October, 2013

Moshe Gammer, 1950-2013: Historian of the Caucasus

Rebecca Gould

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/r_gould/76/
embraced a still-marginalized academic publishing medium—the Internet. Intended as a “service to the history profession” and coinciding roughly with the bicentennial, the bilingual critical bibliography Amann compiled encompassed all publications issued between 1980 and 1995 focusing on the local history of the Revolution of 1789, and can be accessed at: bit.ly/143qVuo.


The great merit of Amman’s scholarship was well recognized. He served as a member of the editorial board of the French Historical Society and was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1963. His commitment to scholarship was balanced by an equal commitment to liberal undergraduate education. He was honored with the University of Michigan–Dearborn’s Distinguished Teaching Award in 1975, and was the first recipient of the William E. Stirton Professorship from 1979 to 1984, the most prestigious award the university bestows on its faculty.

After his wife Enne’s death in 2003, Amann married Jean Apperson, a psychologist who shared his passion for France and nature, in 2004. In addition to completing his critical bibliography of the French Revolution while in retirement, he occupied himself with ornithology and carpentry, as well as his lifelong enthusiasm for mushroom foraging.

He was “loved by many people because of his special way of being” and, as his wife Jean remembered, for “his ingenuous charm.” In his later years, he was fond of using the French expression “fin de vie heureuse” and characterized his life near its end as having been “satisfactory”—a typically wry understatement. In addition to his wife Jean, Peter Amann is survived by his sister, Eva Amann Irrera; his children Paula, Sandra, and David; and three grandchildren.

Joe Lunn
University of Michigan–Dearborn

Moshe Gammer 1950–2013

On April 16, 2013, Moshe Gammer, professor in the Department of Middle Eastern and African History, Tel Aviv University, and the most prominent specialist on the tsarist conquest of the Caucasus, passed away. Professor Gammer had first been diagnosed with lymphoma less than six months prior to his death, and his illness was only known to a few within the community of Caucasian scholars. Broadly trained in the history of the modern Middle East at the London School of Economics by the renowned scholar Elie Kedourie, in whose honor he later co-edited a volume (Political Thought and Political History: Studies in Memory of Elie Kedourie, 2002), Gammer will be best remembered as the author of what remains the most thoroughly documented study of the Chechen and Dagestani resistance to the Russian conquest of the Caucasus in any language: Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Dagestan (Frank Cass, 1994; Russian translation 1998).

While Gammer’s studies of the Islamic resistance to tsarist conquest are definitive across the academic world, the impact of his work in the north Caucasus has been particularly unprecedented. The Russian translation of his book on Shamil, the guerrilla warrior and imam of the longest-existing anti-colonial Islamic state, can be found in nearly every major Dagestani bookstore, often alongside a second Russian volume (Shamil—pravitel gosudarstva i ego diplomatia, 1997) that includes translations of Gammer’s many English articles on Shamil’s legacy. The renown of Muslim Resistance to the Tsar is such that even general Dagestani and Chechen readers are well-acquainted with its contents. Gammer was one of those rare historians whose work actively shaped historical memory, not just in the academy, but also among the Chechens and Dagestanis whose history he recorded. Articles such as “Collective Memory and Politics: Remarks on Some Competing Historical Narratives in the Caucasus and Russia and Their Use of a ‘National Hero’” (Caucasian Regional Studies, 1999), “Shamil in Soviet Historiography” (Middle Eastern Studies, 1992), and “Between Mecca and Moscow: Islam, Politics, and Political Islam in Chechnya and Dagestan” (Middle Eastern Studies, 2005) testify to the extensive interaction between Gammer’s work and the everyday lives of contemporary Chechens and Dagestanis, and to his keen understanding of the variegated paths taken by historical memory.

In the months preceding his death, Gammer was at work on two co-authored articles that similarly pursued the theme of Chechen historical memory in the post-Soviet present, “Radical Islamism, Traditional Islam and Ethno-Nationalism in the Northern Caucasus” (with Chen Bram, Middle Eastern Studies, 2013) and “Post-Soviet Narratives of the Conquest of the Caucasus” (with Vera Kaplan, Jahrbücher für Geschichte osteu-ropas, 2013).

Gammer’s second book, The Lone Wolf and the Bear: Three Centuries of Chechen Defiance of Russian Rule (Hurst and Company, 2005), treated the history of Chechen resistance to colonialism for a general readership, and was well-reviewed by numerous prominent scholars. Further definitive works on the spread of Sufi networks throughout the Caucasus include “The Beginnings of the Naqshbandiyya in Dagestan and the Russian Conquest of the Caucasus” (Die Welt des Islams, 1994) and “The Qadiriyya in the Northern Caucasus” (Journal of the History of Sufism, 2000).

My personal acquaintance with Gammer began when he invited me to a 2008 workshop on Written Culture in Dagestan, hosted by the Iranian and European area studies centers and the Department of Middle Eastern and African History at Tel Aviv University. This conference marked the first time that so many prominent scholars of the Islamic Caucasus from Russia, the United States, England, Germany, and, most importantly, Dagestan, had assembled to discuss the subject of Dagestani...
Moshe Gammer
Photo by Ruth Frankl-Gammer

Arabic textual culture. Thanks to Gammer’s efforts and vision, this conference compellingly demonstrated that research on barely known (and in many cases still unpublished) primary sources was well underway.

Gammer’s editorial endeavors bore fruit in two volumes: *Daghestan and the World of Islam* (Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2006, co-edited with David Wasserman) and *Islam and Sufism in Daghestan* (Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2009). Together, these collections constitute the most important and original corpus of work on Daghestan in the English language published in the past several decades. A third volume, to be based on the proceedings of the 2008 workshop, was in preparation at the time of his death. Gammer invested a tremendous amount of labor in the production of these volumes, including the translation of Daghestani and Russian scholars’ writings into English.

While Gammer founded the subfield of north Caucasus history in the English-speaking world, far from remaining content with the limits faced by scholars who study the Caucasus, he worked productively to extend the boundaries of the field. His keen awareness of, and interest in, the most important recent advances in the study of the Caucasus, even when these advances fell outside his immediate expertise, were frequently observed by all who had the pleasure of making his acquaintance.

Concerning the passing of scholars in his own day, the 14th-century Islamic historian Ibn Kathir wrote, “God does not remove knowledge suddenly from mankind, but removes it when scholars pass away.” With Gammer’s death, the field of Caucasus studies has lost a teacher, editor, collaborator, and a scholar with a bold and compelling vision for the future of his field. In his teaching, as in his scholarship, Gammer focused most intensely on matters of substance. He strove to create a community of scholars rather than to amass accolades. Gammer convened conferences of world-historical significance for the future of Caucasus studies, and nurtured scholars of all persuasions and inclinations, without thinking of how to promote himself. His modesty, as well as the unexpectedly rapid course taken by his illness, had the unfortunate effect of leaving the world of Caucasus studies unprepared for his death. Dear Moshe, rest in peace. Thank you for making Caucasus studies, the Caucasus itself, and the worlds inhabited by your colleagues and the wife and daughter who survive you, a better place during your tragically brief sojourn on earth.

Rebecca Gould
Yale-NUS College, Singapore

Stanley Karnow (1925–2013)

Journalist, Historian, Filmmaker

Stanley Karnow, the eminent journalist and author of prizewinning books on the history of US involvement in Asia, died of heart failure on January 27, 2013, at his home in Potomac, Maryland. He was 87.

Over a long writing career, Karnow ranged broadly across Asian history, publishing books about Vietnam, the Philippines, and China that won high praise from scholars even as they found large popular audiences. Just as impressive, Karnow mastered different genres. He worked as a correspondent for daily newspapers including the Washington Post, weeklies such as Time and Newsweek, and the NBC television network. He also played central roles in two PBS documentaries: the 13-part *Vietnam: A Television History*, which became the most successful program ever produced by public television when it aired in 1983, and a three-part program on the Philippines broadcast in 1989.

In each of these fields, Karnow won great distinction. His book *In Our Image: America’s Encounter with the Philippines*, published in conjunction with the PBS series, won the Pulitzer Prize for history in 1990. An earlier book, *Mao and China: From Revolution to Revolution*, was nominated for the National Book Award in 1973. The documentary on the Vietnam War won numerous prizes including six Emmy Awards and a Peabody Award. In 2002, Karnow was the first recipient of the Shorenstein Journalism Award, given jointly by Harvard and Stanford universities to recognize reporting on Asia.

Although consistently praised for his meticulousness and even-handedness, Karnow was no stranger to controversy, perhaps an inevitable fate for anyone who wrote as much as he did about the Vietnam War. The PBS series was criticized by the left for its gentle treatment of US policymakers and by the right for romanticizing the Vietnamese revolutionaries. Karnow's reporting on Vietnam earned him a place on Nixon's "enemy's list," made public in 1973 by the Senate Committee investigating the Watergate break-in. Karnow later joked that the revelation was "one of the highlights of my life."

Karnow was born in Brooklyn on February 4, 1925, to a middle-class Jewish family. As a young man, he showed literary talent from an early age, writing radio programs and editing his high school newspaper. Karnow's undergraduate years at Harvard University were interrupted by the Second World War, when the Army sent him to Asia as a weather observer and unit historian. Following the war, he returned to Harvard and in 1947 completed his degree in European history and literature.

Karnow's European interests and Asian experiences inspired the life of travel, adventure, and writing that ensued. “Thousands of young Americans were flocking to Europe after World War II, and I joined the throng,” he recounted in his memoir *Paris in the Fifties*, published in 1997. “Late in June 1947, fresh out of college, I went to Paris, planning to stay for the summer. I stayed for ten years.” He studied at the Sorbonne and the École des Sciences Politiques in the late 1940s and began working as a correspondent for American publications, eventually landing a job with *Time* in 1950.

Rising rapidly at the magazine, Karnow was posted to Hong Kong in 1958 as bureau chief for Southeast Asia. The timing was auspicious for an ambitious young reporter. Fighting in Vietnam would draw the world’s attention a year later and it blossomed into a major story in the early 1960s. Karnow was