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KUNACHESTVO BETWEEN CHECHENS AND COSSACKS OF THE TEREK REGION IN XIX CENTURY

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Abstract

The relationship between Russians and Chechens is a problem that has been attracting the attention of specialists in Caucasian studies for a long time. Historically, such relationships in the North Caucasus formed on the basis of kunachestvo (close friendship). This topic is studied in a lot of sources, documents, and literature. Kunachestvo helped to develop trade and exchanges, establish cultural and good-neighborly relations. The institute of kunachestvo, which is widespread among Caucasian nations, played an important role in relationships among mountaineers in all the spheres of life. Over the centuries, Chechens have maintained customs and traditions of hospitality and kunachestvo that transformed with changes in social, economic, and day-to-day conditions. Kunachestvo and hospitality have been regarded as main virtues that raised friendship to a sufficient level. Chechen traditions of kunachestvo facilitated economic, cultural, and political relationships between Chechens and other nations. According to these traditions, people who had a common endeavor or lived nearby, or people who didn't know each other but met on the way had to help and be loyal to each other as brothers. The traditions of hospitality and kunachestvo are still preserved nowadays and bring advantages today.

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Keywords: Above-Terek Chechens, Cossacks, kunaks, traditions, hospitality, exchange.



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1. Introduction

From the very beginning, the system of values in each culture contains the fund for preservation and development of its identity as well as the facilitation of dialogue and assimilation with other cultures. Values have great importance in developing constructive interfaith and international relationships that help to stabilize the situation in modern North Caucasus society.

2. Problem Statement

Nowadays, the most important issues are the problems of intercultural interaction between people of different ethnic groups and national cultures. In this research, we describe the positive sides of intercultural and interethnic relationships based on the example of Chechens and the Cossacks of the Terek region.

3. Research Questions

In this article, we show the relationships between Russian and Chechens in the Terek region.

4. Purpose of the Study

The article aims to describe close friendly relationships (kunachestvo) between Cossacks and Chechens in the indicated region.

5. Research Methods

The article relies on the descriptive methods which employ such techniques as observation, interpretation, comparison, and synthesis.

6. Findings

Hospitality and kunachestvo have come a long way and became a part of the culture of nations in the region, a factor of trust and mutual help, one of the forms of public diplomacy. These institutes have infinite resources and huge reserves. They combine communicative, psychological, and economic functions, and help to develop trust and confidence as the main requirement for building stable interethnic relationships in the region (Akkieva, 2018). Kunachestvo, which is a well-known Caucasian custom, was first described by L.N. Tolstoy (Gelaeva, 2018). L.N. Tolstoy described how he became a kunak (close friend) of Sado Miserbiev, a Chechen who invited the writer to his house, treated him and asked to take a thing which he likes in the house as a present. He gave Tolstoy a saber, and the writer presented him with a music box. Kunachestvo is a friendship in its supreme spiritual and moral manifestation.

Chechens and the Terek region Cossacks maintained close friendly relationships for a long time. Kunachestvo helped to develop trade and exchanges, establish cultural relations. The above-Terek Chechens had especially close trade relations with Cossacks from the villages that were located on the left bank of Terek opposite the settlements of Chechens. The presence of kunachestvo is also manifested in

the fact that Cossacks seconded a nobleman Fedor Prazdnichnov to buy hay to feed cattle in the winter of 1771. He went through Chechen villages and wrote the following report for the commander of the Terek army: "From Braguna I went to the house of Devlet-Girey and told about my mission to his officer Adzhi Elbuzdiy. He said that they have enough hay, and each household can sell us 3 carts which will bring to Chervlennoe for a voluntary fee." It's unlikely that Cossacks would send their representatives to Chechen villages in the case of hostile relationships.

When colonel Pullo ordered the surrender of weapons, a famous generalized rebellion spread in Chechnya. After this rebellion, Chechens who lived along Terek took everything they could transport on their carts and went to the mountains. When Cossacks received a report about the flight of above-Terek Chechens, military authorities issued the following orders: "Dismantle Chechen houses in auls and bring them to Cossacks' villages." This was done by linear Cossacks. However, after seven years of hardship, when the Russian side abandoned this short-sighted order, Chechens returned to their settlements and revived them. For a long time, Cossacks who lived along the Terek river had close friendly relations with Chechens living in the same area. Kunachestvo was far-sighted and vital relation for both sides that by the will of historic destiny had to live nearby, united by the river Terek. The citizens of villages and settlements located in parallel maintained cultural and economic relationships with each other. The citizens of the Chulik-Yurt village maintained relationships with the Isherskaya settlement and the villagers of High Naur and Low Naur kept in touch with Naurskaya settlement and so on. In 1844 the villagers of Stariy Yurt asked the corps commander: "...to let us have a ferry on the Terek river so that one of its halves that belonged to us since the time of our ancestors remained in our favor, and the other part remained in the favor of Russians." As patriarchs claim, ferry links have been in use since the XIX century as it is in that years they were obviously allowed. The ferrymen transported both Chechens and Cossacks living along the banks of the Terek for a fee. This reduced the distance between them and facilitated the rapprochement of people.

The relationships were so closed that both Chechens and Cossacks knew the names and appearance of each other.

The influence of Cossacks on Chechens after their second settlement in the Terek region since the 1840s was much stronger. Before, Chechens used mountain plow to cultivate land in the mountains. Under the influence of Cossacks, they replaced it by a heavy plow with an iron share, which was a more efficient tool facilitating the cultivation of land. As if competing with their neighbors, Chechens started to create "...grape orchards, grow wheat, barley, corn, and different vegetables" (Gritsenko, 1961, p. 56).

Kunachestvo helped Chechens keep shops in Cossack villages, while Cossacks could say the name of their kunak and he could go with his goods to any Chechen village along the Terek.

After Russian authority was established in Chechnya, Chechens appreciated the value of the Russian language started to send their children to schools in Cossack villages to study Russian. This was especially common among Chechens who lived near these villages on the banks of Terek. For example, Umalat Laudaev, a famous Chechen ethnographer who created the first work about Chechens written in the Russian language, studied Russian in the Naurskaya village in his childhood. The value of his work "the Chechen tribe" is hard to overestimate. Kunachestvo strengthened close economic and cultural relations between adjacent nations that existed for long. This custom helped the Caucasian nations come

closer and consolidated peace in the region of Caucasus. One of the most famous Caucasian trade centers was Kizlyar where both Chechens and Cossacks living along the Terek river sold their goods. As many researchers note, Kizlyar was a thriving marketplace since its establishment. This was supported by the location of the town that stood at the crossroads of trade routes between Persia, South Caucasus, North-East Caucasus, and inner Russia. As Inozemtseva (2009) notes “Kizlyar surpasses (the 1830s) all other Caucasian towns by the volume of its trade...” (p. 53). Both Chechens and Cossacks living along the banks of the Terek went to Kizlyar. In Kizlyar, the citizens of the Terek region bought salt, agricultural equipment, wheat, rice, handicrafts, grapes, timber, etc. However, there were also other trade centers for the Terek region Cossacks and Chechens such as Naur, Mozdok, Stariy Yurt, Chervlennaya. These settlements held many fairs. Usually, Chechens bought salt, matches, calico, red bunting, shawls, silk headscarves, paper, soap, etc. In his report of 1812, general Rtishev established a place where Chechens could buy salt: “I designated Naura as a place where Chechens can buy some small amounts of salt. As most of them buy salt in Shamhala, which is a Tarskovskiy’s possession in Dagestan, Naura can be used by those Chechens who are nationals of Russia and live closer to that settlement (AKAK, 1873). Chechen and Cossack merchants brought goods from Kizlyar made in Russia, North Caucasus, Turkey, Persia, Western Europe. They sold them in Chechen villages and Cossack settlements. There is a growth of commodity and money relations in the second part of the XIX century.

During this period, Chechnya was in transit to a peaceful life after the Caucasian war and some reforms. Chechens and Cossacks living in the Terek region had friendly and good neighborly relationships. They had neither animosity nor the will to dominate over each other. Tolerance and mutual interests were the basis for strengthening political and cultural relations between Cossacks and Chechens. The latter had a particular impact on the development of the material culture of Russian settlers. Cossacks acquired the form of dress and types of munition from Chechens. At the same time, Russian settlers had a positive influence on the material and spiritual culture of native people.

For example, special regulations issued during the Caucasian war by the general Gudovich stated: “All soldiers and Cossacks going over to Chechens must not be accepted” (AKAK, 1869, p. 43). The mutual influence was so strong that Chechens refused to turn in fugitive soldiers and Cossacks, although accepting all other requirements imposed on them. The majority of runaways remain living among Chechens and turned to Islam. This process was double-sided. Chechens fled from the blood feud to Cossack villages and started new Cossack families. Those who didn’t want to fight against Chechens crossed the Terek, accepted Islam, started families, and became the full members of Chechen societies. The relationships with Cossacks contributed to a seamless inclusion of above-Terek Chechens in the system of Russian citizenship and governance. Chechens formed the whole group of Russian officers and intellectuals. For example, lieutenant S. Chulikov starts his request with the following words: “My father is Russian ex-lieutenant Chulikov...” (Gritsenko, 1961, p. 82) Adu Vaganov – colonel, Ganzhuev Alkhazur – lieutenant, Mustafinov Davletmirza – lieutenant–colonel, Isaev Musa – lieutenant, Chulikov Ulubiy – major, Kurumov Kasim – colonel, Saraliev Bacha – second lieutenant, U. Laudaev – captain, etc.

This first officers of Chechen origin played different roles in the history of the nation. However, on the other hand, they were the first who understand the hopelessness of fighting against the huge empire

and decided to exploit the benefits of inclusion into its system. They became large owners of land which they got for their loyal service to the Russian Empire. Concentrating huge amounts of land protected by the laws and military force of the empire, they developed economic activities using wage labor of their compatriots, primarily.

After the Russian government concurred the region, land, administrative, and judicial reforms took place here. Already being a part of Russia, Chechnya gets involved in the all-Russia market. At that time, Chechens were even more interested in strengthening trade and cultural relations with Russians. Russian merchants sold them cotton textiles, canvas, iron, which Chechen used to manufacture sickles and capes, as well as the lead for bullets, etc (Gapurov & Abdurakhmanov, 2009; Gapurov & Magomedov, 2017).

Words and whole expressions, taken from the local lexicon, started to appear in the speech of Cossacks under the influence of constant communication with foreign-language neighbors. This gave the Russian language some peculiar features in its composition, content, and pronunciation. Chechens also acquired some elements of the Cossack way of life. Instead of a fireplace, they adopted a type of a warmer building with a Russian stove. They replaced plank-beds with wooden beds and adopted a high table instead of a round table with three legs. Many Cossacks went to Chechen villages and worked for rich lords and wealthy people. They built houses, mills, stables, created orchards, manufactured furniture and “other useful things while citizens watch their work with curiosity and listen to their remarks” (“Caucasus”) Markgraf (1881) described the appearance of Cossacks as the following:

The appearance of Greben Cossacks is highly unusual: brown hair with black shiny eyes or black hair and blue eyes; typical Chechen features mix with a craggy type of Nogaian or Kalmyk; a walk, slimness, and flexibility of a mountaineer are visible, and at the same time you still clearly see a Great Russian behind this cover... (p. 48)

Houses and way of living showed the mutual influence of neighboring nations. For example, Cossacks lived in big houses made of timber and accepted their guests there. However, these houses became cold in winter, as eastern winds were blowing through them and firewood was expensive. That’s why Cossacks adopted a saklia-style house from Chechens and build it near the wooden houses. Saklia was a house built of cheap materials. It was a long and low type of dwelling with a flat roof. Such a house was sort of going underground and didn’t need much firewood while withstanding winter winds of Caspian steppes. The whole family of a Cossack resided in this house in winter. This was the usual environment for them. Markgraf (1881) wrote that “most family members sit here in a Chechen style with their legs curled up. There are no icons here, and a three-leg Chechen kneeler is used instead of a chair or a Russian bench” (p. 58).

Cossack adopted the Chechen national costume, some household items, games, dances, musical instruments, and melodies. For example, the Chechen dance and Naura lezginka were spread among Cossacks in the entire Terek region. Horse races and trick riding competitions became popular among Cossacks under the influence of neighbors.

In turn, Chechens adopted a new type of house and improved agricultural tools from Russians. They learned how to cultivate fields, grow grapes, etc. The trade relationships played a huge role in bringing nations together during the Caucasian war and after it. The first exchange and trade posts were established for this purpose on the Caucasus military line in 1811. As time passed, authorities enhanced

and improved their functions. Such posts were established at Amir-Adzi-Yurtovskaya and Chervlennaya quarantine cordons, etc. Here, the above-Terek Chechens brought their goods such as leather and furs, horses, cattle, sheep, felt, and felt cloaks, chokhas, timber, butter, copper, etc. They were traded for manufactured goods, cast-iron cooking pots, iron, canvas, calico, cotton, silk, and woolen headscarves, sugar, tea, soap, mirrors, goatskins, chests, oil, wooden utensils, etc.

Of course, the life of Cossack during the Caucasian war was purely military. It was governed by military authorities and the cultivation of land was done at odd moments under the cover of soldiers. After the Caucasian water, a Cossack became more of a citizen than a warrior. He was a subject to civilian authorities and had to take care of his household and family. In these conditions, Cossacks, especially those who came from inner regions of Russia, had to face various geographic and climatic conditions in which villages were established. They had to get used to local nature, break their military customs and acquire economic habits.

7. Conclusion

Thus, Cossacks were the main territorial neighbors of Chechens. Their villages were located on the left bank of the Terek opposite to Chechen settlements on the right bank. The relationships between Chechens and Cossacks based on the tradition of *kunachestvo*. These were friendly neighborly relations that continued throughout the history of interaction between Chechens and Russians represented by Cossacks.

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