

Czesława Kulesza

THE SCENES OF DAGESTAN BY JULIAN SURZYCKI

The Caucasus had been to Polish people a rather unknown country up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Though Poland had had trade links with the East and with the Caucasus since the middle ages the travellers going to Persia did not stay too long in Caucasus and they did not record their impressions in writing¹. Thus the Polish literature on Caucasus had been rather poor and had provided no possibility to get acquainted with this extremely interesting country².

The marked change of the situation in the 19-th century was mainly due to the fact that most Polish territories and Caucasus found themselves under tsarist rule. A similar political situation, the fact of incorporation in the same state and first of all a large number of Polish exiles in the Caucasus resulted in the mutual interest of these two nations.

The tsarist regime made the Caucasus a place of exile for political exiles and prisoners. The Polish exiles tried to fill in their free time with scientific investigations, writing memoirs and even literary work. A lot of this scientific and literary output has been preserved up to now but it is not used to the extent it deserves³. Polish scientists have only recently drawn our attention to the literature of the nineteenth

¹ J. Rey chman, *Podróznicy polscy na Bliskim Wschodzie w XIX w.*, Warszawa 1972, p. 176.

² B. Baranowski, *Znajomość Wschodu w dawnej Polsce do XVIII wieku*, Łódź 1950.

³ B. Baranowski, *Sakuartwetos mecchramete saukunis poloneli mterlls Mateusz Gralewski szemokszedebaszi*, [in:] *Razyskanlya po istorii Gruzji i Kavkaza*, Tbilissi 1976, p. 348—355; idem, *Z dziejów polsko-gruzińskich stosunków kulturalnych z połowy XIX wieku (opisy Gruzji Mateusza Gralewskiego)*, Ann. UMCS Sect. F, 1974, vol. XXIX, p. 175.

century regarding the Caucasus. J. Reychman⁴, M. Inglot⁵, B. Baranowski⁶ — wrote about Polish contacts with the Caucasus. *The Scenes of Dagestan* written by Julian Surzycki occupy an important place among the description of the Caucasus left by Polish exiles. Though the author was not a professional writer but an engineer he was able to present the country and the people among whom he lived in an extremely interesting way. For Dagestan and the Northern Caucasus those were the years of fighting of independence against the tsarist Russia. Dagestan since long called „the country of the mountains” was inhabited by numerous mountaineer nations which differed one from another in respect of the language and customs⁷. In the territory of Dagestan there were about 300 nations and ethnic groups which spoke different languages. The basic part of Dagestan's population belongs to the Caucasus language family and only partly to Turkish and Iranian language families⁸.

The most numerous nations among the Caucasus language family are: the Avars, Dargins, Lezgins and Lakovs. Around these nations there lived some small nations which were similar from the language point of view: Andovs, Ahvahs, Bagalovs, Botlihs, Karatinovs, Tindalovs, Tchainlalovs were close to Avars, Agalovs, Retuls, Tabassaruns and Tchahurs.

The Lak and Dargin groups included Knitungovs and Kubatchinovs. The group of Turkish languages included the Kumykovs and Nogais, whereas the Iranian group of languages comprised the Osetins⁹, and partly the so-called mountaineer Caucasus Jews.

Before Dagestan became a part of Russia there had ruled feudal economic and social conditions there (with some remains of the patriarchal system). The level of their development was, however, different in particular regions of the country. Early feudalism with some remains of the patriarchal system was characteristic of mountainous regions whereas a relatively developed feudalism was a more distinctive feature in low-land regions. The principle of territorial

⁴ J. Reychman, *Kaukaz*, [in:] *Polska i Polacy w cywilizacjach świata*, vol. 1, Warszawa 1939; idem, *Polacy w górach Kaukazu do końca XIX w.*, „Wierchy” 1954, vol. 23; idem, *Podróżnicy polscy...*

⁵ M. Inglot, *Polacy piszący na Kaukazie w pierwszej połowie XIX w.*, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1957, vol. 46, p. 538—551.

⁶ Baranowski, *Znajomość Wschodu w dawnej Polsce...*; idem, *Z dziejów polsko-gruzińskich stosunków...*; idem, *Sakuartwetos...*

⁷ *Narody Kavkaza*, ed. M. O. Kosven, L. J. Lavrov, G. A. Nersetsov, Kh. O. Khashaiev, [in:] *Narody mira*, ed. Tolstov, vol. 1, Moskva 1960, p. 403.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 404.

settlement was prevalent and rural communities — jamaats were basic economic and political units.

At the time Dagestan was annexed to Russia, large, patriarchal families were disappearing and the prevalent form was a small family.

There existed a number of feudal landed estates in particular territories, eg. Avar, Kazikumhsk, Kturins, Devbentsk and Mehtulinsk, Hansdoms, the Tarkovsk shamhalsdom, the estate of Kumyysk dukes. They differed in respect of area as well as the stage of economic development and political importance. Generally, the feudal estate covered the territory settled by one nation only, though sometimes it extended to other nations' lands¹⁰.

Shamhalovs, hans, uhmovs were at the top of social ladder, whereas beks were a little lower. Beks were followed by jankies that is beks' and hans' children from unequal marriages. The feudal class also comprised the so-called usdenis. The feudal rulers of Dagestan had their own armies.

The clergy played an important role in the socio-political life of feudal estates. The oppressed class included free and dependent peasants. Slaves were at the bottom of the social ladder. Rent of land was the basic form of feudal income.

A large part of the population belonged to relatively free village communities. They were governed by the group of the richest usdenis. Thus Dagestan was a backward feudal country of the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Agriculture and sheep-breeding were basic economic branches. Agriculture was dominant in plains whereas sheep-breeding prevailed in mountainous regions. Fruit-growing played a rather important part but gardening was much less developed. The technique of soil cultivation was very primitive. The level of economy was much higher in coastal regions where the people also engaged in fishing and extraction of salt. Handicrafts, especially arms smithing, copper and silver handiwork, carpet, cloth and sheepskin coat making as well as inlaying in wood were well developed. The articles produced by Dagestan handicraftsmen were known all over the Caucasus and in other countries¹¹.

Russia became interested in the Caucasus already at the beginning of the 18-th century, when Peter the First captured Derbent and Baku in 1721 (the annexation was however a temporary one). The real penetration took place in the second half of the 18-th century. The regions along the Kuban river were annexed to the Empire and in

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 405.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 406.

1763—1792 the frontier belt ran along the Kuban and the Terek. That belt was settled by the so-called line Cossacks¹².

The neighbourhood of Cossacks and Chechens gave rise to numerous Russian-mountaineer clashes. After Georgia (1801—1810) and Azerbaijan (1803—1813) became parts of Russia it turned out that their territories are separated from the Russian Empire by the Tschechen land, Upper Dagestan and northern-western Caucasus¹³.

Warrior mountaineer tribes created a lot of interest in that region threatening the so-called Georgian war way, the main transport way with Russia. The situation was not changed when Dagestan was legally incorporated into Russia in 1813¹⁴.

The growth of Muslim fanaticism added to the already hostile feelings of the mountaineers in the Eastern Caucasus. The new movement proclaimed „the sacred war” against the infidels. The ideologists of muridism declared that a Muslim should not be somebody's subject and that the first duty of a Muslim was the sacred war for freedom and the second duty the completion of Shariat¹⁵. Muridism also assumed the equality of all Muslims. Kazi Mulla, an ardent follower of muridism stood at the head of Chechens' uprising against Russia. He was proclaimed iman in 1828. The religious fanaticism of the murids, their hate towards the non-Muslims isolated them from other nations and made unity of all Caucasus nations in the wight against independence impossible.

Some Dagestan pro-Russian feudal lords did not want to acknowledge the iman's authority and refused to take part in the war. Peasants left the murid movement after the iman had not kept his promise to liquidate social differences¹⁶. The uprising was put down by the Russian army and the iman fell in a battle.

After the defeat of Kazi Mulla the murids were headed by Gamzat Bek whose cruelty towards the family of avar hans brought on his death in 1834. The Dagestani Shamil, Kazi Mulla's disciple turned out to be the most outstanding among the imans. As he was gifted with extraordinary military and organisation capabilities he was able to considerably extend war operations. Shamil succeeded in uniting the mountaineers and to subordinate local feudal lords. Relying on free

¹² Inglot, *op. cit.*, p. 539.

¹³ *Bolshaya Sovjetskaya Ehntsiklopediya*, vol. 11, Moskva 1972, p. 119 (further BSE).

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ M. Gralewski, *Kaukaz. Wspomnienia z dwunastoletniej niewoli. Opisanie kraju. Ludność. Zwyczaje i obyczaje*, Lwów 1877, p. 197.

¹⁶ BSE, vol. 11, p. 120.

peasants and the clergy he established a war-religious state — the imanat — where the secular and spiritual power belonged to him. In the eighteen thirties the mountainous part of Dagestan was the main point of muridism. That period, marked by the defeat of Mochoha (in 1834) and the capture of aul Achulgo. Shamil's residence in 1839¹⁷ was rather difficult. In the eighteen forties, however, the murids were supported by a successive uprising of the Chechens. The internal conflicts within the Russian Commandment in the Caucasus also proved advantageous to Shamil's cause. The offensive taken by the iman in autumn 1843 ended in capture of all Russian forts in Avaria with the exception of Temir Ilan Shur¹⁸.

Shamil's state extended considerably and his power increased. His victories and his eloquence brought him great popularity. In 1848 the iman rule was proclaimed hereditary¹⁹.

Western Dagestan with Avaria as well as the main part of Chechna were subordinated to Shamil. He introduced permanent administration, law-courts and taxes. The iman maintained a steady army; he manufactured guns and gun powder. As a priest he observed the principles of Koran and he fought with bloody revenge practices²⁰. The fifties brought the Russian supremacy. The growth of social conflicts in the imanat, the devastation of the country resulted in the fall of muridism. On 25-th August 1859 Shamil was surrounded in the Gunib aul. On 26-th he surrendered. At first he and his family were exiled to Kaluga and then he was allowed to leave for Mecca. Shamil died in Medima in 1871²¹. Dagestan found itself under the tsar's rule.

The immigration of Poles into the Caucasus was closely connected with partitions of Poland and then with uprisings and plots against the tsarist rule. Polish prisoners and exiles were enrolled in the Russian army and sent to the Caucasus, where the fight against the mountaineers was going on.

Polish diarists point out that about 20—50 thousand Poles stayed in the Caucasus all the time which accounted for about 20—30 per cent of overall Caucasus garrison force²². Nearly all the Poles were enrolled in the army as privates and military authorities as well as Russian soldiers treated them with distrust suspecting them of

¹⁷ L. Widerszal, *Sprawy Kaukaskie w polityce europejskiej w latach 1831—1864* Warszawa 1934, p. 25.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

¹⁹ BSE, vol. 29, p. 278.

²⁰ Widerszal, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

²¹ BSE, vol. 29, p. 278.

²² Baranowski, *Sakuartwetos...*, p. 349.

conspiracy against Russians and of favorizing the mountaineers. Difficult conditions and the necessity of fighting against the peoples who defended their freedom induced numerous Poles to desert the Russian army. They fled to Turkey, Persia, the Tscherkis and even to Shamil²³. It was neither easy nor sometimes advisable because eg. Persian authorities handed the Poles back over to the Russians²⁴.

The so-called „Hotel Lambert” headed by A. Czartoryski paid particular attention to Caucasus affairs in 1834—1840. Desertions and fights with the Russian soldiers in defence of their dignity induced the tsarist authorities to alleviate their situation. Those were, however, exceptional periods, because every revolutionary movement in Europe resulted in new repressions, so in 1848 tsar Nicolas I-st issued stringent orders which were to prevent a revolt of Polish soldiers²⁵.

There were a lot of representatives of Polish intelligentsia in the Caucasus army. Polish political exiles were largely made up of teachers; students and even schoolboys²⁶. Polish cultural groups, as eg. literary groups, were established rather quickly. Successive „waves” of incoming Poles brought capable men, discriminating observers and investigators, and even poets. Many of them recorded the effect of their work in writing. Special mention should be made of Tadeusz Łada-Zablocki, Ksawery Pietraszkiewicz, Mateusz Gralewski, Karol Kalinowski, Wincenty Dawid, Kazimierz Lapiński and many others²⁷. Julian Surzycki left an extremely valuable work on the history of the peoples of Dagestan and Northern Caucasus. J. Surzycki was born in Zamość in 1820. After graduating he began to work in the Board of Land and Water Ways in the Kingdom of Poland. Construction of a bridge across the river Wieprz, near Kosmin in 1841 was his first independent task. He passed the examination for the degree of an engineer of Land and water Communications with great honours. While working at the construction of New Zjazd in Warsaw he joined the revolutionary movement. When the tsarist gendarmes discovered the conspiracy Julian Surzycki and some of his comrades were arrested. He was imprisoned in the Warsaw Citadel and in spring 1845 he was sentenced to military service in the rank of a private and sent to the Caucasus.

At that time fierce fights with Shamil's mountaineers were going on. But nothing wrong happened to Surzycki. He came back to Poland in 1857 and immediately set to work at the Kierbedź Bridge across

²³ Widerszal, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 34.

²⁵ A. Giller, *Polacy na Kaukazie...*, „Dziennik Literacki” 1869, No. 52, p. 837.

²⁶ Widerszal, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

²⁷ Inglot, *op. cit.*, p. 545—551.

the Vistula. Then he was made manager of the Technical Department in the Board of Land and Water Ways. Afterwards he was manager of the Lublin Road and later of the Brzesc Road. The stay in Caucasus developed his love for the mountains. He was one of the first Polish mountain climbers. He died in Zakopane in 1882²⁸.

During the 12 years of his stay in Caucasus Surzycki devoted all his free time to exploring the country which was the place of his exile and which he came to like much. Mountain expeditions, near and far travels all over the country, hunts, living among the peoples of the Caucasus enabled J. Surzycki to make observations which were presented in *The Scenes of Dagestan*²⁹ published in „Warsaw Library”.

According to Mateusz Gralewski *The Scenes of Dagestan* should be numbered among most important works created by the Poles in the Caucasus³⁰. Besides J. Surzycki wrote a poem *The Virgin from the Country Folk*³¹, a latter *Hunts in the woods of Dagestan*³² and *The Literary Yearbook of 1846* announced the publication of his poem *The Prisoner or the Features of the Caucasus*. The attempts of M. Inglot to find that poem were, however, not successful³³.

Surzycki left good impression among the peoples of Dagestan; he was the main founder of the Deshlagar church he brought water from the mountains to town and he put forward a plan to construct a bridge across the wide and swift-flowing Samur river³⁴.

The Scenes of Dagestan — this is a very accurate and interesting description of the country, its people, socio-economic conditions, religion and culture. The observations are carefully arranged so that the whole work is extremely clear. The first part of *The Scenes of Dagestan* entitled *General Description of Dagestan* contains information about the geographical situation of the country, its mountain ranges, rivers and regions. Though the authors names only the most important peaks, the description of the largest valleys and regions is a detailed one. It becomes evident that Surzycki knew that part of the Caucasus very well. The whole country impressed him much and he did not conceal that when he wrote: „Dagestan is a wild but indescribably beautiful

²⁸ J. Jankowski, *Mosty w Polsce i mostowcy polscy. Od czasów najdawniejszych do końca I wojny światowej*, Gdańsk 1973, p. 75—76.

²⁹ J. Surzycki, *Obrazy Dagestanu*, „Biblioteka Warszawska” 1858, vol. II, III, IV; 1859 vol. II (further BW).

³⁰ Gralewski, *op. cit.*, s. 519.

³¹ Surzycki, *op. cit.*, BW 1859, vol. II.

³² J. Surzycki, *Polowanie w lasach Dagestanu*, [in:] *Wieniec. Pismo zbiorowe ofiarowane Stanisławowi Jachowiczowi*, vol. 2, Warszawa 1852.

³³ Inglot, *op. cit.*, p. 550.

³⁴ Gralewski, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

country particularly in its northern and middle part. When we stand on Kutinshinsk mountains from where we can see snow peaks on one hand and the misty sea on the other we feel nearly the whole Dagestan under our feet"³⁵.

Surzycki uses the name „Kutinshin Mountains" most probably with reference to the southern part of the so-called Tshonka-tau ridge³⁶. The power of the mountains, their huge and naked peaks made a rather depressing impression on J. Surzycki but vast, fertile and beautiful valleys made him smile.

Surzycki devoted much attention to the peoples of Dagestan. He admitted, however, that he was unable to name them all because a large number of them, a great variety and the low level of the available information made it impossible³⁷. J. Surzycki says that the population of Dagestan comes from many different tribes which use a lot of completely different languages. Apart from regions inhabited by one tribe he came across villages where the inhabitants used some different languages and did not understand one another. Not only there existed no reliable knowledge of those peoples and their languages but also the number of those peoples and languages was not known. So Surzycki busied himself with the peoples with the largest population as eg. „the Tavlintshis, Akushincis, Avarcis, Didoicus, Kazimuchovs or Kumuhovs, Kaitohovs, Karakaitohovs Kiurincovs, Tabassarancovs"³⁸.

Apart from them he also mentioned some other tribes which lived among the above said such as the Tatars in Northern Dagestan, the Lezgins inhabiting nearly the whole southern Dagestan, the Kumyks in the Tarkovsk shamhalstv, the Persians in Derbent and Kuba, the Jews in Kaitah and Kiurinsk hanat³⁹. Surzycki realizing that his knowledge about these peoples was not complete and that gaining and arrangement of such a knowledge could not be possible, he did not endeavour to achieve that and he confined himself only to the information he obtained. He had the same difficulties when he tried to present the history of the country and its peoples. The history of those people — he wrote — remains as if beyond an enchanted veil...⁴⁰ Though the Caucasus had been known since the Antiquity, its history was only recorded in legends and myths.

³⁵ Surzycki, *Obrazy Dagestanu*, BW 1858, vol. II, p. 227.

³⁶ Rey chman, *Polacy w górach Kaukazu...*, p. 32, note 41.

³⁷ Surzycki, *Obrazy Dagestanu*, BW 1858, vol. II, p. 233.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 589.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 589—590.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 234.

A more clear picture emerged only after the Arabs had penetrated the Caucasus bringing its rule and the teaching of Muhammed. Surzycki presented the socio-economic conditions in the then existing Dagestan. Clearly and in great detail. The whole Dagestan was divided into the territories of hereditary noblemen and free communes. Surzycki named all of them starting with the northern frontier of the state⁴¹ and then he proceeded with the most important districts. Tankovski shamhal was of greatest importance. Its history dated back to the first ruler appointed by the Arabs and who at a time ruled all over Dagestan. The title shamhal is of Arabian origin; sham meaning a candle and hal — a prince — that is the first man after the king. The next title enjoying great respect was ucmi karakatajsku which also came from the first Arabic iman changed into ucmu by the Dagestans. The titles of hams came according to Surzycki from Tatar rulers during Tamerlan's reign perhaps Crimea rulers. However, the Karchaksk maisum in Tabassaran was nominated by the Persians⁴². Those rulers forming the upper stratum of Dagestan feudal rulers were unrestricted masters of the owned land and also masters of life and death of the subjects. The oldest son was regarded as heir whereas younger off-spring was promised rich income (also the descendants from the unmarried subjects the so-called jankies). Daughters had no right to inherit property. In the lands of hereditary rulers there were in force: the written law which was the integral part of the Koran, the so-called Shariat and the common law-Adat⁴³. When the ruler came to a village the peasants had to support him and his court. The lord could inflict punishment but he could not sell his subject. The subjects were obliged to give away one tenth of all crops and one tenth of handicraft production and income (the so-called rakat).

The rakat was transferred directly to the lord's court twice a year: in the spring and in the autumn. Taxes were also paid by handicraftsmen and merchants. All subjects were obliged to report to military service with their own horse and arms. The remaining inhabitants bore all other costs of war expedition. Rivers, woods, lakes, sea-shores and pastures were the common property⁴⁴.

Becy or yeomanry occupied the next position in the social ladder. They were free from all dues and charges, they owned land and their

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 587.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 591.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 592.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 593.

own subjects. Their only duties consisted in obedience to the ruler and in going to war with their own soldiers⁴⁵.

The clerks had their hierarchy. The most important among them was the Kadi who issued orders on the ruler's behalf and who saw to it that they were executed. He had the lord's seal which was at the same time his signature. Mirza that is the writer had to write. The lowest though the most numerous clerks were nukiers. Among the clergy the highest position was occupied by aim or ulem — a sage then effendi — a priest in charge of mosques, schools and mullas. Kadi was a kind of a priest-clerk. A mulla had to observe religious rites. Muezzin called on the faithful to pray and to execute orders⁴⁶. The Muslim population of Dagestan belonged to the Sunnite sect. In free communes land was the common property of all inhabitants. When the population increased or decreased there was a new distribution of land by an ordinary drawing of lots. All the inhabitants had to take unanimous decisions regarding the commune. Even one contrary vote suspended the execution. In case of war all the inhabitants went to fight either in succession or all together⁴⁷.

Surzycki devoted a lot of attention to the economy of Dagestan. Its main branches were agriculture and sheep breeding. Surzycki divided the country into two distinctive regions: fertile, rich valleys or low lands and stony mountain slopes. The life and work of the mountaineers were much harder „From stony and bare mountains they gathered scarce crops...”⁴⁸ Vast though poor pastures did not provide suitable feeding stuffs for the sheep and cattle which were lean and less numerous. Even the climate — fogs and winds — were less favourable for men, animals and mountain crops.

The conditions in the valleys were quite different. They grew mainly wheat and barley and rice, millet, maize, beans in more fertile fields. Rye was unknown. Crops were plentiful though the soil was very rarely manured as horse dung was used only occasionally and cattle dung served as a combustible material. Sometimes high stubble fields were burned and the obtained ashes could be used as a manure. Ploughing was done by ploughs drawn by buffaloes or oxen. Bigger clods of earth were broken by spades rather than by harrows. Sowing was done by hand while keeping the seeds in a leather bag⁴⁹.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 594.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 595.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 600.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 230.

⁴⁹ Surzycki, *Obrazy Dagestanu*, BW 1859, vol. II, p. 745.

Sometimes it was necessary to irrigate the fields and that was done by men or to weed them and that was done by women and children. The grains were cut with sickles and then made into stacks usually with sloping thatched tops. Barns were not built⁵⁰. Threshing in the open air was effected by means of oak planks provided with tiny, hard stones. The so obtained grain was cleaned using the wind. Straw was used either for feeding the cattle or for making bricks. Grain was preserved in pits covered with boards or it was kept in barrels and sacks. There were extensive orchards around villages where also some vegetables were grown, eg.: onions, garlic, pepper, beans, carrots, lettuce. Fruit-trees like apple, plum, cherry, apricot and peach trees generally thrived without human intervention. Flax, hemp, cotton, tobacco and madder were also grown⁵¹.

Breeding of animals was also an important branch of economy. Flocks of sheep, including rams with big, fat tails grazed in vast pasture lands. They raised also buffaloes used for agriculture, horses, donkeys, and mules⁵². Only Russians, Armenians, Georgians and Persians were engaged in fishing. Trout, sturgeon, herring were fished. Hunting was mainly an occupation of the rich. Shooting pheasants, partridges and quails was often done with help of hawks. Out of big animals the following were hunted more often than the others: wild boars, deer, roe-deer, bears. Ordinary people usually lay in wait for the animals while noblemen often used horses and dogs; the animals were first scared away and then shot⁵³.

All the every-day articles were made by the Dagestanis themselves. Every family engaged in some handicraft. By using primitive tools the Dagestanis produced fine fabrics, garments, tools, excellent arms, utensils, trimmings⁵⁴. Limited trade mainly by sea through Derbent included only export of madder, raw silk, raw hides, walnut, wool, tobacco, fruits. Import included copper, faience and glass articles, grains, tea, sugar, wollen cloth, silk fabrics. Internal trade covered the goods exchange among the neighbouring regions⁵⁵.

Most attention and place was devoted by Surzycki to folk culture. Surzycki began with the description of Dagestan people and their homes. He wrote about home equipment, every day life, customs, festivities, pastimes, folk art, social contacts. Speaking of the people's

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 745.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 749.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 752.

⁵³ Surzycki, *Polowanie w lasach Dagestanu*, p. 146.

⁵⁴ Surzycki, *Obrazy Dagestanu*, BW 1859, vol. II, p. 754.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 755.

appearance he paid attention to the clothes and the men's and women's beauty. The richest and poorest households were depicted equally accurately. Their houses were spacious and even the poorest inhabitant had two rooms out of which one was always cleaner and finer. All rooms were combined by a gallery. The rooms were decorated by arms hung on walls, copper or faience articles. Bed clothing was arranged on shelves and more valuable cloths and things were kept in chests. The earthen floor was covered with carpets, plaitwork made of straw or grass. The people of Dagestan spent a many hours on flat roofs of their houses, resting there, meeting neighbours and so on. All the life of a Muslim was regulated by the Koran, from the most essential matters to rather trifling problems. According to these rules the faithful Muslims had to pray five times a day and to observe fast periods and to celebrate certain holidays. That was often an opportunity of enjoying oneself. Marriage ceremonies were very interesting. Surzycki took part in two such ceremonies leaving us a detailed description. It is worth mentioning that even that ceremony provided entertainment nearly exclusively for men. Women as always remained in the background. While describing marriage festivities Surzycki mentioned some scores of songs which he often heard during his visit to the Caucasus — because he affirmend — they were always sung by the natives there⁵⁶. All the people sang and every event, every object could be the subject of a song. As numerous as songs were legends and stories connected with each corner of Dagestan. The people's imagination, their ideals, dreams, longings are expressed in them. Dances, songs and above all horse races were favourite forms of entertainment. A horse constituted one half of a man's soul and body; it was a true companion in work, war, travel, often more valued than one's wife⁵⁷.

Patriarchal system in family life was preserved in the whole Dagestan. Wives and daughters were treated as property and sons remained under the unlimited father's rule. Father if he deemed it right could kill his son without incurring responsibility. Surzycki wrote about one such an event⁵⁸. The respect of elders was regarded as a holy duty similarly as hospitality which concerned the people including enemies and infidels. The guest was treated as if he had been sent by God. He could as long feel safe as long he stayed in his host's house⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ Surzycki, *Obrazy Dagestanu*, BW 1858, vol. II, p. 573.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 582.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 586—587.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 588.

The Dagestan people took friendship extremely seriously. It demanded boundless sacrifices at any moment and it required treating a friend's affairs as their own affairs. J. Surzycki's penetrating observations, detailed descriptions, his fascination with the trails, beauty and imagination of Dagestan people lead us to the conclusion that he was closely connected with them. His presentation of the life and its problems is marked by great personal interest and zeal. *The Scenes of Dagestan* are not free from defects and inaccuracies which the author frankly admits but in spite of this they deserve a very high estimation. They are perhaps the most valuable source of all as far as the history of Dagestan is concerned.

Czesława Kulesza

OBRAZY DAGESTANU JULIANA SURZYCKIEGO

W pierwszej połowie wieku XIX wielu Polaków znalazło się na Kaukazie. Odbywali oni tam służbę wojskową w garnizonach rosyjskich. Dużą ich część stanowili polscy inteligenci, których w ten sposób władze carskie karały za działalność patriotyczną. Oni to pozostawili liczne opisy Kaukazu, z których wiele przetrwało do dziś. Wśród nich na szczególną uwagę zasługują *Obrazy Dagestanu* Juliana Surzyckiego. Autor okazał się bardzo wnikliwym obserwatorem. W sposób systematyczny i niezwykle ciekawie przedstawił swoje spostrzeżenia o ludach Dagestanu, o stosunkach społecznych, politycznych i gospodarczych oraz kulturze. Wiele miejsca poświęcił opisom przepięknej przyrody kaukaskiej. *Obrazy Dagestanu* stanowią z pewnością jedno z najcenniejszych źródeł do historii tego kraju.