4). Unsurprisingly for Erikson, Georgians who occupied a top position in his gradation and Armenians shared an “age-old feud”: he insisted that Armenians disrespected Georgians and never lost a chance to fool them. Armenians’ disregard of other nationalities and then the obsession with personal profit turned other Caucasians against them: Erikson mentioned Azeri Tatars and Turks organizing Armenian pogroms as proof of Armenians’ conflictual ethnic character. ⁶For Erikson, the disloyalty of Armenians made it harder to eradicate “immoral sexual behaviour” among them, making Armenians the most rigorous practitioners of male sodomy in the Caucasus together with Azeri Tatars.

“Among Christian tribes who have a tendency to pederasty, the first place goes to Armenians, apparently due to their close interactions with an indigenous populace of Turkey and Persia, relatively large wealth, and spoiledness by the restaurant life” (Erikson, 1906a, p. 1886).

⁶ Erikson seemed to engage with conservative wing of Russian imperial polity. His anti-Armenian stances were not new for state administrators. Since the 1890s, Russian state administrations reinforced their anti-Armenians tendencies under the rule of Prince Grigorii Golitsyn, a High Commissioner of the Caucasus. This policy changed only by 1908 when Illarion Vorontsov-Dashkov, a newly appointed viceroy of the Caucasus, urged Nikolai II to defend the Armenian population whom he saw useful in the event of war with Turkey or Persia. See Mostashari, F. (2017). *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 100-106.

By “restaurant life” Erikson referred to “Tatar quarters” and “Turkish cafes” as the main sites for “pederastic encounters” in Tiflis and the cities of Western Georgia (Erikson, 1906a, pp. 1887-1888). The mobility of Armenians and the wealth of Azeri Tatars opened up a way to all the “Eastern delights”, particularly sexual encounters with young boys. Sexual practices of wealthy Muslims became an example for less financially successful Tatar males. This way, deviant male sexual practices mark for Erikson the unwillingness of Armenians and Azeri Tatars to “accept” care by the Russian European administration, and hence their limited ability to be re-educated. They emerge as inherently deviant objects of scientific knowledge.

Erikson presents young boys who offer passive sexual services to make their living as another object of care. According to him, Caucasian teenage boys from 12 to 14 years are “passive [pederasts] in huge numbers”, partly because Armenians recruit them to “entertain Turks in any permitted and improper way” (p. 1889). Because of their occupation and the local savage morals, these boys frequently end their lives in a pit or a river on the city outskirts or buried under the ground:

“Based on how often corpses of boys murdered in deserted corners around borders of different kinds are found, one can judge the frequency of a vice such as pederasty in this region and Baku in particular. ... At the city outskirts, there are 2-3 dead boy found who were probably raped or were raped indeed” (p. 1887)

The proximity of Armenian and Muslim cultures triggers the early sexual development of Caucasian boys as they interact in classrooms. They “easily become exposed to vices of Muslim morals, listen to inappropriate jokes in Eastern taste, which are innumerable, familiarize themselves to tales of erotic content” (Erikson, 1906a, p. 1888).

3.2.3. Mimicry of imperial discourse

While Erikson explicitly attributed male sodomy in the local population to environmental factors, he implicitly regarded homosexuality as inherent. Consequently, the imperial medical discourse in the Caucasus exhibits inherent ambivalence, as it categorizes locals and their capacity for re-education primarily based on “congenital” and “psychopathological” attributes, all the while emphasizing the influential role of environmental factors such as science, law, and culture in shaping their way of life. These naturalized attributes collectively constitute what Erikson refers to as an “ethnopsyché,” signifying the psyche specific to a particular ethnicity. Simultaneously, Erikson argued that the “ethnopsyché” could be nurtured and civilized gradually through legal means. In his view, these ethnopsychological characteristics explained

why Russia's civilizing efforts with regard to its Oriental sexual Others proceeded slowly (Erikson, 1906, p. 8). Ultimately, degenerate sexuality emerged as both a product of environmental factors and an inherent aspect of national character, thus engendering a discourse about Russia's civilizing care of its Oriental Others with mimetic qualities.

“Ethnopsyche with all its external manifestations does not alter that fast as published laws, requirements and rules, and many crimes to some extent are an inevitable consequence of the psychoanthropological organization of people, which they inherit from each other from generation to generation, from one century to another”.
(Erikson, 1906b, p. 8)

The “close contacts with the native populace of Turkey and Persia” signalled the political disloyalty of some Caucasians to the Russian Empire to Erikson. Ultimately, he associated sexual vices with political disloyalty due to the Eastern origin of the former (Erikson, 1906a, p. 1886). Erikson regarded disloyalty both as an inherent trait and as something that could be nurtured through external means. He does not seem to notice this ambivalence, as a system of power-knowledge within which he operated and which drove him to this conclusion did not recognize it as such either. Armenians were the “only [nation which] openly and secretly aims to political renewal” (Erikson, 1906b, p. 6). Their yearning for the lost kingdom and the perceived reluctance to participate in the re-education of their morals signalled disloyalty to Erikson. This disloyalty intersected with their degenerate sexual practices, solidifying Armenians' low position in his racial hierarchy. In the case of Armenians, Erikson's ambivalent use of cultural and biological characteristics, along with his environmental determinism, contributed to the creation of a mimetic imperial discourse.

In certain instances, Erikson accorded more significance to biological factors than to cultural ones. He emphasized the racial proximity between Armenians and Jews, suggesting a shared racial origin and “kinship” (Erikson, 1906b, p. 4). This reference to Jews served to associate Armenians with an existing narrative surrounding “evil Jews,” thereby implicitly homogenizing both racial (Jews) and ethnic (Armenians) Others to accentuate their differences from European Russians, and Georgians. In doing so, Erikson ascribed the qualities of perfectibility and loyalty to racial and biologically inherent characteristics. This approach stood in stark contrast to his views on sexual crimes, which he perceived in cultural and, similarly to many legal practitioners in the late Russian Empire, moral terms (Engelstein, 1994, p. 63). Despite Armenians' inherent capacity for rehabilitation — Erikson considered them “the smartest and most skilled nationality in the Caucasus, with a thirst for enlightenment, [who] had their own science and literature in the distant past” — their racial, cultural (and sexual),

and moral otherness placed them significantly behind Georgians and quite on par with Azeri Tatars (Erikson, 1906b, p. 4).

3.2.4. Erikson as an agent of nation-building

According to Pierson (1998, p. 11), nation-building involves a "simultaneous process of identification and differentiation." Erikson constructed a proof of identification (or, to use Bhabha's original definition of mimicry, "sameness") and difference by, to quote Stoler, "identifying distinct sorts of persons, with specific dispositions and states of mind" among the Caucasian nationalities, where "details of the everyday were elevated to reliable proof of character" (Stoler, 2009, p. 30). This categorization responded to the prevailing Oriental research in late imperial Russia, which was driven more by the imperatives of nation-building than colonial domination (Tolz, 2005, p. 131). During this period, two major models of nation-building coexisted, each offering different perspectives on the concept of a nation. Erikson's gradation of otherness aligns with a body of scholarly work that sought to unite people into nations based on common ancestry while arranging these nations hierarchically (Tolz, 2005, p. 133). He extended this model by introducing sexuality as a cultural and moral category to categorize the native population of the Caucasus, thus shaping their future within the empire. Therefore, Erikson's work aligned with scholars who saw themselves as nation-building facilitators, albeit within an assimilationist model (Tolz, 2005, pp. 144-145). This model, implemented by state administrators, relied on cultural Russification and often discriminated against local cultures and histories.

To Erikson, Azeri Tatars and Muslim Kartvelians were inherently different from European Russians due to their religion and proximity to Turkish or Persian culture. Christianity, meanwhile, was one of the pillars of the ethnic Russian national identity which granted policymakers and intellectuals a sense that the titular nation held inherent superior attributes (Suny, 2000, p. 491). The proximity to Islam considered a "transnational 'other' of Orthodoxy" (Suny, 2000, p. 489), overshadowed Armenians' Christianity in Erikson's view. He belittled Armenians to the same extent as Caucasian Muslims due to their perceived connections to Turks, Persians, and Jews, as well as their own civilizational aspirations. As previously mentioned, Armenian and Azeri women in the Caucasus embodied an active form of female sexuality rooted in Islamic doctrine (Najmabadi, 2005, p. 133). However, in imperial Russia, all forms of sexuality were considered sinful, while Western philosophical tradition portrayed the female sexual subject as passive (Healey, 2018, pp. 21-22; Najmabadi, 2005, p. 133). Adhering to Christian sexual ethics in its Caucasian subjects was of strategic importance for

the Russian Empire as it grappled with its dual identity as both Asian and European. By proposing the care of the Oriental sexual Other, Erikson invoked sexuality and, as I will demonstrate in the next section, gender to enhance Russian European identity and demarcate the Caucasus as a territory within Russian civilizing influence.

This "European" identity was intrinsically linked to the model of nation-building centred around Christianity and cultural Russification. Erikson viewed the Christian religion as a dominant cultural force in the sexual re-education of the locals (Erikson, 1906a, p. 1872), which could eventually grant them access to civic rights, or "*grazhdanstvennost*", understood as civility, citizenship, or civic rights (Mamedov, 2014, p. 149). In late imperial Russia, culture, particularly sexuality, served as markers of social status (Engelstein, 1994, p. 24). Figures like Evdokim Lachinov, a demoted officer and a Decembrist⁷, asserted in 1876 that "wild peoples" who had not yet demonstrated a capacity for citizenship or a certain level of cultural development could anticipate their turn to shine on the world stage (Lachinov, as cited in Mamedov, 2014, p. 149). Lachinov and his contemporaries believed that Russian patronage of Caucasian nationalities and the Russian civilizing mission in the region would enable this "shine" opportunity. In the eyes of Russian state administrators in the Caucasus, everything Russian equated to being European, at least concerning daily behaviour and the organization of everyday life that the Russians introduced to Georgia. Russia's civilizing mission also aimed to preserve anti-modernizing customs at its frontiers and cultivate dedication to the imperial regime among natives (Mamedov, 2014, p. 152; Suny, 2000, p. 490). Thus, culture, including religion and sexuality, played key roles in Russia's competition with the neighbouring Muslim Ottoman Empire and Persia.

The competing model of nation-building introduced by Russian Orientalists was pan-Russian, acknowledging local cultures and histories as the foundation of local identities which would pair with a "greater unity among Russia's different subjects based on state-derived (Russian) norms, i.e. a situation in which imperial subjects of all ranks would share comparable responsibilities and status without necessarily losing their ethnic and religious identity" (Tolz, 2005, pp. 132-133). Nikolaj Maar, a Professor of Armenian Studies at St. Petersburg University, illustratively argued that the Armenians' love for their native homeland had become

⁷ Decembrist is a term describing a member of a Decembrist movement, particularly a participant of a Decembrist revolt (Dekabrist revolt). The movement culminated in a political uprising in St. Petersburg on December 26th, 1925. By protesting, Russian mobility aimed to transform Russia into a constitutional state and abolish the serfdom. However, the uprising was unsuccessful, resulting in the exile of Decembrists to Siberia and deprivation of their rights and nobility privileges. See Rabow-Edling, S. (2007). The Decembrists and the Concept of a Civic Nation. *Nationalities Papers*, 35(2), 369-391.

a basis for their participation in a multi-ethnic Russian national identity, very dissimilar to Erikson's narrative about this nationality (Tolz, 2005, pp. 139-140). However, state administrators often turned a deaf ear to academic Orientalists due to their anxiety and fears induced by nationalist movements in the Caucasus.⁸

It should be noted that Erikson's gradation of otherness, echoing state nation-building efforts, does not imply that state administrators consulted his scholarly work. On the contrary, Russian imperial administrations in various regions, including the Caucasus, tended to ignore academic expertise on the nationalities that populated Russia rather than integrating it into their policies and performance (Tolz, 2005, p. 146). Based on my analysis of legal documents from late imperial Georgia in Chapter 4, I will argue that higher branches of the imperial Georgian judiciary tended to rely on moral grounds found in imperial criminal codes to prosecute crimes associated with male sodomy rather than invoking sexuality as a cultural category.

⁸ The activity of Armenian nationalists (Dashnaktsutun and Hnchak parties), the Muslim revolutionary party, and the Georgian social-federalists and seeker of autonomy for Georgia at the beginning of the 20th century called for state administrators to “pacify” the region via police means, educational Russification, and agrarian colonization. See Mostashari, F. (2017). *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 100-106.

Figure 4

Zverstva turok i kudrov [Atrocities committed by Turks and Kurds].



Note. By Morozov, I. A. (1915). Retrieved from Russian National Library

<https://vivaldi.nlr.ru/lt000070251/details>

3.3. Male sodomy and care of female Others

Remaining faithful to his point that sexual vices were a consequence of environmental factors, Erikson (1906b, p. 6) construed male sodomy as a logical implication of gender differences imposed on Caucasian societies by Arab and Turkish laws and Muslim culture, and religion. He did it through objectification and de-sexualization of Muslim women and the hypersexualization of Muslim men (Efimova, 2023). In other words, his sexualization of the Caucasian male subject rendered the subsequent de-sexualization of the female subject. He presented male sodomy as a quotidian sexual practice which violated “women’s rights”, and repeated this argument numerous times in his article on “sexual vices” of Caucasians (Erikson, 1906a, p. 1873). This way, Muslim women became the Other whose lives would improve thanks to the introduction of sexual ethics. He pointed out that Muslim women married at a very young age, then were secluded and led a “sedentary lifestyle” ever since, which deprived them of physical attractiveness. They “gain weight and lose their looks fast and become unattractive to their husbands”, whose “rampant sexual desire” pushes them to look for satisfaction in the arms of “younger persons, including boys” (Erikson, 1906a, p. 1882). However, while de-sexualizing Muslim women, he simultaneously described how they “walk around in the presence of teenagers almost naked”, “dance immoral dances, and use the most indecent words while swearing” (Erikson, 1906a, p. 1882).

For centuries, as Erikson argued, women suffered from savage morals of the population of the Caucasus as males committing murders “because of a woman” was “the most common thing” (Erikson, 1906a, p. 1878). However, it seems that another side of these savage morals and “rampant sexuality” was the “chivalric” nature of the national characters of Caucasian men, which Erikson evaluated as anything but negative. What facilitated same-sex relations among them, also gave impulse to a readiness to protect honour with force (Erikson, 1906b, p. 6). This ambivalent interpretation echoes a romantic trope common in imperial literary discourse about Georgia and yet another sign of mimicry of Erikson’s narrative (see Brower et al., 1997).

By employing a complex web of objectification and de-sexualization of Muslim women, juxtaposed with the hypersexualization of Muslim men, Erikson established a narrative in which the sexual practices of Caucasian men were presented as a violation of “women’s rights”. This portrayal positioned Muslim women as the Other, in need of the empire’s imposition of sexual ethics. Simultaneously, Erikson detailed how these women engaged in ‘unethical’ sexual behaviours themselves, manipulating his narrative in a form of mimicry. Ultimately, this hypermasculinization and sexualization of local males and mimic de-sexualization of

females of Russian imperial medical discourse differs from European colonialism which feminized male inhabitants of conquered territories and oversexualized colonized women (see Stoler, 2002).

3.4. Grigory Iokhved (dates unknown): a member of imperial medical networks

Grigory Iokhved published his piece titled “Педерастия, жизнь и закон” (“Pederasty, life and law”) in a weekly medical newspaper titled *Практический врач* (“Medical practitioner”) in 1904. I analyze this article in the last section of this chapter (“Male sodomy and care of the self”). Unfortunately, I failed to find any specific information on this expert, which does not allow me to see his arguments in the broader scientific and social context of his time. I still use Iokhved’s article for analysis as it suggests interesting insights into how Russian medical society perceived male sodomy among Caucasians and possible ways of overcoming this “vice”. It is reasonable to assume that Iokhved was either a medical practitioner or involved in medical service in another way, as he published in the professional medical press. *Практический врач* was distributed with a magazine named *Современная клиника* (“Modern Clinic”) edited by doctor of medicine S. B. Ovechkin.

3.5. Male sodomy and care of the self

In the scientific society of late imperial European Russia, “an eclectic blend” of understandings of male same-sex relations existed. Medical professionals were drifting away from physical indicators of “pederasty”, defined by forensic medicine, to psychiatric expertise which examined indicators of same-sex perversions as a particular identity of a man indulged in same-sex desire (Healey, 2002, pp. 79-86). Even though it was deemed never to be complete, medical circles engaged in a discussion of the potential decriminalization of male sodomy. Seemingly in favour of this idea, Grigory Iokhved suggested evicting male sodomy statutes in relation to the Caucasian nationalities. His main argument concerned prison as “a primary source of spread of paederasty, onanism, and other sexual perversion” (Iokhved, 1906, p. 872). As the imperial law punished male sodomy with up to seven years at a penitentiary institution, Iokhved insisted imprisonment would only increase the number of the Caucasian “paederasts”. Instead of isolating them from society, one should eradicate “sexual perversion” that had “soaked so much into the flesh and blood of Eastern tribes” through a consistent exercise of caring power (Iokhved, 1906, p. 871). In his argument, this caring power has two faces. He suggested Russians turn their caring gaze towards themselves and recognize their attitude towards homosexuality as an area that had to be perfected. “It is time [for society and mass press] to

overcome false shame and start an open discussion about the so-called secret but [socially] dangerous diseases and habits" (Iokhved, 1906, p. 873). Otherwise, they would not be able to better exercise their caring power over the Oriental Other in future. This "awakening of the self-conscious" will permit to development of a truly ethical approach to the healing of Caucasian males burdened with sexual perversions (Iokhved, 1906, p. 872). Thus, to Iokhved, a discussion on the decriminalization of male sodomy and the eradication of corporal punishment signalled an important step in liberalizing Russian society.

Iokhved insisted that bodily sexual vices could be evicted by "sympathetic enlightenment" through subjectification and by "schooling and accessible printed word" instead of corporal punishment (Iokhved, 1904, p. 873). To Iokhved, corporal punishment was unacceptable due to the interconnectedness of the body and the soul. According to Foucault (2020a, p. 29-30), a criminal's soul emerges as a product of power-knowledge in a modern process of punishment. This soul is an articulation of the effects of a certain type of power and a reference to a certain type of knowledge. Moreover, the invention of the soul is an effect of the subjection of the body. Hence, Iokhved invited legal practitioners and Russian intellectual society to modernize the existing sodomy law by centring penal practices on the soul of the Caucasian individual instead of their body. His approach to spreading sexual ethics among *tuzemtsi* (literally - people from this (local) land, distant from the imperial centre) would be caring and humanitarian. This way, knowledge produced by an intellectual society within a public debate on sexual vices, should be entangled with "the practice of the power to punish" (Foucault, 2020, p. 23).

Russian medical professionals had already taken this caring approach toward the male Oriental Other, he pointed out. They were not "embittered against these freaks of humanity anymore" as they understood that their "highest purpose" was to prevent diseases instead of condemning them (Iokhved, 1906, p. 871). This is despite the inherently discriminatory nature of this call, as demonstrated by this quote:

"The problem is that we do not take into account the cultural level of Sargovs, Afghanis, Tadjiks and other tribes, who share opposite views regarding it [male sodomy, marital unfaithfulness], and how can they be responsible for their actions as much as a cultured person should be responsible for his actions?" (Iokhved, 1906, p. 872)

Nevertheless, Iokhved could be in a debate with other practitioners who favoured the decriminalization of male sodomy. The Saint-Petersburg lawyer Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov was one of those who argued for the decriminalization of homosexual contact between men (Engelstein, 1994, p. 67). Both Iokhved and Nabokov agreed that homosexuality

should not be considered a crime and belong to the domain of law. Nabokov insisted that male same-sex relations had to remain a private matter and were not to be discussed in the public domain. He also presumed that those practising male sodomy would barely “brag of such a peculiarity” while police were not entitled to publicize stories of homosexuals without their consent (Engelstein, 1994, p. 67). Iokhved, on the other side, called for a public discussion of male sodomy. Nabokov reckoned that no moral, religious, or medical argument could prevail over secular law, unlike Iokhved who acknowledged cultural differences between European Russians and Caucasians, what Engelstein called “the cultural relativity of moral standards in regard to sexual comportment” (Engelstein, 1994, p. 69). However, it must be said that throughout his article, not once did Iokhved explicitly indicate if public discussion of homosexuality should concern only such instances among Caucasians or both Caucasians and European Russians. If he had done this, it would help to clarify his position. Nevertheless, whatever his stance, debates on the decriminalization of male sodomy among liberal Russian intellectuals did not bring any actual changes in the late Russian Empire. The tsarist regime severely restricted access to political power, and legal codes established the superiority of the tsar’s word over any juridical statute, creating an inflexible hierarchy of authority (Engelstein, 1994, pp. 19-28).

Discussion of the results

Positions of Erikson and Iokhved demonstrate that Russian medical society held rather unstable understandings of the nature of “paederasty”. While Iokhved urged European Russians to replace corporal disciplining of the Caucasian natives with the education of the soul, Erikson believed in imperial legislation as a means of their successful disciplining and rehabilitation. These contradictory approaches destabilized the authority of scientific discourses. It only facilitated a limited impact of medical thought on the actual legal practice in the Caucasus within the autocracy’s inflexible legal system.

CHAPTER 4. IT IS NOT UP TO A SATIRICAL JOURNALIST TO DEFEND MORALITY. THE CRIMINAL CASE OF *MOLLA NASREDDIN* (1913-1914)

Introduction

This chapter examines law enforcement of male sodomy statutes in the Caucasus by exploring a criminal case of a prominent Azeri satirical magazine *Molla Nasredin* filed in 1913 after it published two materials about male sodomy. It answers the following question: How did imperial legal practitioners in the Caucasus construe proof of conviction in the case of *Molla Nasredin*? In doing so, I will engage with my findings from the Chapter 3, and expand on them by comparing the medical discourses on male sodomy in the Caucasus with the ways local legal practitioners constructed proof of conviction. Ultimately, I will demonstrate how this criminal case illustrates my argument that regulation of (homo)sexuality could be one of the pillars of the assimilationist nation-building process in late imperial Russia.

4.1. A prophet and a gymnasium student

On July 23rd, 1913, two Tiflis residents of Azeri origin, Aliyev Mammedguluzadeh Jalil (1866–1932) and Ali Kuli Nadjafov published an issue of their satirical magazine titled *Molla Nasreddin*.⁹ There was a particular caricature printed in this issue, targeting Muslim men who indulged in same-sex relations. The drawing depicted a young man sitting by the prophet Bahi, the founder of the Baha’i Faith (on which I will elaborate later in this chapter).

“The drawing depicts St. Bahi, who has millions of admirers and followers as a prophet, holding a boy between his knees and putting one arm around him, not as a teacher of a pet, lovingly and sweetly holding him by the chin while cynically telling the messenger of heaven, the winged angel with the tablets of the Creator, standing in the doorway, that he [St. Bahi] cannot receive the angel because he is busy now “praying”.¹⁰

Nazarov v. Mammedguluzadeh and Nadjafov, 1914-1915, list 5

This account of this drawing was left by V. Nazarov, a public assistant prosecutor for the Tiflis

⁹ *Молла Насреддинъ* in Russian pre-revolutionary orthography, نصرالدين or *Molla Nəsrəddin/Molla Nasr al-din* in Azerbaijani.

¹⁰ The original text reads as follows: “4) В рисунке изображается святой Баги, имеющий миллионы поклонников и последователей как пророк, который держа между коленями мальчика и обхватывая его одной рукой, не как учитель питомца, другой любовно-сладострастно держит его за подбородок и цинично при этом велит ответить посланцу неба, крылатому ангелу со скрижалями ТВОРЦА, стоящему в дверях, что он не может принять его, ангела, ибо занят сейчас “молением” (Пунктуация и орфография оригинала сохранена).

District Court (to whom I will return later). Meanwhile, a poem titled “Gymnasium student” in the next issue of *Molla Nasreddin*, and it contained the following lines:

“An inner voice of pious Muslim [man]”
“I’m crazy about being apart from you.
I came out... with love for you...
I’m burning in the fire of your love.
Come down to me
Come, don’t upset me...
The Almighty created you for me...
And there is none like you in heaven...
I’d embrace you and you’d rapture with joy....
Accept some money from me and... give me... one kiss”.¹¹

Nazarov v. Mammedguluzadeh and Nadjafov, 1914-1915, list 3

In late 1913, the Tiflis District Court listened to the criminal case regarding the publication of these two materials. Even though it is unclear from the materials at my disposal how the case was filed, I can suggest how it happened by looking at a similar 1912 case of the Georgian magazine 606. In the case of the latter, the case was filed after a report by the Tiflis Press Agency. It resembles another case from Moscow where the case was filed after the complaint of the Moscow Press Agency, which Healey mentioned (Healey, 2002, p. 105).

The prosecutor chose Article 1001 of the Criminal Code for prosecution. It punished the “offences against public morality” (the 1866 Criminal Code, 1876, p. 431).¹² Unknown investigators characterised the poem and the drawing of St. Baha as “repugnant to morality and decency” and therefore published for the “corruption of morals of the reading public” (list 40), effectively reproducing verbatim the text of Article 1001 under which the case was brought (1866 Criminal Code, pp. 430-431). The Article commentary elaborated that such violations as “sentiments of chastity, purity, and bashfulness, and which have for their object, in the words

¹¹ The original text reads as follows:

“С ума меня свела разлука с тобою...
Выступил я... с любовью к тебе...
Горю я в огне твоей любви...
Снизойди ко мне...
Приди, не расстраивай меня...
Всемогущий создал тебя для меня...
И в раю нет тебе подобного...
Я бы обнял тебя и ты бы от радости восторгался...
Прими от меня немного денег и... дай мне... один поцелуй”.

¹² Even though I do not have access to this particular case, it is possible to restore the main arguments of each side from the quite informative materials of the follow-up 1914 appeal case.

of the law, the corruption of manners” fell within the category of “repugnant to morality and decency” (1866 Criminal Code, p. 431).¹³

However, the Tiflis District Court dropped all charges against the editors of the magazine due to two complementary factors. Firstly, it concluded that it could not be inferred from the content of the drawing that it depicts a prelude to the sodomy act. According to the court decision, if Abdul Bahi, the prophet, lied about being busy with a prayer, “this lie does not prove that he had an intention to commit an act of male sodomy with a young man”.¹⁴ Secondly, the court found that the poem in fact had an educational and reformatory function as it the poem satirically exposed to Muslim society “hypocrites and Pharisees [who are] hiding under the mask of piety and piety, vile thoughts of seducing gymnasium students for money for pederasty” (Nazarov v. Mammedguluzadeh and Nadjafov, 1914-1915, list 41).¹⁵

The acquittal did not satisfy V.A. Nazarov, a public assistant prosecutor at the Tiflis District Court. While it is unclear what was his prior relation to this case, Nazarov certainly was determined to prosecute Jalil Mammadguluzadeh. In early 1914, he appealed the Tiflis District Court decision. The appeal was forwarded to the Tiflis Trial Chamber.

4.2. A satire or pornography? The 1914 appeal to the Tiflis Trial Chamber

Nazarov suggested to sue the editors of *Molla Nasredin* under the same Article 1001, but he built his argument by ‘refuting’ the grounds for acquittal stated by the Tiflis Court in the first hearing. In the eyes of the state assistant prosecutor, the editors violated the symbolic boundaries of imperial authority by daring to comment on “offences against public morality”. “In a satirical magazine, it is not even the task of a satirical journalist to publish a poem or a drawing with content contrary to the general notions of decency and morality” (Nazarov v. Mammedguluzadeh and Nadjafov, 1914-1915, list 4).¹⁶ In saying so, he implied that only the emperor's viceroy as the mediator of the emperor's will in the Caucasus had the right to discipline and civilise the natives, depriving “a satirical journalist” of the responsibility to

¹³ The original text reads as follows: “Статья... относится только к таким безнравственным неблагопристойным сочинениям, которые противны чувствам целомудрия, непорочности и стыдливости, и которые имеют целью, по словам закона, развращение нравов”.

¹⁴ The original text reads as follows: “допущенная Абдул Багиев неправда не доказывает, что он имел намерение совершить с юношей акт мужеложества”.

¹⁵ The original text reads as follows: “По мнению суда, журнал имел целью обратить внимание мусульманского общества на лицемеров и фарисеев, скрывающих под маской благочиния и богомолья, гнусные мысли о совращении гимназистов за деньги на педерастию”.

¹⁶ The original text reads as follows: “В сатирическом журнале помещать стихотворение и рисунок по содержанию своему противные общим понятием благопристойности и нравственности не входит даже в задачи сатирика-журналиста”.

denunciate the sexual vices of local society. Moreover, elevating the morals of the population by the means of ‘pornography’ was unacceptable to the state employees.

"Even tearing off the mask and veil of the wildest debauchery and continuing this naked unbridled and criminal debauchery and orgies, under the guise of at least satire, to the public in the form of poems and drawings, is prosecuted by the law and is inadmissible anywhere in human dormitory"

Nazarov v. Mammedguluzadeh and Nadjafov, 1914-1915, list 5

To enhance his argument, the public assistant prosecutor also evoked religious terms in his appeal report. He argued that the drawing in *Molla Nasreddin* depicted “a head of a Muslim cult of Abdul Baha [the Bahá’í Faith] in a position of preparation for sodomy” Nazarov v. Mammedguluzadeh and Nadjafov, 1914-1915, list 3).¹⁷ “Abdul Baha”, or Abdu’l-Baha was the son of Baha’u’llah, the founder of the Baha’i Faith. It emerged in the mid-19th century in Persia from Ithna-‘ashari Shi’ism (Twelve Shiites), the main branch of Shi’a Islam in Iran. While Islam teaches that “Muhammad was the seal of the prophets”, the Baha’i Faith proclaims that two post-Muhammad messengers will appear to bring new religious laws (Lawson, 2012, pp. 465-466). The Baha’i Faith first captured the world’s attention in 1911-1913, when Abdu’l-Baha visited Europe and North America. The purpose of his visits, on the eve of World War I, was to propagate peace (Lawson, 2012, pp. 467-468). The 1913 publication of the original drawing in *Molla Nasreddin* may have been a reaction to one of such visits by Abdu’l-Baha. However, Russian authorities knew about the Baha’i Faith for quite a while. In 1852, Emperor Alexander II intervened in the prosecution of Baha’u’llah in Persia via the Russian ambassador to Persia V. Dolgorukov (Ackerman & Hassall, 1998, pp. 158-159). As a result, Baha’u’llah received a full acquittal by the court but preferred an exile to Constantinople and Baghdad to Russian citizenship which Alexander II offered him (Pivovarov, 1998). By the 1880s, communities of Baha’s followers emerged in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, Baku, Tashkent, Samarkand, and other cities of the Empire (Ackerman & Hassall, 1998, pp. 161-165). While probably being aware of this particular attitude of the imperial family to Bahaism, the public assistant prosecutor claimed that the editors of *Molla Nasreddin* mocked Abdul Baha, “the recognised prophet and messenger of Heaven” (Nazarov v. Mammedguluzadeh and Nadjafov, 1914-1915, list 5). While Nazarov attempted to portray the drawing as an offence of religious norms, he seemed to miss that neither “Baha’u’llah was called a prophet or a messenger or

¹⁷ The original text reads as follows: “изображающий главу мусульманской секты Бахаистов, Абдула Бахи, в положении приготовления к мужеложеству”.

even an Imam” (Lawson, 2012, p. 465) nor Article 1001 punished “the expression of disrespect for objects of high ... objects of popular veneration” (The 1866 Criminal Code, 1976, p. 431), as stated in the commentary to the article. Nevertheless, Nazarov articulated and enhanced his argument about Russia as the only civilizational authority in the Caucasus through religious terms by presenting the legal system as a protector of both the Baha’i Faith and public morals. Nazarov’s argument seemed convincing for the members of the commission who listened to the appeal case in the Tiflis Trial Chamber. The Chamber’s final verdict largely restates what Nazarov emphasised in his appeal report, albeit framing the sentence exclusively in moral, not religious terms. “[The] dissemination [of criminal debauchery, pederasty] to the public, in the form of poems and drawings intended to corrupt morals and secretly from the censor, is undoubtedly an offence under Article 1001” (Nazarov v. Mammedguluzadeh and Nadjafov, 1914-1915, list 21).¹⁸ The Tiflis Trial Chamber buttressed the sentence suggested by the public assistant prosecutor. It included a fee of 200 rubles paid by each defendant that could be replaced by a two-month-long imprisonment, as well as the destruction of the entire magazine’s press run of two 1913 issues in question (Nazarov v. Mammedguluzadeh and Nadjafov, 1914-1915, list 22). This verdict led to the second suspension of the publication of the magazine in just two years (Kratkaya Literaturnaya Ensiklopedia, 1967).

The interpretations of the magazine material and sentences by the two courts were contradictory. Whereas the district court used the argument that the magazine produces caricatures and texts in a certain genre, i.e. appealed to the public importance of the magazine in publicly discussing “perverse” forms of private life, the Tiflis Trial Chamber followed the letter of the law and existing patterns of law enforcement in considering the act of publishing materials on male sodomy as a category of disorderly conduct. The Chamber used moral categories and the language of the criminal code to formulate the verdict in the case of the publication of material on male sodomy.

The reason why the public assistant prosecutor and the Trial Chamber construed the verdict in moral terms may be found in their views on the nature of pornographic materials and their impact on the Caucasian natives. As I demonstrated in Chapter 3, in the Russian imperial imaginary, the alleged moral and cultural depravity of the native Caucasian population were the key factors that justified the Russian civilising mission in the region. It was needed to

¹⁸ The original text reads as: “... распространение его [дикого преступного разврата, т.е. “педерастии”] в публике, в виде стихов и рисунков, имеющих целью развращение нравов и притом тайно от цензуры, несомненно представляется преступлением, предусмотренным 1001 ст. Ул. о наказ.”

eradicate the “vestiges of the Turkish morals” (Erikson, 1906a, p. 1888), such as same-sex relations between men, through legal means in the Caucasian population. The medical discourses on male sodomy in the Caucasus perceived the Ottoman Empire and Persia as permanent exporters of “indecent illustrations” (*неприличные иллюстрации*) to the Caucasus. As Erikson mentioned, they “arrive to the [Southern] Caucasus, particularly to Baku, from Persia” while Turkish traders offered “the richest collection of the depictions of the Eastern sexual depravity in all possible forms and poses, [that of] pederasty, tribadism, and sodomy” (Erikson, 1906a, p. 1885). Hence, medical professionals saw the dissemination of such indecent materials as a factor that maintained “sexual deprivations” in the local male bodies, despite Russia’s efforts to discipline them. In the eyes of Russian medical experts, the public morals of the local populace, particularly that of Azeri Tatars, owed their indecency to the impact of Muslim culture with its alleged tolerance toward male same-sex relations.

However, in the Caucasus, imperial legal professionals limited the deployment of medical knowledge to forensic medicine, which they used to confirm physical indicators of an assumed “pederasty”, while ignoring quite extensive psychiatric expertise on male sodomy among the natives. A few examples will suffice. In the 1909 rape and murder case of Giorgy Burkiashvili from Telavi (Tiflis District), state prosecutors ordered forensic expertise which demonstrated that Burkiashvili was a “passive paederast” (Burkiashvili vs Sepashvili, 1909, list 12). In 1908, Tabib Mashadi Yagub Ogly allegedly suggested his male travel companion have sex in a hotel room in Tiflis and killed him when he refused. Forensic expertise showed that the murderer Mirza Aga was a “passive paederast” (Tabib Mashadi Yagub Ogly v. Mirza Aga Jafar Kuli Ogly, 1908, list 7). In 1910, a captain of Polish origin Arkadij Zaleski was punished with 4 years of imprisonment by the Kutaisi district court for allegedly committing sodomy over his inferior while standing in the army. Zaleski appealed the verdict at the Tiflis Trial Chamber which granted him an acquittal. The references to forensic expertise and the textbook made by Zaleski’s lawyer were crucial in proving the captain’s innocence to the Chamber’s committee (Zaleski v. Mozhejko, 1910-1911, lists 4-5). At the same time, medical and legal practitioners in the imperial capital of St. Petersburg and Moscow already tended to view same-sex perversions as an indicator of a particular identity of a man indulged in same-sex desire (as shown by Healey, 2002, pp. 79-86). Thus, the Caucasian practitioners referred to legal knowledge existing in criminal codes to support their claim, employing the discipline-principle. But they were not particularly keen to deploy modern scientific knowledge to prosecute male sodomy among the Caucasian nationalities, due to ambivalence of medical discourses on male sodomy in the Caucasus and the outdated character Russian imperial juridical system.

Figure 5

Caricature from an issue of Molla Nasreddin [The caption below says: “[I] love you as much as Muslim [boys] studying at this school”]



Note. By Media.az (2020). Retrieved September 3d, 2023, from <https://media.az/interesting/1067771473/zhurnal-u-molla-nasreddin-segodnya-ispolnyaetsya-114-let-foto/>

4.3. Sexuality, imperial civilising mission, and nation-building

In this subsection, I connect the prosecution of *Molla Nasreddin* to the assimilationist model of nation-building in the late Russian Empire. By construing proof of conviction in moral and religious terms of imperial criminal codes, local legal practitioners aimed to gloss over the association of the magazine with the Azeri nationalist movement. The Russian imperial authorities had the motive to thwart alternative attempts at power-knowledge, which involved regulating the sexuality of the local population through modern discourses. This was because such efforts posed a threat to their own civilizing mission and the process of nation-building in the Caucasus.

The fact that the magazine was printed in the Azeri language symbolically challenged the authority of the Russian imperial administration in its self-acclaimed role as the sole provider of sexual ethics in the Caucasus. A few educated representatives of the Azeri elite published and edited *Molla Nasreddin*, advocating for “women’s rights” as Russia did (see 3.3. Male sodomy and care of female Others), even though they could have different understandings of what “women’s rights” were (for instance, the editors of *Molla Nasreddin* advocated for the right for education for women, while women in the Russian Empire were not allowed to enter public educational institutions in the first place). The caricatures in *Molla Nasreddin* denoted male sodomy not once. As per drawing on page 44, a school caretaker, an elderly man, tells his female companion: “[I] love you as much as Muslim [boys] studying at this school” (Mirza,az, 2020), hinting at sexual relations between him and Muslim boys. Other frequent vices blamed on the pages of the magazine were male infidelity and the practice of unequal age-differentiated marriages of elderly Muslim men and underaged girls (see Slavs and Tatars, 2011, pp. 165-167). As I demonstrated in Chapter 3, these themes intersected with Russian imperial medical writings. While remaining followers of Islam, the Westernized Azeri editors saw these phenomena as the “hypocrisy” of the Muslim clergy, which for them illustrated a retardation to which Azeri Muslim elites led the Caucasian Azeri Tatars. To the editors of *Molla Nasreddin*, the clergy cultivated “the traditional machismo of Caucasian societies”, “superstitions instead of science, double standards instead of women’s rights” (Slavs and Tatars, 2011, p. 9, p. 160).

Their peculiar sexual ethics which blended Islam with Western European bourgeois morality¹⁹ could seem threatening to Russian state administrators in the Caucasus because the magazine

¹⁹ Or, should I say, what they perceived as such, since the editors of the magazine were Azeris educated in the Russian Empire and their understanding of Europe was mediated by the means of knowledge disseminated through the imperial institutions.

used a straightforward language of caricatures and simple captions in the Azeri vernacular, understandable by its targeted audience of the Caucasian Azeri Tatars. The magazine's editors, including Jalil Mammedguluzadeh, belonged to the educated Azeri writers, journalists, and caricaturists. But the publication targeted mostly illiterate Azeri people who resided in rural areas and small towns, therefore the choice of a caricature as the dominant genre in the magazine.²⁰ The rationale behind this was to attempt to unite the Azeri people residing across the Caucasus through the means of printing word and satire, whatever their social status and language. *Molla Nasreddin* was a mouthpiece of literary-educated Azerbaijani who argued for writing in the Azeri vernacular, understandable for the majority. The magazine was published in the "language of common people" and the "shepherds" instead of Istanbuli, the language of educated Azeri elites (Slavs and Tatars, 2011, p. 8). The opponents of the extensive use of the Azeri vernacular opted for the Ottomanization of the Azeri language, which implied the adoption of the modern Ottoman literary idiom as well as a sort of shared identity with the Turks of the Ottoman Empire (Swietochowski, 1991, pp. 59-60). Thus, the choice of the language by the editors of *Molla Nasreddin* signalled not only their targeted audience. The editors argued for the drafting of an Azeri national identity based on the idea of progress through Westernization, which had implications for the politics of gender and sexuality too (Slavs and Tatars, 2011, p. 8).

Meanwhile, Nazarov presented his appeal report to the Tiflis Trial Chamber solely as a matter of public morals, not that of political prosecution of the prominent printed publication of the nationalist Azeri movement or that of disciplining of "culturally deprived" natives and their "rampant" sexuality which "corrupted public morals". Nazarov presented Jalil Mammedguluzadeh and Ali Kuli Nadjafov as the "philistines from the town of Nakhichevan in Yerevan district" (Nazarov v. Mammedguluzadeh and Nadjafov, 1914-1915, list 2). His appeal did not contain a single reference to their journalistic and political activity whatsoever.²¹ The document gives an impression of a whitewashed version of social reality, in which two no-name Azeri "philistines" "willfully and maliciously" published materials about male sodomy.

²⁰ The choice of the title of the magazine was not accidental too. Molla Nasreddin was a famous folklore satiric figure of the Muslim world. It emerged as a unifying figure of the magazine, pointing out the hypocrisy of Azeri, Turkish, and Russian elites, including their politics and morals (Slavs and Tatars, 2011, p. 5).

²¹ See Sharif, A. (1967). Mamekhuladze [Mamekhuladze]. *Kratraya Literaturnaya Ensiklopedia* [Brief Literary Encyclopedia], vol. 4. *Fundamentalnaya Elektronnaya Encyklopedia "Russkaya Literatura i Fol'klor"* [Fundamental Electronic Encyclopedia "Russian Literature and Folklore"]. URL: <http://feb-web.ru/feb/kle/kle-abc/ke4/ke4-5583.html> (accessed 1.09.2023).

Such an interpretation completely glosses over their association with the Azeri national movement and the history of previous prosecution of the magazine. Nazarov concealed that *Molla Nasreddin* was one of the most prominent Muslim periodicals of its time which had already had to suspend operation once due to the prosecution by the imperial authorities. Instead, he presented *Molla Nasreddin* as a “humour Muslim” magazine in “Muslim” or “Tatar” language which allegedly “corrupted the morals” of “the folk Asiatic mass”, “народной азиатской массы” by publishing “indecent” materials about male sodomy (Nazarov v. Mammedguluzadeh and Nadjafov, 1914-1915, lists 3-4). The case that I am analysing in my thesis followed the second termination in October 1914. The Soviet literary scholarship understandably linked the prosecution to the ideas of “national liberation and revolution” expressed on the pages of the magazine (Kratkaya Literaturnaya Ensiklopedia, 1967). However, this link is impossible to trace in the case materials too unless one examines them in a larger context of that time, as this subsection did.

Summary

This chapter has two main findings. It demonstrated that Caucasian legal practitioners were not enthusiastic about using contemporary medical scientific knowledge to prosecute male sodomy within Caucasian nationalities. This hesitancy stemmed from the uncertainty in medical discussions regarding male sodomy in the Caucasus (as demonstrated in Chapter 3) and the outdated nature of the Russian imperial legal system. Instead, they relied on imperial legal codes to justify their argument, following the discipline-principle. Furthermore, the prosecution of *Molla Nasreddin* underscores an implicit connection between the regulation of sexuality and the process of Russia’s nation-building in the Caucasus. Within the Russian imperial context, state administrators perceived themselves as the only agents who had a right to impart discipline and civilization to the region. In contrast, *Molla Nasreddin* emerged as a proponent of an alternative civilising agenda that appealed to perceived Western European sexual ethics within a broader initiative aimed at uniting socially, economically, and politically diverse Azeri Tatars around Westernization. Russian imperial authorities specifically targeted the magazine for trespassing the boundaries of Russia's symbolic authority in the realm of sexual governance within the Caucasus. That is because sexual management was implicitly incorporated into assimilationist nation-building efforts through the discourses on the Russian civilizational mission in the Caucasus, which included sexual disciplining of the natives through legal means, as my analysis of the medical writings suggested. The Russian imperial authorities thus could

aim to prevent alternative attempts at power-knowledge, i.e. disciplining the sexuality of the locals through alternative discourses, as it threatened their civilizing mission and nation-building process in the Caucasus.

Figure 6

Tatarskaya mechet' i most na Majdane [Tatar mosque and a bridge by Maidan]



Note. By Granberg Corporation (1904-1917). Retrieved from Russian National Library
<https://vivaldi.nlr.ru/lo000071112/details>

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I aimed to understand how sexual categories and norms constituted a system of power-knowledge through the means of bodies. Below I outline two main conclusions that I drew in the course of my research.

To begin with, I argue that the regulation of (homo)sexuality could be one of the pillars of the assimilationist nation-building process in late imperial Russia. The gradation of otherness constituted the knowledge used in the process of nation-building. Within this gradation, sexuality emerged as a cultural and moral category that defined the civic status of Caucasian nationalities within the Empire. The gradation of otherness was based on traits of the local nationalities to assess their capacity to be disciplined by legal means which also defined the limits of caring power that the Russian Empire could exercise over its Oriental Others.

Discourses that constituted the gradation of otherness deployed mimicry as a strategy of power-knowledge. Ernst Erikson considered sexual "vices" among the locals implicitly inherent (part of a certain national "ethnopsych" passed through generations) while repeatedly admitting that male same-sex practices among the Caucasians were a result of Turkish, Persian, and Arab influence (as environmental factors). Furthermore, even though the gradation of otherness aimed to assess the perfectibility of the Caucasian populace concerning Russians/Europeans and each other, the development of sexual ethics within the local population through legal means was deemed to never be achieved. The absence of sexual ethics laid down the foundation for the civilizing mission of Russia in the Caucasus in the first place.

To proceed with, I will argue that higher branches of the imperial Georgian judiciary tended to rely on moral grounds found in imperial criminal codes to prosecute crimes associated with male sodomy rather than invoking sexuality as a cultural category.

This was a result of two complementary factors. The outdated Russian imperial juridical system was not particularly keen to deploy modern medical scientific knowledge to prosecute male sodomy among the Caucasian nationalities. This system was autocratic, contradictory, and inflexible. Legal practitioners tended to construe proof of conviction by referring to the knowledge that was the most relevant and valid in their eyes, i.e. imperial criminal codes.

Furthermore, my analysis demonstrated that medical professionals from European Russia and the Caucasus held rather unstable understandings of the nature of "paederasty". They did not agree on a number of questions, whether Caucasian male sodomy convicts should be corporally punished or not and whether "sexual vices" belonged to the private or public domain of life.

These contradictory approaches destabilized the authority of scientific discourses. It only facilitated a limited impact of medical thought on the legal practice in the Caucasus.

What medical professionals agreed upon was the civilising role of schooling and the “printed word” in the eradication of same-sex practices. The case of *Molla Nasreddin* demonstrated that some legal practitioners in the Caucasus perceived themselves as the only agents who had a right to impart discipline and civilization to the region. Russian imperial authorities specifically targeted the magazine for trespassing the boundaries of Russia's symbolic authority in the realm of sexual governance within the Caucasus. That is because sexual management was implicitly incorporated into assimilationist nation-building efforts through the discourses on the Russian civilizational mission in the Caucasus, which included sexual disciplining of the natives through legal means, as my analysis of the medical writings suggested. The Russian imperial authorities thus could aim to prevent alternative attempts at power-knowledge, i.e. disciplining the sexuality of the locals through alternative discourses, as it threatened their civilizing mission and nation-building process in the Caucasus.

APPENDIX 1. The list of criminal cases used for analysis

№	Title	Year	Location	Codification	Sentence
1	Tiflis District Court Prosecutor's Proceedings on the murder case of Tabib Mashadi Yagub Ogly	1908	Tiflis	Article 1484	4 years of imprisonment
2	Tiflis District Court Prosecutor's Proceeding on the monitoring of the rape and murder case of Giorgy Burkiashvili	1909, November 9th - December 5th	Telavi, Tiflis district	Articles 995, 996 and 1455, p.1	no one was accused or sentenced
3	Tiflis District Court Prosecutor's Proceeding on the monitoring of the case of Gogolashvili, an editor and a publisher of the literary almanack titled 606 printed in the Georgian language	1911	Tiflis, Tiflis district	Articles 1001	all charges dropped
4	Tiflis District Court Prosecutor's proceedings on the monitoring of the murder case of Mikhail Turiashvili.	1912, July 18th - August 13th	Sighnaghi, Tiflis District	Articles 995, 996, 1455 (part 1)	parole (June 31th, 1913)
5	The appellate case to revise a sentence by Kutaisi District Court on charges of committing male sodomy <...>	1910-1911	Sukhum	Article 995	Zalessky cleared of all allegations
6	The appellate case of deputy prosecutor Nazarov against the Tiflis District Court sentence <...> on charges of publishing an "anti-moral drawing" in the magazine <...>	March 31th 1914 - October 10th 1915	Tiflis	Article 1001	a fine (200 rubles per person)

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