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**ECONOMIC LIFE OF DAGESTAN AND NORTH CAUCASUS IN  
18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES**

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***Abstract***

Using scientific and historical ethnographic materials, the article describes the economic life of the peoples of the North Caucasus who were engaged in agriculture, cattle breeding and handicraft production. Based on the analysis of all available sources, published and unpublished works, Caucasian studies, the article describes processes that occurred in the economic life of the region. The economic life of the peoples of the region depended on natural geographical and climatic conditions, availability of arable land plots and the political situation. The article examines the impact of the economic life on strengthening economic ties of the region with Russia. The purpose of this study is to analyze characteristics of the economic life of the peoples of Dagestan and the North Caucasus taking into account peculiarities of the region. The methodological basis of the article is the principle of historicism which requires the study of historical facts and events taking into account specific historical conditions, their consideration in causality, development and interdependence of historical events. Special attention is paid to the development of trade and economic relations between Russia and the North Caucasus which played a key role in further relations. The Russian government paid special attention to the economic development of the region which was one of the means of spreading its influence on the North Caucasus. The economic life of the region was regulated by special decrees encouraging economic activities. For Russia, the North Caucasus was important politically and economically. Therefore, the region was considered as strategically important.

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**Keywords:** Economic life, mountainous and flat terrain.



## 1. Introduction

The Russian historical science is aimed at the comprehensive and in-depth analysis of relations and interrelations of the Russian peoples. Therefore, the study of close and long multifaceted ties of North Caucasian peoples with Russia can be of particular importance for harmonization of inter-ethnic relations, and formation of mutual understanding. The fundamental branch that influences the relationship between the peoples of the North Caucasus was the economic life considered analyzed by the authors using all the available sources.

## 2. Problem Statement

In numerous works devoted to the issues of the North Caucasus, the economic life of Dagestan and the North Caucasus of the 18<sup>th</sup> - mid 19<sup>th</sup> centuries is understudied. However, there is a growing public interest in this issue, because the North Caucasus region has always had exclusive multiethnicity, diversity of cultures, and specific economic activities. In the period under review, the aforementioned region had unique economic management which directly influences relations with neighboring regions and with Russia as a whole.

## 3. Research Questions

In order to study the characteristics of economic life, the North Caucasus region should be divided into mountainous and flat parts. The peoples of the North Caucasus were engaged agriculture, cattle breeding and handicraft production. The limited amount of land suitable for arable farming in the mountainous part caused development of the most intensive farming forms. In the mountains, especially in Dagestan and the North-Western Caucasus, people used fertilizers, terraced slopes and strengthened stone walls. In the highlands, due to the lack of land, great attention was paid to improving natural conditions of arable and hay fields.

One of the traditional occupations were viticulture and gardening, especially in Dagestan. Practically everyone except for the residents of the highland regions was engaged in this activity. Gardens were developed in river valleys, where it was easy to water them; hard to plow winds; in hilly areas protected from winds (Gadzhiev, 2005). They grew apples, pears, apricots, peaches, nuts, cherries, quinces, plums, cherries, etc. Dagestan was famous for its orchards. In its mountain valleys, people used to plant fruit trees on the slopes. The areas that were above the gardens were used for rainfed agriculture and cattle breeding. Fresh and dried fruit was sold all over the region. In addition, wild fruit trees grew in the forests surrounding mountain and flat villages. Dagestan was a region of developed viticulture (Amirkhanova, 2017). It was well developed in Derbent, Kizlyar and Priterechny districts. In 1720, Peter the Great issued a decree ordering to grow “grapes on the southern outskirts of the country and bring trees and herbs from Persia” (Gritsenko, 1984, p. 31). Many Arab authors of the 11<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> centuries noted that large vineyards were located on the territory of Primorsky Dagestan, from Semender to Derbent. The peoples of the region sowed millet, rye, oats and corn. For the inhabitants of the lower hills, grain was one of the main exchange products which was not even sold. Speaking about the exchange side of the economic life of the region, it is worth

adding that the Circassians traded cows and bulls for "military salt", getting 12 pounds of salt per one cow, and 21 pounds for one ox (Kaziev & Karpeev, 2003).

The peoples of the North Caucasus were engaged in gardening; they grew onions, garlic, red pepper, beets, watermelons, and melons. In Dagestan, the population of the Terek-Sulak interfluvium were engaged in "farming and cattle breeding" (Gerber, 1728). Sericulture was significant for the economic life of the region. The center of sericulture was Dagestan, more precisely Kizlyar. In 1830, the silk production volume reached 144 000 lb. In the middle of the 18th century, for the purpose of encouraging silk trade, the edicts of the Senate abolished a silk trade duty. This made it possible to increase purchases. The growing export made it possible to develop the silk industry, both in the region and in Russia (Velikaya, 2016). Handicraft industries played an important role in the economy of the peoples of the North Caucasus. Dagestan ranked first in the North Caucasus by the volume of handicrafts produced in the region. Up to 40 types of handicrafts were produced there. Dagestan was a birthplace of the handicraft industry of the North Caucasus (Hasanaliev, 2012).

Along with the above-listed branches, people grew madder for obtaining the dye for wool and other fabrics. However, smart Persian merchants hired the local population who dug up the madder root which they secretly exported to Persia and made a huge profit. This did not fit into the plans of the Russian leadership which was interested in the economic growth of North Caucasus. The situation changed only in 1748 when the government ordered to buy madder for the treasury rather than to sell it abroad (Demidova, Kusheva, & Persov, 1957).

The most important occupation of the inhabitants of the North Caucasus was animal breeding. First, they had opportunities to prepare hay and other types of feed for livestock. Second, cattle could feed on winter pastures until late autumn. In the plain areas, people were engaged in cattle breeding while in the mountains, sheep and goats were bred.

In the mountains, in particular in Dagestan and Chechnya, two animal breeding systems were used: stationary and distant. For the highlands, the distant districts were typical, for the mountain valleys and the upper foothills – the stationary ones based on the use of pastures and stubble tops. The distant-stationary system was characteristic of the regions with developed agriculture and gardening.

In addition, in the North Caucasus region, horses were bred for riding and military campaigns. Nogai, Kabardian, Karachai, Ossetian and Kumyk horses were known far beyond the region. Bagaev (2014), cites the words of a participant of the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878 Colonel A.A. Bers who gave a high rating to Ossetian mountain horses, pointing out that "they are not cute, but they are bright and fidgety, they feel great in the mountain environment" (p. 6). The Nogai and Kumyk bred two-humped camels which had special power and endurance and were used as pack animals.

The inhabitants of Kizlyar and the Cossacks were engaged in fishing. Fishing was popular among the Cossacks who fished on the Caspian coast, on the Island Chechen. On the Caspian coast, there were several harbors and marinas: Sladkorichnaya, Serebryakovskaya, Ochinskaya, and Shandrukovskaya quays (Inozemtsev, 2005). After Dagestan was annexed to Russia, the demand for fish increased several times which contributed to the development of this industry in the region.

Dagestan, Ossetian and other artisans who owned the secret of steel processing ("damask") were very famous. Khorev (2004) cites the words of Professor M. Engelhardt from the University of Dorpat who

said that “the Ossetians are armed with a double-edged dagger from 12 to 14 inches long; it replaces the knife, and the ax, since a good, sharp iron easily cuts even the bones and small trees” (p. 101).

Meanwhile, the local population needed iron. The petitions of the Kumyk princes, Tarkov shamkhal, Kaytag utsmy, Avar khan and other rulers of Dagestan speak for this fact (Velikaya 2016).

In Dagestan, local residents produced burkas. The centers of burka production were Andi and Botlikh. The processed sheep skin was used for producing coats, hats, belts, belts, etc.

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

The purpose of this study is to analyze characteristics of the economic life of the peoples of Dagestan and the North Caucasus taking into account peculiarities of the region.

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

The methodological basis of the article is the principle of historicism which requires the study of historical facts and events taking into account specific historical conditions, their consideration in causality, development and interdependence of historical events. The theoretical basis of the article is the doctrine of the economic life of the region used in the Russian, North Caucasian and Dagestan historiography.

#### **6. Findings**

The article examines the nature of the economic life of the region and characteristics of the economic life of the peoples of Dagestan and the North Caucasus of the 18<sup>th</sup>- middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

#### **7. Conclusion**

The economic life of Dagestan and the North Caucasus was assessed by dividing the population of the region into two groups — living on the flat terrain and in the mountains. In the mountains, the population was engaged in cattle breeding; while on the flat terrain, they were engaged in agriculture. Handicraft production and home crafts were also very important.

The economic relations between Dagestan and the North Caucasus had a positive effect on the economic life of the population. However, the Russian-Caucasian trade relations depended on political relations. The disunity of the Caucasian society had negative effects on the economic life (Turkav, 2008). The exchange relations were changed by commodity-money relations. The long and painful process of transition to commodity-money relations was predetermined by long-term positive prospects.

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