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Published in the Russian Federation
Bylye Gody
Has been issued since 2006.

ISSN: 2073-9745

E-ISSN: 2310-0028

Vol. 42, Is. 4, pp. 1148-1157, 2016

Journal homepage: <http://bg.sutr.ru/>

UDC 94

The War which was not: Russian, Turkish and Western Historiography on the North-Western Caucasus of the 19th Century

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Abstract

In the present paper we analysed in a historical perspective the formation of the key concepts concerning the military actions in the North-Western Caucasus of the 19th century in Russian, Turkish and Western historiography. We didn't set before ourselves the task to find out, “what really happened in the western North Caucasus”, but rather how actually “what happened in the western North Caucasus” is interpreted in different historiographical traditions.

Our study has shown that Russian, Turkish and Western historiography on the North-Western Caucasus of the 19th century so strongly depends on local traditions that we can say about three separate historiographies. Current situation is noticeable for the development of Circassian ‘auto-historiography’ which is characterised by ethnocentrism and victimisation due to the trends of counter-history.

In spite of interaction between Russian, Turkish and Western historiographies, each of them was formed according to own logic of development. Thus, the misunderstandings in the terminology on the North-Western Caucasus of the 19th century (in particular, with the term ‘Caucasian War’) lean on the differences of historiographical traditions leading to the conflicts of interpretations.

Keywords: Caucasus, North-Western Caucasus, Circassians, Caucasian War, Russian-Caucasian War, Russian-Circassian War, Historiography.

1. Introduction

In June 2015, in Vol. 36 of the historical journal “Bylye Gody” we published an article entitled “Circassian Question: Transformation of Content and Perception”. The article caused a lively response from the Circassian community and was noted by critical publications of Circassian activists Iyad Youghar and Adel Bashqawi (Youghar, Bashqawi, 2016), and right after them – by leading analyst of post-Soviet affairs Paul Goble (Goble, 2016). Though this criticism had no academic argument and in many respects didn't correspond to the contents of the article, it interested us as an indicative example of historiography's contradictions.

Attention of the authors mentioned above was attracted by our chronology and terminology that were taken by them as “official Russian” (Youghar, Bashqawi, 2016). According to Goble, “the article not only falsifies dates of the Russian-Circassian War which lasted from 1763 to 1864 but rechristens that conflict as ‘the Caucasian War’, a Russian innovation which ignores what really happened in the western North Caucasus” (Goble, 2016).

Meanwhile this ‘innovation’ relies on one-and-a-half-century-long Russian tradition. Thus Goble's words once again demonstrated the unfamiliarity of Western researchers with Russian historiography of the North-Western Caucasus. Moreover, we can state the similar situation in the Russian research field. And if we'll add the Turkish historiography, the knowledge of which is very poor both in the West and in Russia, the picture will be even more complicated.

In this regard, we decided to analyse in a historical perspective the formation of the key concepts concerning the military actions in the North-Western Caucasus of the 19th century in Russian, Turkish and

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Western historiography. We didn't set before ourselves the task to find out, "what really happened in the western North Caucasus", but rather how actually "what happened in the western North Caucasus" is interpreted in different historiographical traditions. Respectively, this article doesn't give any correct answers to such questions as how was called, how long lasted and whether there was at all any war in the North-Western Caucasus in the 19th century. Contrariwise, we'll try to understand why we see things the way we do.

2. Materials and Methods

Since it is important for us to explain the differences in historiographical traditions, we have chosen the comparative method as a basic one for our study. Being aware of all the limitations of broad generalizations, we do our best to avoid simplified picture, and consider historiography as a complex, multiple, and sometimes contradictory phenomenon.

The main difficulty for our study is to determine the meaning of "Russian", "Turkish" and "Western historiography", as in reality we are dealing only with linguistic segments (Russian, Turkish and English ones¹) that hide a number of various historiographical traditions and schools, influenced by both geography and ethnicity. Bearing this in mind, we made an attempt to trace the genesis of each historiographical tradition and suggested a schematic periodisation.

It should be noted separately that we consider the words "Russian" and "Turkish" applied to historiography not in a narrow ethnic sense, but in civic. It's expressed in Russia in an untranslatable division into "russkiy" (ethnically) and "rossiyskiy" (politically, regardless of ethnic origin). In Turkey, there is also a similar division ("Türk" and "Türkiyeli"), however the dominance of nation-state model prevents the wide spread of it.

Moreover, seeing no premises for the emergence of a single transnational historiography of the Northern or North-Western Caucasus, we also called into question the isolation of local historiographical traditions. To check the real degree of permeability of borders we used the cultural transfer theory ([Espagne, Werner, 1988](#)).

We should also note that during our research work it wasn't always possible to separate the North-Western Caucasus from the Northern one, and Circassians (Adyghe) from other Caucasian peoples. We carried out this differentiation where it could be made.

In the course of the research we were guided by numerous bibliographies on the North-Western Caucasus written in Russian, Turkish and the western languages². Besides, in 2013-2016 we collected our own bibliographic base including a lot of up-to-date works in the Russian, English, Turkish and Arab languages which weren't mentioned in previous bibliographies.

3. Discussion

Though there are a huge amount of current works on comparative historiography, they rarely present the research of Russian, Turkish and Western historiography all together. In Circassian Studies there is only one such known to us research on the subject, presented by Zeynel Abidin Besleney at the conference held in Sukhum (Abkhazia) in 2007 ([Besleney, 2009](#)).

Claiming to cover all the Circassian Studies Literature, Besleney concentrates on the most known to him Turkish segment. And if he selects just one of those not numerous English-language works, the same approach to the Russian-language studies is unacceptable and can be explained only by a poor knowledge of Russian.

The large Soviet and Post-Soviet Russian historiography is ignored by Besleney under the pretext of its ideological bias. As a result, Besleney, describing the Circassian Studies Literature, speaks only about researches made by the Circassian Diaspora. In the section entitled "Works by Circassian Intellectuals and Researchers both in the Caucasus and the Diaspora" Shora Negomoko (Nogmov) is the only Caucasian intellectual mentioned, and in the section on Post-Soviet Studies not a single author from the Caucasus or the whole Russia was presented.

Such an approach is commonly used, and Russian contribution to the research field is neglected due to the predisposition to see the Diaspora the centre of the Circassian world rather than the North-Western Caucasus. The following idea is widely repeated: after the mass resettlement of the Caucasians to the Ottoman Turkey in the 19th century the North-Western Caucasus remained without Circassians, and those, inconsiderable in number, still living in the Caucasus – are Russified, suppressed and completely dependent on the Russian authorities. According to Besleney, "Because of the marginalization of the remaining Circassians in the Caucasus amongst the Slavic settlers, interest in them following their uprooting somewhat died out" ([Besleney, 2009: 82](#)).

Even so, Besleney admits the low level of research activity in the Diaspora because of the "near absence of any means of formal educational and research opportunities in Circassian Studies". He states that most of the works in the Diaspora "do not meet current academic and scientific requirements" ([Besleney, 2009: 81-](#)

¹ In the course of our research we did not use studies in other European languages, including French and German, which would greatly expand our understanding of the 'Western' historiography.

² Including the ones compiled by the Circassians ([Berzeg, 1996, Jaimoukha, 2009, Özbek, 1993](#)).

82). At the same time, we can assert that the main mass of high-quality researches in the Circassian Studies is done in Russian, and many of the academics in the field are of Circassian origin. Thus, in the present paper we will try to address some knowledge gaps about the Russian researches and create a balance in the coverage of the Russian, Turkish and Western historiography.

4. Results

Russian Historiography

The term 'Caucasian War' was introduced in the Russian historiography in 1860 by the Russian military historian Rostislav Fadeyev (Fadeev, 1860). It was used on an equal basis with the 'Caucasian Wars' by the majority of historians in the Russian Empire, including Vasily Potto, Alexey Dubrovin, Anton Gizetti, Arnold Zisserman, Dmitry Romanovsky, and Semyon Esadze. In 1864 the commander-in-chief of the Caucasian army grand duke Mikhail Nikolaevich wired to St. Petersburg to the Tsar Alexander II: "I am lucky enough to congratulate your Majesty on the end of the glorious Caucasian War. Henceforth there is not a single unsubdued tribe..." (Fadeev, 2010: 238).

The term 'Caucasian War' was, according to imperial approach, applied to the struggle of Russia for the setting of power in the Caucasus with Turkey, Iran and North Caucasian mountaineers. In an encyclopaedia of the beginning of the 20th century the following definition of the Caucasian War was given: "long struggle of Russia against numerous, aggressive tribes of the Caucasus, as well as with neighbouring Asian countries for the purpose of conquest and pacification of the vast outskirts" (Novickij, 1913: 220). The event perception was influenced seriously by the Enlightenment ideas dominating in Russia due to which the actions of Russia were treated as bringing civilization to the Caucasus, while resistance of local tribes was associated with wildness and Muslim fanaticism.

Chronological framework was established rather widely. The outbreak of war was usually attributed to the 16th century, and the end – to 1864. According to another common view the start date of the war was 1801, marking the Georgia's incorporation into the Russian Empire. As the imperial apologist Romanovsky stated: "having solemnly accepted Georgia under the protection, thereby made the conquest and pacification of the Caucasus obligatory" (Romanovsky, 1881: 290).

In the Russian historiography of the Soviet period the interpretation of the Caucasian War was completely changed. Having rejected the idea of a civilizing mission of the Russian Empire, perceived as a 'prison of peoples', Soviet historians (for example, Mikhail N. Pokrovsky, Nikolay T. Likhmitsky et al.) focused on studying national liberation struggle of the Caucasian peoples against colonial oppression of Russian Tsarism. This approach was based on the ideological legacy of the revolutionary-democratic movement in the Russian Empire, including the works of such radical Russian thinkers as Aleksander Herzen and Nikolay Chernyshevsky.

The historical framework of the Caucasian War was narrowed to 1817–1864 and left aside the military confrontation with Turkey and Iran. Geographically the war covered the territory of Chechnya, mountain Dagestan and North-Western Caucasus. What Fadeev referred to as the 'Mountain War' that "in fact began only in 1817, on return of General Yermolov from Persia" (Fadeev, 1865: 23) started to be called the Caucasian War. To indicate the military operations conducted in the 16th century with the participation of Russia, Turkey and Iran the term 'Caucasian Wars' was used.

The Caucasian War, with the obligatory reference to Marxism-Leninism¹, started to be interpreted as anti-colonial and anti-feudal. The Soviet historians applying the Marxist methodology were trying to find out the social antagonism and the class struggle between workers and the oppressors-aristocrats in the history of the Caucasus.

Considerable retreat from this ideological line took place after the end of the World War II in the 50-s. At that time the movement of Shamil on which the main emphasis when studying the Caucasian War was placed, started to be recognized not progressive but reactionary, which overseas conquerors, colonialists and imperialists exploited².

However, with the dethronement of the Stalin's 'personality cult' at the XX Congress of the CPSU in 1956, there was a partial return to the original positions. In the late Soviet period the ideas of voluntary and beneficial incorporation of the North-Western Caucasus into Russia were added (for detailed information see: Degoev, 2000).

These trends in the Russian Caucasian Studies (Imperial, classic Soviet, Stalin's, and the late Soviet) in the conditions of 'perestroika' and later the post-Soviet chaos, switched to the direct confrontation, creating, according to Oleynikov, the 'Caucasian war of historiographies' (Olejnikov, 2001: 69).

The absence of central academic directions, to which researchers got accustomed in the Soviet times, led to the unprecedented level of segmentation and dissociation. Numerous isolated historiographical schools emerged, marked by ethnocentrism and ethnonationalism. Their interpretations of the history of the

¹ For example, Engels': "The real war, in which the people take part, we have not seen in the Centre of Europe for generations. We saw it in the Caucasus..." (Marx, Engels, 1960: 200).

² The foundation was laid by the publication of the brochure (Baghirov, 1950) by the "Azerbaijan's Stalin" (Cornell, 2010: 41) Mir Jafar Baghirov.

North-Western Caucasus were rested upon the Soviet theoretical base – the primordialist and essentialist concept of ‘ethnos’.

One of the leading modern Russian caucasiologists Vinogradov notes: “Nowadays definitely heroic and complementary ‘own’ history is regarded by some as a kind of ethnic ownership... caucasiologists of the North Caucasian ‘national’ territorial subjects of the Russian Federation objectively found themselves in a difficult situation, when possible discrepancy of their interpretations of the ‘Caucasian War’ to already created ethnic stereotypes may cause that public rejection and condemnation, the weight of which cannot be overestimated in the local ethno-cultural environment” (Vinogradov, 2015: 36).

Since then, the military actions in the Caucasus were interpreted by the representatives of the national historiographical schools in the framework of inter-ethnic conflict and the ‘historical guilt’ of Russia that committed ‘genocide’ of the North Caucasian peoples. For example, in April 1990 in the Koshehabl village in Adyghea an academic meeting was held, the final recommendations of which stated: “Tsarism pursued a policy of genocide against the Adyghe peoples in the 19th century” (Mekulov, 1991: 263).

It should be noted that the concept of genocide had started to develop in the late 80's already in accordance with the trend of the time. Since the XVII Congress of CPSU in 1986 when Gorbachev declared the policy of glasnost and for the first time used the word ‘genocide’ openly¹, the country was overflowed by a wave of historical offenses. From the political tribunes the ideas on genocides of Russians, Cossacks, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Georgians, Abkhazians, Chechens, Ingushes, etc. were mouthed.

At the research conference “National liberation struggle of the peoples of the North Caucasus and the problem of muhajirism”, held in Nalchik on October 24-26, 1990, the term ‘Russian-Caucasian war’ was first introduced into academic circulation. Soon ‘Russian-Circassian War’², ‘Russian-Adyghe War’, ‘Russian-Kabardian War’, and other ‘ethnic’ wars were added to the list. Their chronology also extended: the beginning was traced back to the 15th century, and the war was supposed to last up to the present days. The ‘century-long Colonial War’ (1760-1864 or 1763-1864) became the most widely-used term that entered even the official documents of the North Caucasian republics.

The traditional term ‘Caucasian War’ as not reflecting the ethnic confrontation was subjected to criticism by ethnic historiographical schools. However, it found a lot of critics in the opposite camp. According to some researchers, the term is easily politicised and disputable in sense, territory, and chronology. It compromises the very idea of the complexity and ambiguity of the process of the North Caucasus integration into Russia (Klychnikov, 2006; Vinogradov, 2015). For example, the school of professor Vinogradov develops the alternative concept of the ‘North Caucasus crisis of the 19th century’, and the President of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Chechnya, professor Gapurov suggests to use the term ‘Caucasian War’ as the geographical one to the wars of Russia, Turkey and Iran, and to call the ‘uprising’ of mountaineers – that time the citizens of the Russian Empire already – as the ‘people’s liberation war’ (Gapurov, 2015).

This trend can be found in popular among Russian academics ideas of mutual interest and interattraction between Russian and Caucasian peoples, predetermination of entering of the Northern Caucasus into Russia as an organic part of it. Also influential are the concepts of the Contact Zones (Ludmila S. Gatagova, Viktor V. Cheronus, Dmitriy I. Oleynikov) and the Frontier (Aleksey V. Shcherbina, Tatyana P. Khlynina, Evgeniy F. Krinko, Amiran T. Urushadze). A widespread geopolitical approach in modern historiographical works on the history of the North-Western Caucasus in the 19th century should be also mentioned (Vladimir V. Degoev et al.). Besides, there is one more specific feature of the Russian researches that is to study Circassian tribes (i.e. Ubykhs, Shapsugs, etc.) instead of Circassians in general (for example, see: Cherkasov et al. 2014).

There are regular calls in Russian research community for reconciliation of historiographical schools and attempts to develop some uniform criteria for Caucasian Studies. Specific initiatives include the Charter and the Code of Ethics elaborated at the annual forums of historians-caucasiologists. As Gapurov stated at one of such meetings: “All European countries reconciled long ago and together build the common European home. And we, citizens of one country, can’t finish till today the Caucasian War, which began and ended in the 19th century. It proceeds in our minds and researches. The time has come to conclude a peace treaty” (Gapurov, 2013: 32).

Thus, the term ‘Caucasian War’ with the chronology of 1817–1864 remains in modern Russian Caucasus Studies rather by inertia to be on solid ground. Paraphrasing the known statement of Churchill for Russian historiography of North-Western Caucasus, ‘Caucasian War’ is the worst term, except for all the others.

¹ “The ‘enlightened’ 20th century entered the history with such outcomes of imperialism as the most bloody wars, wild militarism and fascism, genocide, disadvantaged population of many million” (1986: 29).

² This term was used by certain Russian pre-revolutionary historians, for example, Fedor Shcherbina, however without ethnic implication.

Turkish Historiography

In the Turkish historiography of the Ottoman period, there was not at all any term for the ‘Caucasian War’. The Ottomans didn’t consider the military actions of Russia in the Caucasus as something special, but only as a part of successive Russian-Turkish and Russian-Iranian wars that involved the Caucasian peoples.

For the Turkish historiography Islam was one of the most important criteria to evaluate the events occurring in the Caucasus. Ottoman historians wrote about the Russian advance on the Caucasus since the 17th century as the attack of Disbelievers (kâfirs) against the world of Islam. The Ottoman sultan, being at the same time the caliph, perceived Muslims of the Caucasus (Cherkezistan as it was called¹) as a people of Caliphate.

Sultans had also other reasons to put in a claim for the North-Western Caucasus. The oaths of fidelity were brought by the Circassian princes in Constantinople, the money was sent to them regularly and the status fur, leather and gun gifts gave. Besides there was an idea of hereditary succession of North-West Caucasian ownership passed to the Ottomans from the Golden Horde through the Crimean Khanate². Lands between the Kuban and the Terek deemed fallen under Ottoman domination with the recognition by the Crimean Khan of vassal dependence on the Ottoman sultan in 1475 (Bilge, 2005: 36, Kırzioğlu, 1976: 383). Belonging of the North-West Caucasian lands to the Ottomans was legally confirmed by the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca of 1774, according to which the river Kuban became the new Russian-Turkish border³. For the same reason the Ottomans considered themselves entitled to give Russia the entire east coast of the Black Sea from the mouth of the Kuban river to the marina of St. Nicholas according to the Treaty of Adrianople in 1829.

Since 1774 in connection with the loss of the Crimea the interest of the Ottoman Empire in the Circassians increased in a greater extent than ever before. Considering the Circassians Ottoman subjects, sultans demanded from them subordination based on the principle: “Do not fight in the peacetime; when declaring the war, fight on the side of the Ottoman Empire” (Güneş-Yağcı, 2009: 106). Therefore, all the military operations of the Circassians beyond Russian-Turkish wars were perceived negatively by the Ottoman side as being able to do much harm to the foreign policy of the empire and to provoke another war. Thus, one could not talk about any special term for war of Russia with mountaineers in an Ottoman historiography of that period.

The situation changed radically during the reign of the Young Turks, many of whom were immigrants from the Caucasus. Against the background of such historical events as the World War I and the creation of the Mountain Republic the ideas of the Russian invasion and occupation (işgal, istila) of the independent Caucasus began to dominate in Turkish historiography. However, these views gained an opportunity for a wide circulation only in 50-60-s of the 20th century. Then such participants of the events as the Kabardians Pşmahö Kosok and İsmail Hakkı Berkok, and a little later the Ingush Wassan-Giray Cabağı could publish the works on a centuries-long history of the ‘war for freedom and independence’ (Hürriyet ve İstiklâl Savaşı) of the Northern Caucasus and the struggle of Caucasians against Russians (Kafkas-Rus Mücadelesi) (Berkok, 1958; Cabağı, 1967; Kosok, 1960). This trend was supported by the Turkish researchers of the period (Hızaloğlu, 1958; Hızal, 1961; Tokses, 1966).

Such a long silence on the North-Western Caucasus and the Circassians in the Turkish historiography was due to the tabooing of ethnic topics by Turkish nationalist ideology since the early 20-ies of the 20th century. Marginal was even the Circassian identity itself. The weakening of ideological dictate after the end of the single-party system and Turkey’s accession to NATO in 1952 along with its involvement to the Cold War led to the return of the Caucasus to the agenda. The Caucasian Associations have appeared since the 50-ies, and journals on Caucasian issues expressing anti-Soviet and anti-Russian orientation, as well.

Since the 60-s the interest in the history of the North-Western Caucasus gradually grew mostly among the researchers of Circassian origin. The most prominent of them were Nihat M. Berzeg and İzzet Aydemir. The numerous Circassian Diaspora publishing houses started to print the sources and research works in the field.

Circassian historiography as a part of Turkish historiography exists largely on the principle of counter-history, challenging many points of the official historical doctrine. Thus, for example, the Turkish historians call the resettlement of the North Caucasians to the Ottoman Empire ‘migration’ (göç) and link it with the resettlements from the Crimea and the Balkans, placing emphasis on Islamic identity of the Circassians (Caucasians). The Circassian researchers, in turn, from the 90-s have been developing the concept of exile (sürgün) and genocide (soykırım) (Aslan Cahit, Fethi Güngör, Abdullah Saydam, Yeldar Barış Kalkan, Yalçın

¹ The geographical term “Caucasus” began to appear in the Ottoman Empire only in the 19th century. Before that the terms “Cherkizistan”, “Dagestan”, “Kuban” and others were used.

² Another version is suggested by the Ottoman historian Ahmet Cevdet Paşa (1822–1895): “Both the Kabartayts and other Circassian tribes, senior servants of the high monarchy, up to the days of Sultan Bayezid, served to him as a horse army in peace and war. Afterwards, at the meeting with Bayazid Khan great Haji Giray Khan asked him for the said tribes, his request was granted, and since then these tribes had always served him (Cevdet Pasha, 1888: 378-379).

³ At the same time, according to Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, the legal status of the Great Kabarda – “a member, due to the force of circumstances cut off from the body of the empire” – was unclear. The Ottoman Empire fearing of breach of the treaty, did not support the Kabardians, and Russia used it in its own interests (Cevdet Pasha, 1888: 378-379).

Karadaş and others), paying little attention to religious issues. They also avoid to understand the Circassian identity as a common Caucasian one, passing to a narrow ethnic meaning: “Circassian equals Adyghe”.

Turkish historiography of the republican period uses such terminology as the ‘Russian-Caucasian War/Wars’ (Rus-Kafkas savaşı/savaşları), ‘Russian-Circassian War/Wars’ (Rus-Çerkes Savaşı, Çerkes-Rus savaşları), ‘Circassian national war’ (Çerkez milli savaşı) and ‘Circassian national liberation war’ (Çerkes Ulusal Kurtuluş Savaşı) (Kalkan, 2006). 1864 was usually referred to as the war/ wars end whereas the outbreak of war was usually dated as 1762, 1763, 1829. For example, Kanbolat wrote: “In 1762 the Russian-Circassian War under the leadership of the Imam Mansour began ... In 1819 the Russian-Circassian War under the name ‘War of Myurids’ started over again. It was a guerrilla war and Circassians demonstrated wonders in this war” (Kanbolat, 1989: 51, 70). In 2000s in Circassian-Turkish historiography the ‘Russian-Circassian War’ term with dating 1763-1864 entrenched, which refers to the ethnic approach described above. However, the religious wing of the Diaspora adheres to the version about 300 years-long ‘Russian-Caucasian War’ that allows to keep interpretation of an ethnonym ‘Circassian’ as the North Caucasian.

The term ‘Caucasian War’ still meets misunderstanding in Turkey. Thus, one of the modern Circassian writers describes the widely celebrated in the Caucasus Memorial Day of victims of the Caucasian War as follows: “Authorities hold events in honour of the ‘Commemoration Day of those died in the Caucasian wars’. Now I will be accused again of cruelty and denigration, however I cannot help asking. What does Russia mean, speaking about the deads in the Caucasian wars? Obviously, the Circassians killed each other, Russia came and separated the parties. It boarded us on the ships and sent to Turkey with words: ‘If you remain here, you won’t calm down and you will kill each other. I will better send you to the Ottoman Empire’” (Özden, 2016a). Also there is an opinion on ineligibility of the term ‘war’ in relation to the historical events of that time, since that was the “resistance against the policy of genocide of the Russian Tsarism – a huge imperialist force” (Özden, 2016b). Supporters of this approach point to the absence of professional army and the centralised state system in Circassia.

Western Historiography

The foundation of the western historiographical tradition on the North-West Caucasus was laid by the British travellers and writers. They formed an emotional evaluation of Russia’s military presence in the Caucasus as endangering British interests in India. Circassia was perceived as a barrier or a shield, like Poland, capable to deter the ‘onward march of Russia’ (Rolland, 1858: 29). The pioneer in the Circassian affairs David Urquhart stated in 1853: “For Hindoostan and for the Ottoman empire there is one, and a mighty, protecting barrier... the Caucasus. In our times we have seen this new people arise... This people is at war with Russia. Hear it, Europe!” (Urquhart, 1854: 135-136).

Like Urquhart, such travellers across Circassia as Edmund Spencer, James Stanislaus Bell, John Augustus Longworth and William Jesse in the 30-40s used the word ‘war’ or ‘Russian war’ in relation to the Caucasian events. Already in the 50s George Leighton Ditson mentioned the ‘Caucasian war’ (Ditson, 1850: 372), while Russell Lee used ‘Circassian wars’ (Lee, 1853). However this meant firstly the Holy war of the ‘brave Schamil, the Napoleon of the Circassians’ (Lee, 1853: 411). There were repeated calls to assist him for the salvation of the Caucasus and the British possessions: “Russia will inevitably overwhelm the Caucasus at Schamyl’s decease, if aid be not given in time. And Russia stops not there. Its aggressive policy, opposed to that of the world, will lead it to India, and the empire of the Indian ocean” (Wagner, 1854: 157).

In turn, the actions of the Circassians in the North-Western Caucasus were described as a modern struggle for liberty (Lee, 1853: 344), struggle against subjugation by Russia (Rolland, 1862), etc. In the British historiography neither de facto nor de jure political power of Russian Empire over Circassia was recognised. Independence of the Caucasian tribes was defended and the principle of freedom of trade was stated.

The most of research literature on the subject described the Russian conquest of the Caucasus and, in response, the Caucasian/Circassian resistance. This trend have preserved till nowadays, being used in the works of John Braddeley, Peter Brock, Willis Brooks, Moshe Gammer, Paul Henze, Kadir Natho, and many others. Since the 2000s such researchers as Walter Richmond, Oliver Bullough, Kadir Natho, Paul Goble, Irma Kreiten, Merab Chukhua, Lars Funch Hansen, Antero Leitzinger actively promote the idea of the Circassian genocide, and the Circassian historiography develops in the course of Postcolonial Studies.

Though in the Western historiography the term ‘Caucasian War/Wars’ was regularly met, by the 2000s under the influence of Circassian researcher’s contribution the term ‘Russian-Circassian War’ starts to prevail¹. Besides, the understanding of Circassians as the North Caucasians still preserves².

It should be stated that no unified approach to the chronology was developed. The outbreak of war is dated as 1800, 1802, 1817, 1825, 1829, 1830; the end of war – as 1763, 1840, 1859, 1861, 1864, 1872. An American researcher of Circassian origin Kadir Natho made a conclusion that is worth noting in this respect: “The overwhelming majority of the historians, however, came to the conclusion that the Russian-

¹ At the same time, the leading researcher in Circassian Studies Walter Richmond uses the Russian-Circassian War, Russian-Caucasian War and Caucasian War synchronously.

² Sometimes, as John Baddeley and Moshe Gammer did, they are distinguished from the Kabardians are separated from Circassians as a special ethnic group.

Caucasian War started in 1763 and lasted until 1864. Nevertheless, the information of these historians is not accurate, since the first Russian invasion in Circassia took place in 985, which was held by Prince Sviatoslav... This had happened 1,016 years ago, 778 years before the Russian-Caucasian War is supposed to have begun!" (Natho, 2009: 267).

Interaction

Having traced an independent development of Russian, Turkish and Western historiographical traditions, we would like to overcome the effects of isolation, and therefore try to examine the relationship among the Cultural Zones. For this purpose, we will concentrate on an exchange of texts and the transfer of concepts between our three Zones.

Interesting to note that the Imperial period of the 19th-early 20th century was characterised more by people exchange rather than texts. Many English speaking authors, who wrote about the Caucasus, had the experience of direct observation of the object of study during their travels to the Caucasus and Russia. The Russian historiographers of the period also had an opportunity to see what was happening in the North-Western Caucasus with their own eyes. The Ottoman Empire in this respect wasn't able to provide some special investigations on the North-Western Caucasus, but regularly obtained firsthand information from Circassians who came to Constantinople for a while or settled there.

In the Soviet period, visits to the Caucasus and contacts between Russian and foreign researchers were already considerably restricted and controlled. However, as shows the research of Peter Brock in the 50s (Brock, 1956), one should not underestimate acquaintance in the West with the recent trends in the Soviet historiography. Penetration of the western views and approaches to the Soviet research circles was also substantial, though it was given along with required criticism from the standpoint of Marxist ideology.

The Institute for the Study of the USSR at Munich (1950-72) became the most important foreign centre of research cooperation in the field. Its employees belonged to the second wave of Russian emigration, among them a Circassian researcher Ramadan Trajo took place. It was he who first introduced the dating of the Caucasian War as 1763-1864. Besides Munich, Istanbul (Constantinople) preserved its fame as a meeting point for the Circassians.

As concerns texts, the English translation of Russian (including Circassian) and Turkish works on the subject were and still are very scarce. On the other hand, a number of the main key concepts and current theoretical trends come to Russian and Turkish historiography through the western authors.

Translations of western texts into the Turkish language became actual for Turkey in the 60s of the 20th century with the return of interest in the Caucasus. The translations from Russian began to appear only in the 90s. At that time, Russia and Turkey suddenly opened for themselves the huge massif of foreign literature on the North-Western Caucasus. Between Cultural Zones an active transfer of key concepts was launched.

Thus, in the Russian historiography influenced by the Turkish one an idea of voluntary resettlement or relocation for religious reasons (muhajirism) was replaced by the idea of forced eviction. In Turkey, in turn, with the translation in 1995 of the Kasumov's book "Genocide of Circassians" (Kasumov, Kasumov, 1995) the idea of genocide was introduced. Subsequently the concept of genocide developed in both Russia and Turkey thanks to the translations (by the way, not always exact) of English texts.

Nevertheless, it is possible to find some kind of filter in selection of works and even in their translation. Foreign-language researches were subject to condensation, adaptation and essential editings both in Russia and Turkey. For example, the Turkish version of the "Conquest of the Western Caucasus and the End of the Caucasian War" by Semyon Esadze turned into the "Russian Conquest of Circassia" (Esadze, 1999). In Russia, mainly in the Caucasus, the publications of extracts or quotations from the works of English authors were in common practice. By the 2000s the situation in Russia and Turkey normalised to some extent, and translations of works became closer to the originals.

5. Conclusion

Our study allows to state that Russian, Turkish and Western historiography on the North-Western Caucasus of the 19th century so strongly depends on local traditions that we can say about three separate historiographies. Though, one can notice some common trends, especially in the 'empty period' of Russia, Turkey and Britain.

Current situation is noticeable for the development of Circassian 'auto-historiography' which is characterised by ethnocentrism and victimisation due to the trends of counter-history.

In Turkey there is some kind of opposition of the Circassian historians to the Turkish ones, caused by long marginalization of ethnic histories under the pressure of the Turkish nationalist discourse.

In Russia, on the contrary, the policy of the Soviet authorities on the development of national cultures and identities, drawing on the positivist concept of 'ethnos', after the collapse of the USSR led to the fragmentation of local ethnic historiographical schools. This manifests itself not only in the confrontation with the official history, but also in mutual deafness among the schools themselves. Therefore in Russia we can trace the permanent attempts to reconcile the conflicting camps.

Last but not least, the Western historiography has a significant impact on the research field, though it demonstrates the lack of homogeneity due to its diffuse borders.

In spite of interaction between Russian, Turkish and Western historiographies, each of them was formed according to own logic of development. Thus, the misunderstandings in the terminology on the North-Western Caucasus of the 19th century (in particular, with the term ‘Caucasian War’) lean on the differences of historiographical traditions leading to the conflicts of interpretations.

6. Acknowledgments

This publication was made possible by funding from the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, research work “Factors and Mechanisms of Destabilization of the Situation in the North Caucasus: Islamism, Nationalism and Regionalism”.

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УДК 94

Война, которой не было: российская, турецкая и западная историография по Северо-Западному Кавказу XIX в.Вероника Витальевна Цибенко^{а, *}^а Южный федеральный университет, Российская Федерация

Аннотация. В данной статье анализируется в исторической ретроспективе формирование ключевых понятий для обозначения военных действий на Северо-Западном Кавказе XIX века в российской, турецкой и западной историографии. Авторы прослеживают взаимосвязь между историографическими традициями, предлагают собственную периодизацию.

Проведенное исследование позволяет констатировать, что хотя восприятие событий на Северо-Западном Кавказе было обусловлено локальными историографическими традициями и рамками заданных магистральных подходов, проявляется ряд общих тенденций. Например, можно отметить схожесть в имперский период российского, османского и британского взглядов на Северо-Западный Кавказ как арену борьбы великих держав. В современной историографии отчетливо выделяется собственное направление «автоисториографии», развиваемое исследователями с черкесскими корнями и носящее черты контр истории.

Несмотря на выявленные взаимовлияния между российской, турецкой и западной историографическими традициями, каждая из них формировалась в соответствии с собственной логикой развития. Таким образом, непонимания, связанные с терминологией по описанию событий на Северо-Западном Кавказе XIX века (в частности, с термином «Кавказская война») опираются на разницу историографических традиций, порождающую конфликты интерпретаций.

Ключевые слова: Кавказ; Северо-Западный Кавказ; черкесы; Кавказская война; Русско-кавказская война; Русско-черкесская война; историография.

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