



Twenty-Five Years in the Caucasus, 1842-1867

Arnold L. Zisserman

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The first English-language personal account of high adventure in the Caucasus, Arnold Zisserman's *Twenty-Five Years in the Caucasus, 1842-1867* is a rare and important work. The book brings to life the voices of people who have long since sunk into oblivion and events shrouded in time and almost forgotten that nevertheless influence our present.

Zisserman, once a deputy administrator for Georgia's troubled region of Kakhети, also headed a police department and acted as an advisor to the viceroy. He possesses the two best qualities of a chronicler: he is curious and observant, and his chronicle will prove invaluable to those studying the history of the Russian expansion. As a narrator, he proves unafraid to criticize the administrative structure, the bureaucratic machine, or army brutes and officials.

The book includes numerous examples of the tyranny of the generals and the disorderliness of the Caucasus government. Zisserman describes the careers of his colleagues and their downfalls: "The abundance and cheapness of the local wine brought to ruin not just one clerk, but many." Nothing escapes his attention. This translation is painstaking, and is accompanied by illustrations, detailed comments, and maps to bolster its accounts.

Every day in the Caucasus brings Zisserman a surprise. He takes part in military expeditions and manages bureaucrats, learns languages, notes down traditions and legends. His pages are inhabited by Georgia's various ethnic groups, including Pshavs, Kists, Khevsurs, and Kakhეთians. Who would have thought that the life of an official of the middle of the nineteenth century could be so eventful?

LADO POCHKHUA (March/April 2018)

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