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**TOWARDS FORMATION OF STATE UNITY BETWEEN RUSSIA**  
**AND PEOPLES OF NORTH CAUCASUS**

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**Abstract**

The paper states that the key factor contributing to the accession of the peoples of the North Caucasus to Russia was Russian culture. At first, these were cultural contacts between the Cossacks and the North Caucasian highlanders, which led to the creation of a unique Cossack-mountain community. Then, in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russian writers, poets, Decembrists, Caucasian educators introduced Russia to the Caucasus, and the Caucasus to Russia. It is emphasized that this was the background for a cultural basis, which against all odds united Russia and the Caucasus. Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the lowland regions of Chechnya (Tersko-Sunzhensky interfluve), Dagestan, Kabarda, Karachay, North Ossetia and Cherkessia have been in close contact with the Russian population, Russian culture. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> centuries many publications appeared in Russia, the authors of which objectively and impartially assessed the Caucasian War, forms and methods of accession of the North Caucasus to Russia, participation of the representatives of advanced Russian intelligentsia in establishing good-neighborly relations and the formation of the state unity of Russia and the peoples of the North Caucasus. The paper provides a rigorous evaluation of published studies and identified archival materials, which objectively and comprehensively analyzed the process of the Russian-North Caucasian socio-political, cultural and military unity, and revealed deep socio-political reasons for strengthening the Russian-North Caucasian unity.

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## 1. Introduction

The formation and development of Russian-Chechen relations and state unity is a complex, historically long and multifaceted process. It began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and went its way from good-neighborly relations and a military-political union to the state unity. On the eve and in the early years of the Caucasian War, both the Russian and Chechen sides sought to solve emerging problems and differences through political efforts and negotiations. An important role in this belongs to the representatives of Russian culture: writers, poets and Decembrists who found themselves in the Caucasus by the will of fate.

## 2. Problem Statement

Since the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, acting mainly by political and diplomatic methods, Russia has managed to achieve significant success in strengthening its influence in the North Caucasus. Oaths and agreements on “nationality” of the highlanders of Russia were a recurring phenomenon in the Russian-North Caucasian relations of the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> mid – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The study of Russian-Chechen relations in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and the analysis of domestic political events in the region during this period allows answering questions that have not yet been sufficiently studied in such a logical connective in Soviet and Russian Caucasian studies. The answers to these questions are not only scientific, but also practical. The relevance of the study of the problem of the state unity and the role of the representatives of Russian culture in establishing Russian-North Caucasian relations is beyond any doubt, especially in the light of the modern state of Russian-North Caucasian relations.

## 3. Research Questions

The problem of studying the history of relations between Russia and the peoples of the North Caucasus of the 16<sup>th</sup> – first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and the issues of the historical role of the representatives of Russian culture has an extensive historiography. Serious attention was paid to the study of the Russian-North Caucasian military-political union in the 16<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many Russian authors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century who wrote about the Caucasus, including the participants in the Caucasian War, tried to objectively understand the events that took place in the Caucasus in the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> centuries many publications appeared in Russia, the authors of which objectively and impartially assessed the Caucasian War, forms and methods of accession of the North Caucasus to Russia, participation of the representatives of advanced Russian intelligentsia in establishing good-neighborly relations and the formation of the state unity of Russia and the peoples of the North Caucasus (Akhmadov, 1991; Gapurov, 2016, 2019; Kozlov, 1996; Lyubavsky, 1996; Maltsev, 1996; Totoev, 1948; Zasedateleva, 1974).

Published studies and identified archival documents provide the basis for an objective and comprehensive analysis of the Russian-North Caucasian socio-political, cultural unity, and make it possible to reveal the reasons for strengthening the Russian-North Caucasian unity.

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

The purpose of the study is to consider the main stages of the formation of the military-political union of Russia and the peoples of the North Caucasus, as well as to show the huge contribution of the representatives of Russian culture to the development of Russian-Chechen relations in the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It seems that in this context it is necessary to follow the process of formation and development of cultural, trade, economic and military relations between Russia and the peoples of the North Caucasus.

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

The study utilized general scientific and special methods (problem-chronological, historical-genetic, historical-typological). The problem-chronological method made it possible to study the formation of Russian-North Caucasian relations in the historical perspective, the historical and genetic method made it possible to analyze the causal relations in the development of relations between Russia and the peoples of the North Caucasus, the historical and typological method made it possible to classify and comprehend the motives of regular periodic political, economic and cultural ties and the conclusion of corresponding agreements and unions.

#### **6. Findings**

Discussing the nature of political processes in Russia at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin wrote: “With the collapse of the country, we were on the verge, and in some well-known regions – beyond the civil war, on ethnic grounds. We managed to quench these hot issues by tremendous efforts, heavy toll. But this, of course, does not mean that the problem is solved”.

However, even at a time when the state as an institution was critically weakened, Russia did not disappear. What happened was what Vasily Klyuchevsky spoke about in relation to the first Russian Time of Troubles: “When the political bonds of public order broke, the country was saved by the moral will of the people” (Putin, 2015).

Indeed, it was the “moral will of the peoples” that saved Russia from the collapse at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Russian culture played a huge role, which for centuries connected the peoples of Russia with thousands of threads and which could not break up any destructive forces, including external forces hostile to Russia. Russian culture acted as a cementing force in the formation of a multinational Russian state.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries Russia managed to attach (and here it is necessary to emphasize that it was mainly by peaceful, political and economic means) most of the peoples of the North Caucasus. In the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the peoples of Russia and the North Caucasus

were united by strong bonds of cultural, political and economic relations, which in the 20<sup>th</sup> century withstood the most difficult hardships. Suffice it to recall the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 and the upheavals of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Russian culture played a huge role in the accession of the peoples of the North Caucasus to Russia, and then in their approval and incorporation in the Russian society. There were many factors (economic, political) that attracted Russia and the mountain peoples of the North Caucasus to each other, but cultures occupied the most important place.

From the very beginning of the contact between cultures of Russian and mountain peoples mainly from the 16<sup>th</sup> century (in general, this process began from the period of Ancient Russia) there was a mutual desire for knowledge of each other, mutual respect, otherwise there would not have been that amazing interaction and mutual influence of these cultures, the emergence of such a phenomenon as the culture of the Caucasian Cossacks that we have been observing since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Terek-Greben Cossacks became an integral part of the North Caucasian society. It was an important factor in both the economic and political history of the region, in the relations of the North Caucasian peoples with Russia.

There was a consensus in historical literature on the initial period of the formation of the Terek-Greben Cossacks (16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries). During this period, peaceful and friendly relations developed between them and the highlanders. “From the very first days, the most good-neighborly relations were established between the Greben and their closest neighbors”, wrote Karaulov (1912). – “The Grebens socialized with Kabardians and Chechens, and often took wives from the latter...” (p. 23). Pisarev and Lyubavsky note that the Cossacks kept their positions due to the support of the Malo-Kabardian princes and Chechen societies (as cited in Pisarev, 1881).

Centuries-long peaceful relations between Cossacks and highlanders contributed to the mutual influence of mountain and Russian culture. Cossacks that were poorly familiar with local natural conditions adopted the agricultural system, clothing, certain types of cold weapons from the highlanders (Akhmadov, 1991).

The fact that they learned each other’s language also confirms not only peaceful relations, but also respectful attitude between Cossacks and highlanders in the 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries, which is the most important means of good-neighborly communication.

A clear example of such relations between the mountain owners and the Cossacks is the alliance and cooperation of the Nakh ruler Shih-Murza Okotsky and his heirs with the Terek-Greben Cossacks. It is also possible to point out that the military chieftain of the Terek army in the 40s of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was the mountain prince Mutsal (Potto, 1991).

By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century “the tension between the highlanders and Cossacks grew into an open confrontation in many areas of the North Caucasus” (Maltsev, 1996, p. 21). At the same time, one interesting circumstance was once noted by the Decembrist Bestuzhev-Marlinsky (1958): “The left bank of the Terek is humiliated by the rich villages of linear Cossacks... Almost all of them speak Tatar, socialize with the highlanders..., but they are the relentless foes in the field” (p. 56).

The inclusion of mountain peoples in Russia left a unique imprint on Russian culture – literature, art, social thinking. There was mutual enrichment between the culture of the advanced Russia and the

peoples of the Caucasus. In the complex and deeply contradictory reality of that time, the multilateral influence of Russian culture significantly strengthened the positive features of the national culture of the peoples of the North Caucasus.

The great Russian poet A.S. Pushkin discovered the Caucasus as a “wonderful region” inhabited not by “predators” but by proud, freedom-loving, brave highlanders for Russian society. Belinsky (1947) wrote about this: “The grandiose image of the Caucasus with its warlike inhabitants was first reproduced in the Russian poetry. Only in Pushkin’s poem for the first time did Russian society get acquainted with the Caucasus, which has long been familiar to Russia by its weapons” (p. 23).

The works of Pushkin, Lermontov, Polezhaev, Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, many other writers, poets and Decembrists contributed to the spread of ideas about the Caucasus and its peoples.

In the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the first secular schools and libraries appeared in Chechnya and other parts of the region. Russian scientist P.K. Uslar together with Chechen Kadi Dosov created the Chechen grammar. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Chechen teachers appeared who graduated from Vladikavkaz and Grozny schools. It was they who formed the backbone of the future secular Chechen intelligentsia.

The construction of railways, dirt roads, highways, bridges, etc. was intensively developed during the post-reform period. Grozny oil exported by rail was one of the most promising sources of income. Its extraction greatly contributed to the growth of economic well-being not only of the Caucasus, but of the whole country.

The fact that from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Chechens treated Russia as their great Motherland is evidenced by the facts of their participation in the external wars of Russia together with other peoples of the empire: in the Russian-Turkish war of 1877–1878, in the Russian-Japanese at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the World War I.

A system of modern school, secondary special and higher education was created in the 20–30s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of the 1930s, schools were available in each settlement, universal illiteracy was eliminated.

In the 1920s and 1930s, a real breakthrough took place in the industrial construction of the republic: modern oil production, oil refining, chemical and engineering industries were developed.

However, all these successes in the republic were accompanied by negative processes: repressions against the intelligentsia, engineering and technical personnel and party-Soviet workers. In February 1944, the Stalin regime committed a terrible crime (genocide) against peoples – Chechens and Ingush were deported without any reason from their homeland to Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Up to 1/3 of the Chechen population died during deportation and during the stay in places of exile (13 years).

On January 9, 1957, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR adopted a decree “On the restoration of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as part of the RSFSR” and from the same year the Chechens began to return to their historical homeland.

In the 1960s and 1980s the development of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was quite controversial. On the one hand, industry developed quite quickly and well: oil production, oil refining, chemical industry, engineering. The Republic has established a quite powerful processing industry for agricultural products. At the same time, under the pretext of combating

nationalism the party bodies of the republic created serious obstacles to the development of national culture and research on national history.

In 1991, the actions of destructive forces led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Certain political forces in Moscow with the support and incitement of anti-Russian circles abroad headed for the collapse of the Russian Federation. The Chechen Republic was used as a bridgehead. So in the 1990s the Republic was involved in tragic and bloody events.

The military campaigns of the 1994–1995, 1999–2000s bulldozed right through the republic. Cities and settlements, all social infrastructure were destroyed. Hostilities continued even in early 2000. In these most difficult conditions, the Russian President V.V. Putin appointed Akhmat-Hadji Kadyrov as the Chief of Staff of the Chechen Republic. Due to great wisdom, courage, diplomatic tact, he managed to stop the war in Chechnya, unite the Chechen people, began the restoration of the destroyed republic. After his untimely death on May 9, 2004, Ramzan Akhmatovich Kadyrov continued his course and policy. For several years, the Chechen Republic has made a historically unprecedented breakthrough. The republic was not only restored, but became much more beautiful and better than in the pre-war period. Peace and stability finally came to the Republic.

## 7. Conclusion

Two main factors influenced the development and preservation peaceful and friendly relations between Cossacks and highlanders in the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries: firstly, in the initial period, there were few Cossacks on the Terek and the Sunzha, they occupied free lands (while the highlanders believed that the land would be enough for everyone; the centuries-old mountain custom – to provide hospitality to the runaway and persecuted people – was also worked). Russia has not really threatened the independence of the highlanders and the Cossacks have not acted as conductors of tsarist policy in the region. Secondly, in the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries North Caucasian rulers, societies and Cossacks were mutually interested in peaceful and allied relations. The approval and consolidation of the Cossacks on the Terek and the Sunzha ensuring its viability was in direct dependence on the state of its relations with the highlanders.

The end of the Caucasian War stopped the long and difficult process of joining Chechnya to Russia. There was an opportunity for gradual inclusion of the region in an economic, cultural and management system of Russia. In this regard, in the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century a lot was really done.

The events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century showed that Russia and the Chechen Republic are very closely, inextricably linked by centuries-old political, economic and cultural ties that cannot be broken. The Russian President V.V. Putin pointed out that “the Russian experience of state development is unique. We are a multinational society, but we are a united nation. This makes our country complex and multidimensional. It offers tremendous opportunities for development in many areas (Putin, 2015).

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