

**ISCKMC 2020****International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****ISSUES OF «HIGHLANDER RAIDS» IN NATIONAL  
ISTORIOGRAPHY**

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**Abstract**

The question of the so-called raids, “highlander raiding system” in the North Caucasus in the XVIII-XIX centuries is still one of the most controversial ones in Russian Caucasian studies. In the 70-80s of the twentieth century the terms “highlander raiding system”, “highlander expansion”, etc. were introduced into scientific world. In this article, in the light of the fierce dispute that still exists on this terminological problem, the Highlander-Cossack raids, the authors also analyze the opinions of the Decembrists and Russian writers, who were the participants in the Caucasian War. Raiding neighboring territories is a phenomenon typical of all peoples at a certain stage of development. It had been growing since the 16th century, gaining its greatest scope in the 18th century and existed even in the 19th century. From the end of the 18th century the highlanders' raids on the Caucasian line were dictated by a protest against the establishment of Russian power in the province by military, forceful methods and military expeditions to mountainous areas. At the same time, the Cossacks were also engaged in raids in the highlander villages: not a single highlander raid towards the Russian side remained without a response raid of the Cossacks and soldiers. The raids were of a mutual nature and therefore it would be more correct to speak about the Highlander-Cossack raids.

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## 1. Introduction

The study of the issues related to the assessment of the raiding system in the North Caucasus in the 18th-19th centuries is still one of the most sensitive and controversial in Caucasian studies. Unfortunately, some historians have introduced the terms “highlander raiding system”, “highlander expansion”, etc. into scientific world. Undoubtedly, the raids of the highlanders in the Trans-Caucasian region, the neighboring mountainous regions and the Russian settlements along the Caucasian line from the middle of the 18th are the events that took place. However, putting forward offensive assessments of the highlanders for raids (“predators”, “robbers” etc.), it is necessary to take into account some aspects.

Firstly, raiding neighboring territories is a phenomenon typical of all peoples at a certain stage of development. The raids as a social phenomenon known as “highlander raids” were ambiguous and mainly represented a manifestation of the liberation struggle of the highlanders in the form of partisan actions.

Secondly, the Cossacks were also engaged in raids on the highlander villages: not a single highlander raid on the Russian side remained without a return raid of the Cossacks and soldiers. The raids were of a mutual nature and therefore it would be more correct to speak about the Highlander-Cossack raids.

## 2. Problem Statement

Since the second half of the 16th century, acting mainly by political and diplomatic methods, Russia has managed to achieve significant success in the consolidation of its influence in the North Caucasus. At the same time, the study of the nature of the Highlander-Cossack raids remains relevant.

The study of Russian-North Caucasian relations in the first half of the 19th century and the analysis of the internal political events in the region during this period allow clarifying the issues that are understudied in a similar logical connection in Soviet and Russian Caucasian studies. The answers to the questions are not only scientific, but of practical and applied nature.

## 3. Research Questions

- 3.1. The history of relations between Russia and the peoples of the North Caucasus in the 16th - first third of the 19th centuries and the problem of the study of the “raiding system” has an extensive historiography. Much attention was paid to the study of the formation of the Russian-North Caucasian military-political alliance in the 16th - first half of the 18th centuries. Many Russian authors of the 19th century who wrote about the Caucasus, including participants of the Caucasian War, tried to objectively understand the events that took place in the Caucasus in the 18th -19th centuries.
- 3.2. At the turn of XX-XXI centuries many publications appeared in Russia, the authors of which objectively and impartially assessed the Caucasian War and the forms and methods of the annexation of the North Caucasus to Russia (Gapurov, 2018).

The published studies and revealed materials provide the opportunity for objective and comprehensive analysis of the process of the formation of Russian-North Caucasian relations moreover they allow revealing the deep socio-political reasons for the liberation movement of the highlanders.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the article is to show the formation of the concepts of “highlander expansion”, “highlander predation”, “actions of retribution”, “highlander raiding system”, “Highlander-Cossack raids” in pre-revolutionary and national historiography.

#### **5. Research Methods**

In the research we used the general scientific (analysis and synthesis) and special methods (problem-chronological, historical-genetic, historical-typological). The problem-chronological method allowed studying the formation of Russian-North Caucasian relations in a historical perspective, the historical-genetic method allowed determining causal relationships in the development of relations between Russia and the peoples of the North Caucasus, the use of the historical-typological method allowed classifying the motives of military confrontation, the formation of political, economic and cultural ties in the region.

#### **6. Findings**

The question of the so-called raids, “highlander raiding system” in the North Caucasus in the XVIII-XIX centuries is still one of the most controversial ones in Russian Caucasian studies. In the 70-80s of the twentieth century the terms “highlander raiding system”, “highlander expansion”, etc. were introduced into scientific world. Moreover, the article analyzes other points of view. Undoubtedly, the raids of the highlanders in the Trans-Caucasian region, the neighboring mountainous regions and the Russian settlements along the Caucasian line from the middle of the 18th are the events that took place. However, putting forward offensive assessments of the highlanders for raids (“predators”, “robbers” etc.), it is necessary to take into account some aspects.

Firstly, raiding neighboring territories is a phenomenon typical of all peoples at a certain stage of development. It had been growing since the 16th century, gaining its greatest scope in the 18th century and existed even in the 19th century. The raids as a social phenomenon was not a national feature of the highlanders and it did not originate from their “predatory nature”, as many authors of the 19th century wrote.

Secondly, the Cossacks were also engaged in raids on the highlander villages: not a single highlander raid on the Russian side remained without a return raid of the Cossacks and soldiers. The raids were of a mutual nature and therefore it would be more correct to speak about the Highlander-Cossack raids.

Shcherbina (1996), the only pre-revolutionary historian of the Cossacks, wrote about the Highlander-Cossack raids (in the context of this particular problem statement) as a terrible mutual

tragedy. He emphasized that the raids took place with “amazing tenacity, resilience and mutual bitterness, which brought a lot of evil, ruin and grief to both sides” (Shcherbina, 1996, p. 131).

Pokrovsky (1995) wrote that the raids were, in fact, a mutual affair and it was very difficult to establish who was the first to start it: the highlanders against the Cossacks or the Cossacks - against the highlanders.

The assessment given to the raids by some representatives of the Russian command in the Caucasus is also very interesting. Thus, the commander of the left flank of the Caucasian line, Lieutenant General Rosen, in the report to his superiors on April 19, 1830, wrote: “I do not consider useful the raids carried out by our troops on the Chechen villages for any pranks of some residents; because the inhabitants, not involved in pranks, but only living in one village, are exposed to the devastation caused by our troops (i.e., by the principle of mutual responsibility, the comment of the authors ), thus they have more hatred towards us and want revenge” (Central State Military Historical Archive: L. 2-2).

However, the results of the actions of the highlanders and the tsarist troops were incomparable. The highlander troops were small. Tsarist troops and Cossacks carried out their raids on highlander villages using huge forces and artillery. Accordingly, the number of civilian casualties on both sides was different. According to Gisetti (1901), the loss of people from the Russian side from the end of the 18th century and until the middle of the 19th century in the Caucasus amounted to about 2 thousand people killed, wounded and imprisoned. The losses of the population among the highlanders were many times greater. For example, during the raid of the Cossacks on the village of the Adyghe lord Erige-Mansurov On October 3, 1823, 500 people were killed (Debu, 1829). Almost the same number of people was killed in the Chechen village of Dady-Yurt in September 1819 (notes of A. P. Ermolov with appendices (1869), p. 87). However, there were dozens of such villages in Trans-Kuban, Kabarda and Chechnya during the raids of the tsarist troops and the Cossacks; accordingly, the number of civilians killed was also large.

Taking into account all these factors, Degoev (2001) wrote about the nature of the raids: If we switch the conversation into the channel of the hard truth, then it is necessary to take into account that in fact the countless Cossack raids on the highlanders in their socio-economic nature, methods, cruelty and results differed little from the raids of highlanders. Since the supporters of the concept of the “internal” origins of the Caucasian War associate its origin with this particular social institution (it does not matter in this case, whether it is a main or a secondary reason), then we should not forget that the opposite side has the same institution, which can play an equally provocative role.

However, the problem of uncompromising clarification of “who is right and who is wrong” in the war or the mathematical distribution of responsibility for it is unproductive from a scientific point of view, although it has a legal right to exist as a subject of ideological and political speculation. Unfortunately, even serious scientists can not get rid of the oppression of this problem, often understanding its moral task of the rehabilitation of Russia and solving it quite frankly and directly (Degoev, 2001).

The nature of the raids in the North Caucasus in the 18th-19th centuries was much more difficult than it seems at first glance. Highlanders-raiders are only one side of this phenomenon. Judging objective and impartial, there is a second side - the Cossacks. Therefore, if we want to write about the highlander raids, about the “highlander raiding system”, then, it is necessary to write about the Highlander-Cossack

raids. The historical phenomenon in the North Caucasus, known as raids, had mutual character in the 18th – 19th centuries: both the highlanders and the Cossacks ran on each other.

In the context of fierce dispute that exists on the problem of the Highlander-Cossack raids, it seems interesting to us to consider the opinions of the Decembrists and Russian writers – the participants of the Caucasian War. They either witnessed those raids and or were the participants of those raids (being the soldiers of Cossack detachments), left their impressions and assessments of this events.

Decembrist writer Bestuzhev-Marlinsky (1981) was one of those who wrote about the raids according to fresh impressions. Unlike modern authors who categorically take one of the sides, Highlanders or Cossacks, Marlinsky wrote about the raids in a calm tone, without demonizing anyone. Apparently, it was because he knew for sure both sides were to blame, the raids were mutual.

During the raids on the highlander villages, Russian troops and Cossacks destroyed everything - houses, gardens, hay and bread. Highlanders, as a rule, did not do this. They, as a rule, dealt with those who resisted, captured not only men, but also women with children, drove away livestock, “but rarely lit hay and bread in the field” (Popka, 1858, p. 249). Here is how Bestuzhev-Marlinsky (1981) described Highlander raid on a Russian settlement beyond the Terek: “The Kabardians invaded houses, took away what was more valuable or what came to hand in a hurry, but did not burn houses, did not deliberately trample the fields, did not break vineyards. “We should not touch the gift of God and the work of man,” they said, and this is the rule of a highlander robber, who is not terrified of any villainy, there is a valor that the most educated peoples could be proud of if they had it” (Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, 1981). At the same time, Bestuzhev-Marlinsky does not idealize the highlanders who raided Russian settlements and Cossack villages. It shows how much grief and suffering these raids brought to the inhabitants of these settlements.

It is necessary to take into account the following aspect: often military expeditions of Russian troops against the highlanders were carried out in the form of raids - a sudden raid at night, the destruction of one or another village, the capture of prisoners and cattle and a quick return to the fortress. In this form, most of the raids of the notorious General Zass against the western Adygs, in Trans-Kuban region, were carried out. The general was sure that doing so he was driving fear into the highlanders and accelerating their conquest by Russia. Most of the Decembrists did not support such methods. Thus, N.I. Lorer wrote in his memoirs: “In a conversation with Zass, I mentioned that I did not like his system of war, and he answered me at the same time: “Russia wants to conquer the Caucasus whatever it takes. These peoples are our enemies, how can we take them if not with fear and threat? Philanthropy and A.P. Ermolov are not useful here, hanging mercilessly, robbing and burning villages – the only things he managed to do better than we (Lorer, 1984, p. 258).

A similar point of view on the methods of conquering the highlanders was expressed by the Decembrist Lachinov (1877). Discussing the expedition of Russian troops to Chechnya in the summer of 1832 under the command of General Rosen, he wrote: “Rapid raids, well-calculated, therefore always sudden and therefore rarely unsuccessful, can undoubtedly frighten and thereby subdue the rampage of predators; but this requires completely different tricks and not sluggish parodies of the European wars...”, during which the “horrors of war are observed” - fires, robberies, murders” (Lachinov, 1877, p. 82). Such raids, Lachinov (1877) assured, would not soon lead to the desired goal - to peace in the Caucasus and its

permanent annexation to Russia. “There is no reason to think, he noted, that the raids will ever lead to the expected end, if the system does not change and, of course, such expeditions will not serve to completely pacify the highlanders” (Lachinov, 1877, p. 82).

The raids of the highlanders and the Cossacks against each other represented a terrible vicious circle. From the end of the XVIII century the raids of highlanders on the Caucasian line were dictated not only by predatory motives, they also expressed their protest against the establishment of Russian power in the region by military, forceful methods and military expeditions to mountainous areas.

In response to the highlander raid, a whole military expedition was equipped: Cossacks and soldiers with artillery. They randomly destroyed highlander villages, gardens, cattle, hay harvested for the winter and food supplies. N.I. Lorer, E. Lachinov and A. Bestuzhev-Marlinsky wrote about this with sadness.

Similar opinions on the nature of highlander raids were expressed by Pushkin (1936). Following his journey to the Caucasus in 1829, he wrote: “The Circassians hate us. We drove them out of free pastures; their villages were ruined; whole tribes were destroyed. From hour to hour they go deeper into the mountains and start their raids from there” (Pushkin, 1936, p. 565).

Almost the entire military administration of the Caucasus and the overwhelming majority of the Russian officers, were convinced that the only way to stop the highlander raids was harsh punishment and the use of military methods. However, Bestuzhev-Marlinsky (1981) was sure that it was impossible to eradicate highlander raids only by forceful methods. “Be sure, he wrote, that as long as enlightenment does not open up new means to contentment and trade does not spread it equally in all the gorges of the Caucasus, the highlanders will not be weaned from robberies even with triangular evidence (i.e. bayonets, the comment of the authors)” (Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, 1981, p. 300). According to Bestuzhev-Marlinsky (1981), it will be possible to stop the raids of the highlanders and their armed resistance only through the use of economic and cultural means, which are only able to show the highlanders the advantages of a peaceful life within the framework of the Russian state. Indeed, the real rapprochement between the Russians and the highlanders, the incorporation of the highlanders into the Russian state began in the last third of the 19th century, when serious Russian reforms were carried out in the North Caucasus, which had a huge impact on highlander society.

There is no doubt that the raids of highlanders on neighboring territories existed even before the appearance of Russia in the North Caucasus. These raids were purely predatory in nature. However, the highlander raids of the late 18th-early 19th centuries, which, allegedly, according to some historians, became one of the main causes of the Caucasian War, in our opinion, are different from these early raids to some extent. Here, in the raids, different motives mixed - both the desire for prey and the struggle against the establishment of Russian power in the region by brutal forceful methods and retaliatory revenge caused by the military expeditions of the Russian troops.

## **7. Conclusion**

The scientific dispute on the nature of the highlander raids on the Russian border area in the North Caucasus in the second half of the 18th - the first quarter of the 19th century is not only purely academic. The answer to the origin of the nature of the Caucasian war itself, the struggle of the highlanders against

tsarism in that period depends on different approaches to the assessment of this phenomenon. The mutual raids of the Cossacks and the highlanders, generated by the policy of tsarism, made the life of the border population on both sides of the Caucasian military line unbearably difficult.

The long path of uniting the peoples of the North Caucasus and Russia was also accompanied by political and economic rapprochement, the establishment and development of cultural ties, the spread of Russian administrative power in a particular territory, shortcomings and mistakes on both sides, which often led to armed clashes.

The raids of the highlanders and the Cossacks against each other represented a terrible vicious circle. From the end of the XVIII century the raids of highlanders on the Caucasian territory were dictated not only by predatory motives, but they also expressed their protest against the establishment of Russian power in the region by military, forceful methods and military expeditions to mountainous areas.

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