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**TRADITIONAL ATTITUDE OF CHECHENS TO PERSON AS  
COUNTER ACTIVITY TO EXTREMISM**

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*Abstract*

Counteracting efforts of extremism and terrorism remains among priorities of a number of regions of Russia. The article dwells on traditional attitude of the Chechens to a person based on respect for his natural and social rights, the recognition of his highest value, regardless of origin, nationality, religion and other circumstances. The ideology and practice of the attitude of extremists and terrorists towards a person is marked by intolerance towards those who disagree with them. In fact, Islam is distorted by extremists and terrorists themselves, and in this form they use this religion in order to achieve their main goal.

The traditional attitude of the Chechens to sociocultural, moral and ethical values, to a person, his rights and life has undergone significant deformation during the dominance of religious and political extremism in Chechnya in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which caused the disintegration and division of society, hostility and conflicts between individual people and their groups. A person and his life itself were devalued. Activities and goals of extremists and terrorists are alien to the mentality of the Chechens, their historically established attitude towards a person.

The article also shows that the traditional attitude of the Chechens towards a person is essentially identical to the Islamic one. Along with other resources to counter extremism and terrorism, it is important to know and consciously use in anti-extremist propaganda the formation of understanding the essence and immunity against these phenomena with their pseudo-romanticism, deception and false promises.

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**Keywords:** Chechens, attitude, extremism, terrorism, Islam.



## 1. Introduction

Many works has been written about the Chechens at different times, under the conditions of different political conjuncture, by the authors of different ethnonational bias, profession and competencies. Hence, the diversity, discrepancy, and even confrontation of opinions in their publications about the past and present of the Chechens, about their social organization, sociocultural, moral and ethical values, traditions, mentality, etc. This was also expressed in the interpretation of the question about the attitude of the Chechens, their society to a person, an individual.

Unfortunately it is impossible to say that some fundamental publications are devoted to this issue. However, there are works devoted to “traditional” Chechen society. It was studied by many researchers (Laudaev, 1872; Avtorkhanov, 1931; Mamakaev, 2009; Kosven, 1951, and others.) The generalized work on the above-mentioned issue was published by Natayev (2013).

The studies of these and other authors contain certain requirements for the attitude of the Chechens to a person. They were formed over the centuries and passed on from generation to generation. In a concentrated form, they constituted a kind of National Chechen Code of Honor (Nunuev, 2001; Mankiev, 2007; Mankiev, 2018). The importance of the understanding of this Code and following it has increased and actualized in connection with the well-known crisis in Chechnya in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, when political extremists and terrorists (national and international) dealt a strong destructive blow to all the areas of life support of this region of Russia, the traditional mentality and spiritual and moral values of the people, deformed the centuries-old relations of Chechens to each other, a person, a human.

The author attempts to show the importance of the revival of its last undivided statement of its essence in society as a significant resource for countering extremism and terrorism - a phenomenon that is very tenacious and requires the mobilization of all possible means for eradication.

## 2. Problem Statement

For many years, the Russian Federation has been effectively combating international extremism and terrorism. As it is known, for example, at the turn of the XX-XXI centuries, the extremists and terrorists from more than 50 countries were operating on its territory (in Chechnya and other regions). The results of their homegrown extremists and terrorist activities still exist, as evidenced, for example, by the succession of counter-terrorist operations established today in various regions of Dagestan, incidents of attacks by armed terrorists in Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, etc.

Scientists of the Russian Federation by their own means are also taking part in the fight against extremism and terrorism.

In the Chechen Republic, one of the most significant manifestations of this activity, for example, is the organization of International Scientific and Practical Conferences in Grozny on the improvement of the measures for countering extremism and terrorism (initiated and organized by V. Kh. Akayev, the professor of the Academy of Sciences of the Chechen Republic). The topic of the next conference scheduled for November 2018 is: “Mobilization of the ethno-cultural resource as the most important factor in countering extremism and terrorism”. Its “purpose and objectives”, according to the statement of the “Informational letter” on its implementation is: “the identification of opportunities in order to use the ethno-cultural resource and its mobilization to counter extremism and terrorism”. It determines the topic of this work. As

far as the author is aware, in the statement presented by him the topic has not presented yet the subject of special consideration. The article highlights the traditional attitude of the Chechens to a person, his incompatibility with extremism and terrorism, stresses the importance of education, especially young people, in the spirit of this attitude to counteract extremism and terrorism, directs the educational institutions and the media of the Chechen Republic to this.

### 3. Research Questions

In socionormative and spiritual culture of the Chechens, a key, system-forming place has been occupied by people since ancient times. It was a person who was oriented and his interests were subordinated to the social organization of the Chechens in the past, starting with the local community headed by the Council of Elders and ending with the people ruled by the Council of the Country. It was characterized by the election of management structures, the transparency of their activities, their accessibility to everyone, the freedom of speech, public participation in the discussion of all important issues to people and other signs of democracy and humanism. The positions and post could not be inherited. The possibility of taking over them in an unjust way (using public relations, bribing, force, etc.) was excluded, in any case, such examples were not recorded by the researchers.

The highest human value of the Chechens is also reflected and fixed in their adats, which affirm in society the principles of “humanity” (“adamallah”). According to their meaning, “a person is the highest value”, “person’s life is above all”, “a person is the measure of all things”. This is visibly represented in the customs and traditions of the people, as well as the ideas of ethnic and confessional tolerance, friendship, good neighborhood, cooperation with other nations and their representatives regardless of their national and religious affiliation, which is reflected in the National Chechen Honor Code and is shown below.

The ideas about a person as the highest value, respect and care for him, humanism, tolerance, internationalism, loyalty to duty and honor constitute the indisputable essential basis of the concept of “nokhchalla” (“Chechen”). Xenophobia, ethno-phobia and religious intolerance were alien to it. It is this aspect that substantially determined the polyethnic nature of Chechnya, where since ancient times representatives of many ethnic groups and supporters of various religious beliefs found shelter and settled. This is recognized by science and widely known historical fact, confirmed by the modern presence of Chechens of foreign ethnic origin: Avar, Kumyk, Dargin, Russian (Cossack), Tatar, Georgian, Jewish, etc. (Vachagaev, 2003). They live in peace and harmony, without inter-ethnic conflicts.

According to the opinion of the author, under modern conditions multidimensional phenomenon is one of the important indicators of the presence of the Russian identity in the public consciousness of the republic, the formation of which is relevant and essential for the intensification of the unity of multinational Russian people (Drobizheva, 2018).

Convincingly the highest value of a person in Chechen society is also evidenced by the fact that “the murder of a Chechen by a Chechen, and not only murder, but any crime against a person was extremely dangerous and serious” (Furman, 1999). Of course, this does not mean the exclusivity of the Chechens. The same thing was typical for other Caucasian nations. For example, in connection with the blood feud, a well-known Dagestan scientist, Professor M.A. Abdullayev writes: “We did not approve and condemned hit. But it did not arise by chance; it was a result of tribal system. In Dagestan, in the past there was no strong

government, it was not able to protect the honor and dignity of an individual. Therefore, clan traditions were long preserved, and clans acted as protectors of their members. The survivals of blood feud are preserved, mainly because of the corruption and irresponsibility of the law enforcement agencies, the murderers evade criminal responsibility” (Abdullaev, 2004).

The concentrated expression of the concept of “adamallah” (“humanity”), its moral and ethical values were found in the National Code of Honor. This concept is derived from the term “nokhcho” – “Chechen” and literally means “to be a Chechen”, “Chechen”. Its content consists of such requirements and guidelines as:

- unconditionally respect the other person, not to demonstrate superiority over him, regardless of his nationality and faith in any case;

- be ready to help, independent, free. From deep antiquity to the present day, the main greeting of the Chechens says: “Марша вогийла” - “come free”, such a wish is expressed to any person, whatever his ethnicity;

- do not offend a weak, defenseless person, no matter what nationality or religion he is. Moreover, the nokhchalla proceeds from the fact that the farther a person by kinship, ethnicity, or religion is, the more attentive and respectful a Chechen must be to him, for the offense inflicted on him by a Muslim can ever be forgiven because on the Day of Judgment. An insult, inflicted on a person of a different faith, cannot be forgiven, because such a meeting is impossible, therefore, a Chechen will stay with such a sin forever;

- be extremely polite, helpful, and compliant;

- be ready for help and a person’s rescue;

- unconditionally respect hospitality. Hospitality assumed, among other things, the duty of a host to help a guest in his affairs, and, if necessary, to protect his honor, dignity and life;

- to honor a woman as a saint, especially to protect the honor and name of a single woman;

- to do good to people sincerely, at the Bidding of the Heart, without demonstration and self-advertisement. Moreover, their national and religious affiliation plays no role;

- to make friends and to be able to be friends, to remain loyal to friendship under any conditions.

Friendship is a truly holy concept, regardless of the ethnicity and religion of a friend (Nunuev, 2001).

- to respect and provide feasible services to elders regardless of their nationality, religion, degree of kinship and acquaintance;

- to be unconditionally faithful of the given word, not to change it even if there is a real threat to life. The man’s word was a universally accepted self-sufficient guarantee for the most serious issues of life in Chechen society: refusal of blood feud, reconciliation of hostile parties, resolving a land dispute, refusing a defective lifestyle and bad habits, etc. The word of a man in their reliability and recognition was comparable to the oath on the Koran;

- to be equal to each other, regardless of differences in wealth, strength, rank and other characteristics;

- to deeply and unconditionally honor parents, brothers and sisters, take constant care of them, be attentive to their needs, give them help and support, etc. (Mankiev, 2007; Mankiev, 2018).

According to the author the study of the question proves the impossibility to recognize the assertions of some authors as correct (Vereshchagin, Gavrin, & Nechepurenko, 2003) that a person, an individual was

impersonal, deprived of individuality in “traditional” Chechen society. It seems that here the attitude towards a person of extremists and terrorists in Chechnya is illegally transferred to this society. At the turn of the XX-XXI centuries it could also have been caused by intensive propaganda in the country in the 1990s and at the beginning of the twenty-first century by implanting in the Russian society the image of the Chechen people, “supposedly living according to “wild tribal laws”(Khasbulatov, 2003).

With the dominance of religious and political extremism in Chechnya in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century’s, which caused the disintegration and division of society, hostility and conflicts between individuals and their groups, a person inevitably became an object of hatred, repression, destruction and was not perceived as a value, worthy of veneration and rescue. Such an attitude towards “strangers” implanted into the society by all sorts of “hattabs, fattakhi, and abdurakhmans”, which, as noted by A-Kh. Kadyrov, “assumed the role of the true mentors of the Muslims of Chechnya ...” (Kadyrov, 2004). The content of this mentoring was determined by the ideology and political goals of the Wahhabis. The researchers believed that Wahhabism is essentially political adventurism and religious extremism, a hotbed of international terrorism and banditry, which at its core Wahhabism is a blatant form of extremism, orienting to take-over of power and using Islam and its slogans for this purpose (Kadyrov, 2004; Nukhazhiev, 2006).

A quarter of a century ago, one of the national researchers of the religions of the East wrote: “Now Wahhabism, which is dominant in Saudi Arabia, has become more moderate” (Vasiliev, 1983). As can be seen from the above estimates of this phenomenon, Kadyrov and other do not have to speak about the moderation of Wahhabism in the North Caucasus.

The ideology of Wahhabism and extremism was deeply alien to the ethno-national mentality of the Chechens in general and their traditional attitude to a person, in particular. Extremists, both alien and “national”, understood this and actively tried to impose on the Chechens so-called “pure” Islam instead of the “distorted” Islam they professed, which essentially corresponded to their traditional attitude to a person and which they should have given up as delusions.

In fact, the distortion of Islam was the Wahhabi version of this religion. This was especially evident in its misanthropy, intolerance towards the Gentiles, for example, which A-Kh. Kadyrov convincingly showed. Exposing the failure of the “scientific” basis of Wahhabism in terms of misanthropy and homicide on religious and racial grounds, he cites the “official document”: “Fatwa on the inadmissibility of justifying terrorism and extremism by the norms of the Holy Koran and Sunnah”. Based on this document, he makes a number of fundamental conclusions, including the following:

1. “In Holy Koran, the murder of an innocent person is equated by the destructiveness and degree of sinfulness to the murder of all mankind: “He who kills a soul not for the soul and not for a crime, is like the killer of all mankind” (Koran, 5:32).

2. “Any person is exalted before God, no matter what nation he belongs to” (Koran, 17: 70).

3. “The Koran clearly shows the common origin of all people: men, women and various nations. Thus, in Islam there is no division of peoples into the best and worst, there is no affirmation of the exclusiveness of anyone just by origin or by gender. The Prophet Muhammad himself (may Allah bless him and greet) teaches: “O people! Isn't your Lord one? Isn't your common father? Does an Arab have an

advantage over non-Arab? Does a non-Arab have an advantage over an Arab? Or a black man in front of a white and vice versa? Only in piety is superiority” (Koran, 21: 89).

4. “Islam unequivocally affirms human freedom and rejects the possibility of coercion in matters of faith.” “There is no compulsion in religion” (Koran, 2: 256).

5. “The punishment of unbelievers is the exclusive prerogative of Almighty Allah in the future eternal life, and no one has the right to usurp the authority to judge other people for their religious beliefs in this life” (Koran, 2: 256).

A.-Kh. Kadyrov points out: “A terrorist cannot be a Muslim, and a Muslim cannot be a terrorist. Extremism and terrorism have no support in the Holy Koran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). Those who try to justify their crimes by referring to the Koran and the Sunna only aggravate their already grave sin by attributing their personal vices and false views to the Almighty Allah. Such people reject the mercy of the Almighty and are subject to judgment as having violated both the Law of Allah, and the state law, and obligations to other people. The Russian Ummah categorically condemns terror and extremism, which cause incomparable moral, psychological and material damage to not only Muslims, but also to our entire country and all its citizens ”(Kadyrov).

Thus, there is an abundant resource (both “secular” and “religious”) for a full-fledged revival and assertion in Chechen society of such an attitude to a person that is opposed to the attitude of extremism and terrorism towards him and therefore is an effective means of counteracting this evil. Of course, the statement in the minds of people of the perception of a person as the highest value is ensured not only by the education with a word, but also by a doing in the interests of the person, the conditions of his life, and the concern of the authorities about him. Therefore, an impressive achievement in the post-war revival of the Chechen Republic, the wide coverage of young people by education, its active involvement in all spheres of life in the region, promotion to leadership positions, etc., play an invaluable role in the formation of attitudes towards people.

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

The consideration of traditional attitude towards a person as a factor that can and should be used to counteract extremism and terrorism in Chechnya, drawing attention to this issue of those involved in the upbringing and education of the younger generation in the Chechen Republic, as well as media workers from the republic.

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

The theoretical method was used for scientific understanding of the attitude of the Chechens to a person, which has been formed for centuries and passed from generation to generation, in the form of imperatives: determining from which it comes from the recognition of a person as the highest value.

Essentially they acted as indisputable norms for regulating relations between people before present time, before the dominance of extremists and terrorists in the republic from 50 countries who needed completely different regulators of society, a different type of relationship between people and a person, who was implanted in society by means of the same alien traditions and mentality to the Chechens, as well as the “new order” being introduced, without thinking about the destroying of the “heretical” canons living

in “delusion” of the Muslim population of Chechnya. Even today the consequences of this mayhem manifest themselves to a certain extent in some cases. They remain in the list of the tasks of countering extremism and terrorism and implies, among other things, appropriate work, including preventive one.

It was necessary to use the comparative method in order to highlight the coincidences in the essence of traditional attitude of the Chechens towards a person with Islam’s attitude to him, as well as the ideology and practice of extremists and terrorists towards a person being equally alien to them, which is important in the Chechen Republic for the formation of immunity to these phenomena especially among the younger generation.

The logical method provided the semantic correctness of the arguments given in the article, as well as the structure of this article.

Induction, deduction, analysis and synthesis were also used, which performed the well-known research functions typical for the article preparation.

## **6. Findings**

The traditional attitude of the Chechens to a person is highlighted. It is characterized by the recognition of a person as a supreme value, regardless of his nationality, race, religion, origin, or other circumstances. Man-hatred in any of its forms is unacceptable; it is distinguished by its orientation towards the help and support of a person and its assistance in righteous deeds.

It is shown that traditional attitude of the Chechens towards a person is incompatible with the attitude of extremists and terrorists towards him. This makes the traditional attitude of the Chechens towards a person important and demanding active use in the formation of a conscious and sustained rejection of the ideology and practice of extremism and terrorism especially among the younger generation.

The coincidence, in essence, of the traditional attitude of the Chechens towards a person with the attitude of Islam towards him, is highlighted, as consistent with humanism, as can be seen from the article.

The attention is focused on the fact that this relationship strengthens the anti-extremist resource of the traditional attitude of Chechens to a person, making the last more attractive for the Muslim population of the Chechen Republic.

This resource is also reinforced by the ideology and practice of extremism, the victim of which was the population of the republic, who experienced all their savagery and barbaric cruelty, their true man-hating essence.

Despite this, under the influence of extremists and terrorists, there was a certain part of the population, primarily and mainly young people, uncovered by work and study, and a disinterested legitimate life outlook. Nowadays it is not youth, but heads of families. Some of them are not completely freed from the ideas of radicalism, which infected them in their youth, which can easily be found in normal communication with them. Hence, the need to strengthen anti-extremist emphasis in sermons in mosques, press materials, radio and television programs occur.

Propaganda, ideological work will be quite effective and bring sustainable results only if it is supported by successful solution of social and economic problems, as well as by the steady improvement of state national policy.

## 7. Conclusion

The study showed that one of the important resources that can and should be used in countering extremism and terrorism in the Chechen Republic is the historically established attitude of the Chechens to a person. It is characterized by the recognition of a person as a supreme value, humanism, internationalism, tolerance, toleration, and irreconcilability in contrast with any form of xenophobia, extremism and terrorism.

The key component of the attitude of the Chechens to a person is the vision in him (a person) of a personality, an individual worthy of respect and honor. A person as an individual was not at all impersonal to the social organization of the Chechens, but was its core and goal, its highest value. This is the exact opposite of extremism and terrorism.

All this makes the traditional attitude of Chechens towards a person related to Islam's attitude to him, makes him attractive to Muslims of Chechnya, and strengthens his anti-extremist and anti-terrorist resource. This is important because the fight against extremism and terrorism is still relevant today, although it was in the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century. However, the trace left by them makes it known even now, which, for example, is impressively confirmed by the description of the actions of the radical part of the clergy in the villages of Chechnya's neighboring Dagestan, which establishes its leadership in regulation of people's lives (Abdullaev, 2008).

Due to the principled and resolute policy of R.A. Kadyrov and his team the situation in the Chechen Republic is different nowadays. It is definitely a great achievement. However, it does not exclude the possibility of the latent existence of Wahhabi and other extremist movements and attitudes capable and ready to turn into appropriate practice at the "right moment".

A more successful and effective implementation of the above-mentioned resource for reviving and approving a former attitude to a person in Chechen society would be facilitated by the solution of the all-Russian problem, which "is connected with legislation in the religious sphere and the lack of a system and concept of state-confessional relations" (Lunkin, 2017).

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