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RELATIONS OF THE CHECHENS WITH PEOPLES OF NORTH
CAUCASUS IN MODERN HISTORY

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Abstract

The submitted paper sets the task to study the questions connected with trade relationship of the Chechens with the people of the North Caucasus and also, with the people of Russia. Being one of the most ancient people of the Caucasus, the Chechens had rather highly developed material and spiritual culture in comparison with other people of the region, and due to this fact, were constantly in interference and interaction with the people of the North Caucasus and Russia. The paper considers the stages of relationship of the people of Chechnya with Russia and the people of the North Caucasus since the 16th century in the field of trade and economic and other relations. Trade and economic relations of the Chechens with the neighboring people of the Caucasus and with the Russian population have an extreme antiquity. Their basis should be historical, natural-geographical and other factors. It is known that in the considered time the Chechens, as well as all North Caucasian people, were engaged in subsistence economy which, as a rule, met their needs, but, nevertheless, at all stages of the historical past they had quite close relationship with Russia and with other people of the North Caucasus, both in political, as well as in trade-economic and cultural spheres. Trade ties with Russia and other people of the North Caucasus, in general, promoted further increase in production that, in turn, had significant effect on the growth of trade both in the region and beyond its boundaries.

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1. Introduction

The Chechens are the indigenous population of the Caucasus. The material and spiritual cultures of the people testify to their close ties both with the peoples of the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia, and sometimes with West Asia. More actively the Chechens showed themselves during the invasion periods on their territory of nomad tribes of the I millennium BC – the II millennium AD – Cimmerians, Skiphosarmatic tribes, Alan, Huns, Khazars, Mongolo-Tatar hordes and the Central Asian conqueror, as well as in the expansion of representatives of the Arab caliphate in the 7–8th centuries (see more detail about the ancient history of the Chechens in Bagaev's (2006) article.

2. Problem Statement

The study of the nature of trade, economic and cultural ties between Chechnya and the peoples of the North Caucasus and Russia reveals the historical roots, causes and conditions of their rapprochement.

3. Research Questions

The subject of the study is the trade and economic relations of the Chechens with the peoples of the North Caucasus and Russia in the 16th – early 19th centuries.

The paper also considers the following:

- Development of agriculture and cattle breeding of the Chechens;
- Development of craft production of the Chechens.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to analyze the trade and economic relations of the Chechens with the peoples of the North Caucasus and Russia in the 16th – early 19th centuries.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis of the study includes the principles of objectivity, historicism and scientificity in the study of documents and the use of facts.

6. Findings

Trade and economic relations of the Chechens began from the 16th century, possibly in an earlier period. The peculiar group of the Russian population that has developed in Chechnya – the Cossacks – has intensified these relations. In the history of Chechnya, the relations have not been sufficiently studied, although a number of pre-revolutionary historians directly or indirectly concerned the mutual influence of the highlanders and Cossacks. Popko is considered the official pre-revolutionary historian of the Cossacks. He wrote extended essays on the Terek Cossacks by order of the administration of the Terek region, however, it should be noted that they did not always differ in objectivity and relative reliability. There were other chronological inaccuracies.

The works of Belokurov (1899), Maksimov (1893), Potto (1912) and others represent a significant cognitive material for the study of the early history of the Terek Cossacks, its economy, mutual influence and relations with the mountain peoples.

The works of Soviet and Russian historians and ethnologists who studied the past of the Cossacks, their life and culture, economy, relations with the Chechens and other mountain peoples are distinguished by an objective new approach to the study of existing materials. An example is the work of Kaloev (1961), Volkova (1974) and others (Zasedateleva, 2018).

In the 16th century the fugitive Russians settled along the banks of the Terek River in the neighborhood of the Chechens, as a result of which, to some extent, the ethnic map began to change. The natural and geographical conditions of the new settlement of the fugitive Russians (Cossacks) contributed to their further migration. Some features of the immigrants, the local ethnic environment, as the main factor, the nature of established relations and a number of other reasons, contributed to the transformation of the Terek and Greben Cossacks into a kind of group of the Russian population in Chechnya. The Russian population established peaceful contacts with the highlanders, in which the Cossacks maintained friendly economic relations (Zasedateleva, 2018).

The trade and economic ties of the Chechens with the advent of the permanent Russian population on the Terek River to some extent revived thus becoming more active. Russian immigrants on the Terek River were interested in establishing good-neighborly and trade relations and ties, since difficult living conditions, the need for food were the basis of these ties. This is confirmed by the Cossack researcher, Doctor of Historical Sciences Zasedateleva (2018). She writes: ... “economic, anthropological, cultural similarities or differences...” (p. 11). It is noteworthy that such relations were characterized by peaceful coexistence, and not by “war” and contradictions.

It is known that from ancient times the main occupation of the Chechens was agriculture and animal husbandry. In general, it should be noted that the main source of livelihood for the Chechens was tillage. Researcher Isaeva (1974) gives information on high development of agriculture among the Chechens in the 16th–17th centuries.

Along with agriculture the Chechens were engaged in cattle breeding – cows, bulls, sheep and horse breeding was developed. Cattle breeding prevailed in mountains as there was not enough arable land, and but quite enough pastures. The highlanders exchanged animal products – cheese, oil, wool, leather –for bread and craft products of lowland inhabitants. The products of livestock production was partially for sale as finished products: cloth, felt cloaks, felt carpets were produced from wool and leather. In the 16th century the Chechens supplied horses to the Russian Embassies in Georgia.

In the 16th century the craft industry was presented by such types of production as blacksmithing, gunnery, woodworking industry, pottery, etc. Considerable development was gained by the products connected with processing of wool, leather and metal. Production of rifles, guns, boards was widespread, and the Chechen checkers were highly demanded by Terek Cossacks. It should be noted that part of such products was demanded in the Russian settlements, in particular arch wheels, staves, etc.

Zasedateleva (1974) noted the trade nature of the Cossack economy: “... hunting, fishing, collecting wild-growing fruits that were in abundance in the new region had at first bigger value than farm gardening ...” (p. 23).

It is remarkable that the Russian population, having appeared in new natural and geographical conditions, began to be engaged in cultivation, got acquainted with the types of agricultural production earlier unknown to them, borrowed some grain grades, instruments of labor and labor skills from highlanders. So, for example, when describing life and classes the Terek Cossacks the researcher Maximov (1890) wrote:

The Cossack troops, undoubtedly, played a leading role in the territorial expansion of the state and in opening new places and nationalities for its cultural influences, but the Cossacks, at least in their most ancient representations (Terts and the Grebents), did not bear this cultural influence, and on the contrary, borrowed the culture of the nations they conquered. (p. 63)

It is noteworthy that all the peoples of the North Caucasus maintained trade relations with the Russian people. The center of trade was the Terek city, as well as Cossack towns and large Vainakh villages (Isaeva, 1974). Trade was conducted with Astrakhan through Terek (Gritsenko & Khasbulatov, 1981).

In the 16th century quite strong and versatile ties were established between Russian immigrants – Cossacks and working highlanders, including Chechen and Ingush tribes living in the foothill and lowland regions. Chechen and Ingush tribes under different names were known from the very beginning of the settlement of the Russians in the Caucasus (Gritsenko & Khasbulatov, 1981).

The Chechens supplied the market with livestock products, field husbandry, horticulture, bread, goods of domestic trade and crafts – sheep, ram fur coats, etc. Highlanders, including the Chechens, purchased products and goods of Russian and foreign production – fabrics, needles, whitewash, etc.

Researchers dealing with the problem of relations between the peoples of the Caucasus and the Russians Isaeva (1974), Kusheva (1963), Magomadova (1975) and others believe that the most active connections of the Chechens and other highlanders with the Russians have been since the end of the 16th century when the Terek city was built in 1588. The exchange of goods in the 17th century became even more intense (Vinogradov & Magomadova, 1981). In the 17th century there was even a money circulation in Terek, also engaging the Vainakhs.

Thus, the above confirms that the trade relations of the Russians with the Chechens existed from the 16th–17th centuries. There were also household relations.

Since the middle of the 16th century trade people from the North Caucasus, including Chechnya, visited Astrakhan, the Terek city, and the most active even reached Moscow.

If we consider the issue of trade ties between Dagestan and Russia, then it should be stated that they began, as researchers note, from the middle of the 16th century after Astrakhan joined Russia (1556). But they became more active and regular in the 17th century.

Researcher Kusheva (1963) wrote that:

Astrakhan, and especially the Terek city as a frontier city, were in constant everyday relations with the lands of Dagestan and the North Caucasus, their governors should be aware of all local relations and events, and the related interests and actions of neighboring powers. (p. 46)

The researcher also noted that “located in border places on the way from Transcaucasia and from Iran to Astrakhan and to the Volga route, the Terek city acquired commercial significance – primarily as a transit trade point” (Kusheva, 1963, p. 74).

It is noteworthy that the Terek city, like other cities, had a positive significance in the development of Russian-North Caucasian relations.

According to Fadeev (1960), there were dwellings in the center of Terek for visiting trade people, merchants from Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia, India and, of course, from the neighboring territories of the North Caucasus. Bazaars were arranged twice a week. There were many shopping rows and shops in the city, and there were 3 living yards in Terek.

From the first days of the founding of Terek, it served a trade intermediary between the North Caucasus, Transcaucasia, Iran, India and other countries. From the Terek city there were trade routes in different directions: by sea to Astrakhan, Derbent, Baku and Iran; by land to Transcaucasia and Iran through the Kizlyar transfer, as well as to the crossing of the Aksay River, then through Koisa to Tarki, Boynak and to Derbent. (Magomaev & Kidirniyazov, 2017, p. 32)

A similar situation was in other cities, which were the centers with an active trading life.

At the bazaars of the Dagestan villages of Endireya, Aksay, Terek, the Chechens sold food products and handicrafts. The Chechens provided mountain Dagestan with bread, and carpets, metal and jewelry came to Chechnya from Dagestan. Besides, in the Dagestan markets, the Chechens purchased goods from Azerbaijan, Iran and India, these were mainly silk and batiste fabric, spices, etc.

The monuments of material culture also demonstrate the presence of trade ties (peoples of the North Caucasus – Z.Kh.). As Gritsenko notes, the Soviet archaeologist Markovin, when studying Chechen medieval monuments in the upper reaches of the Chanty-Argun River “... he discovered a coin of Russian origin of the last third of the 14th century in one of the crypts. This silver coin-pendant weighing 0.8 grams of the time of Dmitry Donskoy and Vasily Dmitrievich was worn as jewelry. Its head side depicts a man with a pole-axe and a sword, surrounded by a cut-off inscription: “Seal of the Grand Prince”, on the reverse the Arabic inscription in a square: “Tuktamysh Khan, may Allah extend his reign”. According to the archaeologist, a coin of Russian origin could get into Chechnya at the end of the 14th century or in the first quarter of the 15th century” (Gritsenko, 2017).

In the 16th–17th centuries to a greater or lesser extent all peoples of the North Caucasus had trade relations with the Russians and among themselves.

In trade relations with the peoples of the Caucasus, roads and trails that went through either country acquired a significant role.

Since ancient times these roads for the Georgians and the Chechens have been of particular importance. Referring to the relationship between mountain and lowland inhabitants the famous Georgian historian Dzhevakhishvili (1930) wrote that “the inhabitants of the lowland needed highlanders, while the highlanders needed lowlands. They could not exist without each other” (p. 47). This statement can be fully attributed to the Chechens.

The Chechens purchased cattle from the Georgian highlanders of Eastern Georgia when the Tushins bought here salt, woolen ropes for pulling goods, wooden utensils ... and then they continued on their way to Tushetia ... the Tushins have economic ties with the Chechens, there were economic relations between these peoples. (Dzhavakhishvili, 1930, p. 49)

The Chechens received significant income from the sale of handicrafts, which was developed here a very long time ago. In 1897, one of the Caucasian local historians noted that “even more recently, quite decent blades were made in many auls of the Terek region; the most famous were the blades of Atagin masters who even got into Cossack songs” (Shavkhelishvili, 1981, p. 61).

In addition to weapons, agricultural implements and household goods were manufactured in Chechnya, which found great demand both inside and outside Chechnya.

Among the Chechens were skilled masters in the manufacture of pews, “mountain cloth”, carpets, palaces, felted cloth, “istangs”, etc. A significant part of these products was intended for household use, and part went for sale. Chechen felt cloak were famous throughout the North Caucasus. Many felt cloaks were made in Ichkeria, from where they went for sale to the Andians. The Chechens traded with Dagestan and even distant Baku. Trade relations of the Chechens were strengthened with the opening of exchange yards at the beginning of the 19th century. For the Chechens, such an exchange yard was opened in Naura (Gritsenko, 1961).

The Nogais had the liveliest exchange, it existed among the Adygs and other peoples of the North Caucasus. The representatives of the peoples of this region traveled for trade to the Terek city, to Moscow and to other Russian cities.

The population of the North Caucasus purchased food products in Russian markets, as well as imported goods – canvas, soap, metal products, wooden objects and much more. In turn, local residents, including the Abazins and Adygi, brought cattle and small cattle, horses, etc., to the Terek city. The Nogais purchased clothing, leather products, weapons, bread products, Russian fabrics, Western European cloth, iron and many other things from Russians.

“In the 17th century Terek becomes an important center of trade relations for the peoples of the North Caucasus not only among themselves, but also with Russia. According to some reports, the population of Terek in 1669 was more than a thousand yards. Russians, Nogais, Kumyks, Kabardians, Ossetians, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Persians, Germans... Georgians, etc. lived or temporarily stayed here. The majority of the population was Dagestanis and Vainakhs (Chechens and Ingush). Local residents drove to the Terek city to sell horses and cattle twice a week on market days. The Terek Cossacks acquired weapons and the necessary equipment for the economy, as well as horses, cattle and small cattle from the local peoples ...” In the 16th–17th centuries the Nogais also conducted lively trade in Terek. They supplied cattle and cattle breeding products. Here, Russians and other local peoples were interested in trade with the Nogais no less than the Nogais themselves (Magomaev & Kidirmiyazov, 2017).

Indeed, the relations between the Chechens and other peoples of the North Caucasus were sometimes complex, but in most cases friendly, which were expressed in trade, the mutual influence of material and spiritual cultures, and the establishment of kinship.

7. Conclusion

In summary, Chechen trade relations with Russians and peoples of the North Caucasus, which served as one of the indicators of economic ties between these peoples, had deep traditions. Due to the same natural conditions in some cases, and sharp differences in the natural environment (Russia) in others in the conditions of weak and even almost undeveloped technology the economy of the population of the mountainous and lowland territories was to a larger extent a significant complementarity, which was the basis for the development of trade between the Chechens and the peoples of the North Caucasus. The Chechens closely communicated with Russians, from whom they adopted a lot in economic and household life, in addition to trade relations.

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