

SCTMG 2023**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of
Modern Globalism»****ETHNIC INTERACTION OF THE NORTH CAUCASUS DURING
THE CAUCASUS WAR**

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Abstract

This article examines an ethnic interaction between Chechens and the North Caucasian peoples, Cossacks and Russian soldiers, which was based on the traditional culture of the North Caucasian peoples. For many centuries, the Caucasian peoples have developed life-affirming traditions of hospitality, twinning and kunachchestvo. In the history of the Caucasian War, being one of the most tragic periods in the history of the peoples of the North Caucasus, Chechens, like other peoples of the North Caucasus, remained faithful to the ideas of humanism and morality despite the fact that, due to historical circumstances, they were on the verge of total annihilation. Even in the period of total conquest, when exhausted, exsanguinated and utterly exhausted by the long Caucasian war, there seemed to be no strength and opportunities for resistance, Chechens set conditions that they should not be required to hand over defectors, those who had found shelter in their people, otherwise they would not submit. This was facilitated by traditions that had been established among the Caucasian peoples for centuries. These traditions facilitated ethnic interactions, cultural interactions, close economic cooperation and trade relations. The curse of the people fell on the family and relatives who violated the customs of hospitality, twinning and kunachchestvo. The article reveals the complex processes of the broken human destinies of amanats, the transition during the Caucasian War from one belligerent side to another in the name of justice and loyalty to the ideals of truth and humanity.

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Keywords: Caucasian war, ethnic, interaction, hospitality, twinning

1. Introduction

Many research works are devoted to the topic of ethnic interrelations on the basis of life-affirming traditions and customs of the Caucasian peoples. A number of authors of the XIX century, such as Berger (1858), Zisserman (1979), Leontovich (1882), Maksimov and Vertepov (1892), Laudayev (1872) in their works paid attention to ethnic interrelations based on traditional culture of the North Caucasian peoples. Such researchers of the XX century as Anchabadze (1985), Gritsenko (1965), Gelaeva (2018) in their scientific works also did not neglect this problem. Over a long period of neighbourhood, the customs of the North Caucasian peoples have become closer to each other. Also, like the autochthons of the North Caucasus, the Cossacks strictly observed the customs of hospitality, twinning and kunachestvo. When receiving a guest of another nationality and faith, the mental and religious peculiarities of the guest were respected, and the emphasis was placed on what united them. If the Terek Cossacks had a Muslim guest in their house, pork dishes were never served (Velikaya, 2021, 2015). Kunachestvo, hospitality, twinning-customs, on which good-neighbourly friendly relations of other peoples of the North Caucasus were based, were first described in the diary of great Russian writer L.N. Tolstoy (Vinogradova, 1961). Elbuzdukayeva (2022) devoted a monograph to Chechen culture. The authors emphasise in their works that there have been ethnic interactions between the Caucasian peoples from time immemorial and even between the belligerents during the Caucasian War in the 19th century.

2. Problem Statement

Our research topic involves analysing Chechen ethnic interactions with the peoples of the Caucasus through the life-affirming traditions of kunach, twinning and hospitality.

3. Research Questions

The object of the study is to analyse ethnic interactions between Chechens and the North Caucasian peoples during the Caucasian War.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study is to show the ethnic interaction between Chechens and representatives of the Caucasian peoples during the Caucasian War (Giza, 2024; Mambetova et al., 2024; Mascareno & Chavez, 2024).

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis was the principles of objectivity, science and historicism, which presuppose the study of facts and phenomena in all their diversity, in concrete-historical conditions of their emergence and development.

6. Findings

The Caucasus is famous for its beautiful life-affirming traditions. The Chechen people, represented by their representatives, have enjoyed very close friendly relations with the peoples of the Caucasus and other peoples of our multinational country. Ethnic interactions between Chechens and the peoples of the North Caucasus have been facilitated by the traditions that have been developed from time immemorial and strictly observed by the peoples of the North Caucasus. These are the traditions of hospitality, twinning and kunachchestvo (Collet-Sabé, 2023; Manakbayeva, 2023; Sheveleva, 2024).

The North Caucasian peoples have long had a custom whereby two men belonging to different clans or even different peoples entered into friendly relations and were called kunaks. The kunaks gave each other help and hospitality, and, if necessary, protection. Kounachism was widespread in the Caucasus. It was the highest level of human relations, which turned into kin relations of twin kunaks. The tradition called kunachchestvo has long existed among all Caucasian peoples. Researchers speak of two forms of kunachchestvo. Kunachestvo is a close friendship based on the custom of hospitality. And kunachchestvo is the friendship that arose between peoples, one of whom needed protection and patronage, and the other had the opportunity to provide it. In this case, this friendship was close to blood kinship in its strength. Usually, representatives of different countries and peoples, as well as tribesmen, who lived at a great or relatively great distance from each other, became kunaks (Mele, 2022; Nikulin, 2023; Rawel, 2022).

In 1882, F.I. Leontovich wrote that Chechens honoured kunacy on a par with kinship (Leontovich, 1882). No Highlander should have given any reason for a kunak to feel in danger when visiting him. The further the territorial relationship between kunaks was, the greater the responsibility was. A Highlander could not allow his behaviour to form an opinion about his clan, village or nation. V.D. Itonishvili wrote that kunachestvo contributed to the strengthening and development of cultural and historical relations between Nakhs and Georgians (Itonishvili, 1971).

Kunachnost and twinning, interrelated traditions denote the very important concepts of friendship and brotherhood in Chechen society. Those who wanted to be closer were fraternised by making a friendship-fraternity alliance. Friends who decided to enter into such alliance swore oaths and performed various rites. After that, they exchanged gifts, usually weapons or certain attributes of men's clothing (burka, papakha, etc.). Relatives of twin kunaks were all aware of it and further treated each other as relatives. Kunaks were closer than any relatives were, as well as siblings. In case one of them was killed, the other had to avenge his blood. Therefore, the institution of kunachchestvo, as well as other forms of establishing artificial kinship, is based on the natural need of man to expand ethnic interactions in order to strengthen authority and consolidate his position, to increase his influence and opportunities.

A. Zisserman, assessing kunachchestvo in the Caucasus, wrote;

Fraternisation is when two people, who have rendered a mutual favour or are close acquaintances and wish to become closer friends, perform the rite of fraternisation.... swear to be brothers and not to spare their blood mutually. Sanctified by time, this custom, like all other customs, is observed so

strictly that one after another has been made bloodthirsty or completely killed, and this is not at all uncommon ... (Zisserman, 1979, p. 33)

Traditions of hospitality, twinning and kunachchestvo served to establish an ethnic interaction between representatives of different peoples, to establish peaceful friendly relations not only between the peoples of the Caucasus, but even between warring parties, i.e. people who initially had hostile relations, but over time, as a result of some personal sympathies, became twins or kunaks. And such friendship was not hindered by differences in nationality, language, religion. The more kunaks there were, the more authoritative a person in Chechen society was. Indeed, only individuals, pushing national boundaries, established relations of peace and harmony between peoples, finding the time and means to maintain these relations by attending various family events: weddings, funerals, any happy or unhappy moments of life, and taking a material part in the life of a twin friend.

Owing to ancient Caucasian traditions, a friend could be at ease with his kunak, no matter how far away he was from home. The peoples of the Caucasus developed this tradition based on the rule that you should treat another person as you would want to be treated if you were in a similar situation. And in this case, when a person became vulnerable away from his home and relatives, all the best that the Caucasus had developed was put into action: hospitality, absolute participation in all affairs of a kunak-friend, be it trade or family affairs, revenge against an offender, etc. The need for this custom was dictated by life itself.

Chechens living along the right bank of the Terek entered into trade relations with the Cossacks and Russian authorities, as well as with neighbouring peoples of the Caucasus. The Nadterechnye was a staging post for trade between Chechens and other Caucasian peoples. There was a prominent merchant stratum among the peoples, who knew each other by sight and name. Among them, kunak relations were established, which contributed to the development and expansion of trade relations between the peoples. The tradition of kunachestvo was closely linked to the custom of hospitality. Chechens had a kunatskaya, or guest room, to receive their kunaks. Nineteenth-century historians also noted this.

Despite the generally negative attitude of 19th-century military historian Dubrovin, in his work on Chechens (Nakhcha), he recognises the obvious:

Hospitality has been developed to a great extent among Chechens, who are very dormitory and, despite their savage manners, are exquisitely polite hosts and guests. No one, not even a small one, enters a house unintentionally or unawares. A person arriving or coming into the courtyard stops, and if his arrival is not noticed, he is called the host. The latter in most cases warns the guest and comes out to meet him, greets him, shakes his hand, takes his horse and ties it to a post. Having invited the guest to the kunak room, the host at the door of the room accepts, according to custom, the weapon handed over to him by the guest. After that, mountain etiquette makes the host responsible for the guest's safety and, at the same time, for the most exquisite hospitality. (Akhmadov, 2020, p. 12)

In extreme conditions, without food and shelter, far from home, when anything could happen, having a twin friend became vital.

During the Caucasus War, a period rich in battles and military events, the Caucasus Military Line defined the border of the two warring sides Russian and Caucasian as hostile. But, even in this difficult period, the Caucasian peoples remained faithful to the traditions of *kunachchestvo*. Famous Russian writers and poets, who knew the Caucasus firsthand, wrote about it. Great Russian writer Leo Tolstoy wrote about friendly relations between Chechens and Cossacks and their mutual cultural influence on his works. Pushkin, Lermontov and others wrote about the beautiful customs of the Caucasian peoples in their works. With admiration, they described examples of loyalty and friendship inherent in the Caucasians. Tolstoy, in his famous work "Cossacks", wrote: "Greben Cossacks arranged their dwellings in the Tatar (meaning Chechen) way". Tolstoy had a *kunak* Sado Miserbiev from Staroye -yurt, about whom he wrote many good words. "Many times he proved his loyalty to me, putting his life in danger because of me, but it means nothing to him, it is for him a custom and pleasure", Tolstoy wrote. Sado Miserbiev presented a checker to his *kunak* L.N. Tolstoy. In return, Tolstoy gave him a music box. Living among Chechens, the great Russian writer wrote: "Cossacks were related to them and adopted the customs, way of life, and manners of the highlanders" or "Cossack families are still considered to be related to Chechens..." (Elbuzdukayeva, 2022, p. 18). Tolstoy was a frequent guest in Chechen villages, knew many Chechen families, and recorded Chechen folklore owing to them.

In the summer of 1853, on the way from the village of Vozdvizhenskaya to the fortress of Grozny, which was the period when the Caucasian War was in full swing, L.N. Tolstoy and Sado Miserbiev, having broken away from the main detachment, were ambushed. Naturally, the mountaineers could not know at that time that it was a great Russian writer and ambushed them. In turn, remaining faithful to the custom of *kunachchestvo*, Sado put Tolstoy on his faster horse and persuaded his compatriots to stop pursuit. One must suppose that he said that it was not an enemy, but a friend.

Tolstoy himself wrote in his diary on 23 June 1853: "I was almost captured", which was another insignificant but interesting fact from the history of friendship between Sado and Tolstoy. Apparently, our compatriot played cards well enough to win back Tolstoy's loss. "Sado came and brought the money. Will my brother be satisfied? – he asks" (Vinogradova, 1961, p.31).

During the Caucasian War, especially by the early 1950s, Russian soldiers could go to Chechen auls unarmed. Having made friends with some Chechens and given the name of their *kunak*, they could freely go to villages and buy necessary or favourite household items. Some stayed overnight with their *kunaks*. Yakov Alpatov, a Cossack from the Naurskaya village, was one of these prominent Chechen *kunaks* and later defectors. He became so friendly with the Chechens that he converted to Islam and led attacks on the military cordon line. He usually released captured Cossacks and took only cattle. In 1851, he seized the state post office with the sum of 37 thousand roubles. For that time, it was a huge sum. As a result, Yakov Alpatov himself was captured and sentenced to execution. When he was offered to return to Christianity, he replied that he would die a Muslim. In 1856, he was hanged on a mound, popularly nicknamed Alpatov, near the Naurskaya village.

The Caucasus War was a very difficult time, which also gave rise to a number of interesting fates. Old Cossacks and those soldiers, who believed that the struggle of the mountaineers was legitimate, fled to the warring mountaineers. Among the defectors, there were also descendants of mixed marriages between Cossacks and representatives of Caucasian peoples. Hesitating between duty and a sense of

justice, these people had a dual identity. The fate of Semyon Semyonovich Atarshchikov, a famous Cossack-Teretz resident of the Naurskaya village, is interesting in this respect. His Chechen father Ismail was given as an amanat and never returned. He was baptised and became Semyon and married Antonina Urusova, a baptised Nogai woman. Ismail-Semen's son Semen Atarshchikov grew up in the Kumyk village of Karabudakhkent among the highlanders. Apparently, having practically a mountain upbringing, he inclined in his ethnic self-consciousness to his father's origin. He fled to the Abadzehs in 1841, converted to Islam and took a new name in Islam, Hajret Magomet, and was so desperately brave that he was the leader of the Highlanders when they attacked the cordon line. Among the Adygs, the son of Ismail, a Chechen, enjoyed great respect and authority. He was also able to seize the treasury post with a decent sum, which was a great help to Imam Shamil during this period in capturing several fortifications in Dagestan. Hajret Mohammed addressed a proclamation to the soldiers with an appeal to switch to the side of the highlanders, promising his patronage and defence according to all the rules of the highlanders. In 1845, he was severely wounded; he died in captivity without recovering from his wound.

Chechens, like other peoples of the Caucasus, have developed their own ethics of cronicism and twinning, which helped consolidate economic, trade and cultural interrelations, not only between the native Caucasian peoples, but even between warring parties. The Cossacks were strongly influenced by Chechens in material culture. Clothing, weapons and even the lezginka dance were adopted from the Chechens. Horseracing and dzhigitovka competitions became popular among the Cossacks under the influence of their neighbours. The influence was mutual, so that even during the Caucasian War, the Chechens, defeated and unable to set conditions, nevertheless set them, agreeing to everything except the extradition of kunak-friends. Hence, General Gudovich's special order stated: "Do not accept all soldiers, Cossacks and other people running to the Chechens". Accepting all conditions imposed on them, the Chechens agreed to everything except extradition of fugitive soldiers and Cossacks, most of whom had been converted to Islam and remained among the Chechens. Throughout the entire Caucasian War, when relations between the tsarist power establishing itself in the region and the local population were moving from war to peace, from battles to treaties, the Chechens always demanded or asked for one condition, depending on the conditions created: not to demand those who had found shelter and patronage with the Chechens.

During the Caucasian War, the peoples of the Caucasus remained faithful to the traditions of friendship, loyalty and reliability. Throughout the history of relations, the authorities shaped their policy, which in the 19th century was colonial in nature. Nevertheless, the peoples went beyond the narrowly directed hostile policy and entered into relations of friendship-counselling, realising at the level of self-consciousness that this was the only way they could survive. Very often Russian soldiers, having considered the struggle of the highlanders fair, went over to the side of their former enemies. Kunak relations were established at bazaars where highlanders and Cossacks brought goods for exchange or sale. It was traditions, such as kunacy based on twinning and hospitality, that helped the Caucasian peoples survive in difficult periods of historical development.

7. Conclusion

During the Caucasus War, the peoples of the Caucasus remained faithful to the Caucasian traditions rooted in traditional culture for centuries, traditions of friendship, loyalty and reliability. Throughout the history of relations, the authorities have shaped their policy, which in the 19th century was colonial in nature according to the rules of the ancient Romans. However, nevertheless, not only the peoples of the Caucasus, but even the warring parties went beyond a narrowly oriented hostile policy and entered into ethnic interaction. Very often, Russian soldiers, having considered the struggle of the highlanders just, went over to the side of their former enemies. Ethnic interactions were often established at bazaars where Chechens, other peoples of the Caucasus and Cossacks brought goods to exchange or sell. Ethnic interactions helped the North Caucasian peoples survive throughout the Caucasian War.

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