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“The Caucasus Anthology”: History and Fate of an Archaeographic Project

Abstract

The article addresses an issue of publishing primary sources on the integration of the Caucasus into the Russian Empire, which has been little studied in the national archeography. Drawing on archival document, the author traces the history of the “Caucasus Anthology” (Kavkazskii sbornik) publication, focusing on the issues that covered the Russo-Persian and Russo-Turkish wars and those on conflicts between the Russians and the mountaineers. This was the Commander-in-Chief of the Caucasus Army Great Prince Michael Nikolayevich’s idea. The first project of the “Caucasus Anthology,” approved by the Emperor Alexander II in 1874, envisaged an accumulation of memoirs and notes on the military history of the Caucasus, in addition to

massive collections of documents stored in local archives. Within the Caucasus Military District headquarters a military history department was formed to edit and print the “Caucasus Anthology.” There were 20 volumes published under the editorship of I. S. Chernyavsky before the project ran out of primary sources and petered out. The notes on current military operations succeeded archival documents in print. The article scrutinises the role of the military historian V.A. Potto in the history of the “Caucasus Anthology.” After becoming head of the department in 1889, he produced a new editorial program, which focused on primary sources publication. Although his ideas were not officially approved by the Ministry of Military Affairs, he was supported by the commander of the headquarters of the Caucasus Military District N. N. Belyavsky and was able to enforce his plans. It is evident in the evolution of the 12 “Caucasus Anthology” volumes published with his participation. The last, 32nd, volume, published in 1912, consisted of two books edited by V. I. Tomkeev and S. S. Esadze and included solely documents on the Caucasus War of 1830-1840. The author concludes that the “Caucasus Anthology” was a noticeable achievement in the publication of documents on military history in the Russian Empire. Every volume extended the base of primary sources for studying the Russo-Caucasus relations.

Keywords

The military archeography, sources on the Military History, the Caucasus War, Caucasus Anthology, the Department for Military History, V. A. Potto.

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