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**CHECHNYA DURING MILITARY AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY**  
**OF BEY-BULAT TAYMIEV**

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**Abstract**

The first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is a chronological period of time when one can speak of Bey-Bulat Taymiev, if not as a ruler, then unequivocally as the leader of the Chechen people who had indisputable authority, the leader of all social and political processes and fateful events to take place in Chechnya. Bey-Bulat Taymiev was from the village of Mayrtup. He was born in 1779 and was highly respected by his people. The first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the period of his military and political activities. Bey-Bulat Taymiev was an educated person. The North Caucasus was a territory where the interests of the three leading powers of Iran, Turkey and Russia collided. Towards the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, a generally peaceful period of Russian-Caucasian relations was in place. Russia established itself in the North Caucasus by signing agreements with Ossetia when the Vladikavkaz fortress was built, the Dagestani feudal lords, plain Chechnya, Ingushetia signed a number of agreements, and the North Caucasians calmly looked at how the Caucasian military line was being built along the rivers. It was a peaceful expansion of Russia in the Caucasus. As for further actions and events following the annexation of Georgia to Russia, Chechnya, Dagestan and Kabarda became an internal territory between Georgia and Russia. Naturally, at any cost, Russia intended not to concede these territories to anyone. During this period, Bey-Bulat Taymiev, a politician and military leader, put forth all his exertions to prevent the subsequent hostilities.

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## **1. Introduction**

Bey-Bulat Taymiev and his place and role in the history of Chechnya in the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century have been studied by many authors. The first generalization on this topic was the publication by Kolosov (1991), in which he for the first time, on the basis of documentary sources, investigated the military and political activity, his influence on the political events in Chechnya and his role as a leader in the history of Chechnya in the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Many authors concerned with Caucasian studies describe the events to take place in Chechnya in the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Everyone emphasizes Taymiev's significance and authority he had among the people. Caucasian scholars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century including Butkov (1869), Dubrovin (1871) write about his role and influence among his people. Gapurov (2003, 2018) greatly contributed to this issue. He is the author of a number of studies into the history of Chechnya in this period and the role of Bey-Bulat Taymiev in the processes taking place in Chechnya.

One cannot but mention Akhmadov (2019) who researched the problem of Russian-Chechen relations.

Tesaev (2019), a young scientist, is also worth mentioning for his studies, as is a wider academic community of the Academy of Sciences of the Chechen Republic, at large, for their tremendous endeavors in this respect.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The paper deals with some major events to take place in Chechnya during the period of military and political activity of Bey-Bulat Taymiev, namely, in the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **3. Research Questions**

The subject of research is the evaluation of the general socio-economic development and political events in Chechnya in the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during the period of Bey-Bulat Taymiev's activity.

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

The paper aims to delineate the major events in Chechnya during the period of military and political activity of Bey-Bulat Taymiev.

## **5. Research Methods**

A methodological toolkit rests on the principles of objectivity, scientific character and historicism that imply exploring facts and phenomena in all their diversity, in definite historical conditions they occurred and developed. A source analysis was used, as well.

## 6. Findings

By the end of the 18th – beginning of the 19th century, the Russian government established a contractual relationship with the population of the plain Chechnya closest to the line, while the foothill and mountainous parts were outside the control of the Russian government. Since that time, Chechnya and Chechens began to be differentiated in Russian documents as peaceful and non-peaceful.

Once established in the 16th century, Russian-Chechen relations continued to be far above the average in the 18th century. That same period, there were close trade relations between the Chechens and the Russians inhabiting an area along the Terek cordon line. The Chechens brought their home-made products to the markets organized near the fortresses and in the villages and exchanged them for dry and iron goods. From among the lowland Chechens, there was a stratum of merchants who supplied Russian goods to Chechen mountaineers. The Chechens inhabiting Nadterechny and Sunzha districts implemented peaceful and good-neighbour policy with the Russian cossacks in Chechnya (Gapurov, 2003). Russian-Chechen relations began to worsen following the appointment of P.D. Tsitsianov as the governor who set a goal to conquer Chechnya at any cost. In response to Tsitsianov's tough attempts to conquer the region, Bey-Bulat kidnapped the Kabardian bailiff Delpozo and demanded a ransom for his return. P.D. Tsitsianov paid the ransom, but collected three times more money from the Chechens. Tsitsianov's methods to suppress the population sparked public outcries in Chechnya, Kabarda, Ossetia and Dagestan. The governor Gudovich planned to strengthen more friendly Russian-Chechen relations, in view of the results of Tsitsianov's tough policy that brought about public protests. Even his contemporaries depicted Gudovich as a very cautious person. By this time, Russian-Chechen relations had worsened, the situation and relations with other states were developing in such a way that, in any case, Russia had to reduce its activity in conquering the region. The peoples neighboring the Chechens were considered Russian citizenship. In the 19th century, the Chechens raided the line, which was a response of the population to invasions of villages, cattle theft, destruction of crops, etc. In the summer of 1806, Gudovich met Chechen foremen, from 104 Chechen villages representing almost the entire plain of Chechnya and even the foothills. Chechen foremen expressed their dissatisfaction with the Russian government. In response to Gudovich's reproaches about raids on the cordon line, they replied that the Russian government was strongly oppressing the inhabitants, insomuch that they had no other choice. Just at the beginning of 1807, Bulgakov returned to Chechnya from the Dagestan campaign. Immediately, he announced his commitment to join the next campaign in a month. His detachment moved from the village of Chervlennaya to Chechen villages through the Khankala Gorge. Bulgakov's troops reached the gorge on February 15, and on February 17 they made an assault that the Chechens would long remember for its cruelty, as Bulgakov himself admitted. The Chechens, inspired by their upright struggle, rigorously resisted.

Bulgakov's atrocities reached such a climax that Gudovich indignantly spoke to him that "you were sent not to wage war with the Chechen peoples, but to punish them and bring them into complete submission" (Gapurov, 2003, p. 24).

However, reports from both generals flew to St. Petersburg that the military expedition to Chechnya (February 13 – March 18, 1807) ended up with the complete victory of the Russian troops. Of course, the Russian-Chechen relations that had turned into a military phase, imparted overtone to the

reports produced by the governor. "... Chechens are completely subdued at the point of the sword and are sworn to eternal allegiance to Her Imperial Majesty... At the point of the sword, Chechens are brought into a state, that they will feel distressed for a long time and, of course, will not soon recover from a blow they have been dealt..." (Gapurov, 2018, p. 42).

Today it is difficult to assess what exactly the ambitious generals were driven by when they issued orders to trash Chechen peaceful villages. Some civilians, hoping that military commanders would fulfill their promise not to hurt those who were not fighting, stayed at home. Yet they shared the same destiny as those who stood against. Dozens of villages were destroyed, even those that were considered Russian citizenship. These expeditions were not so much aimed at the military suppression of the population. In fact, the population was forced to pledge of allegiance to Russia. The military events of 1807 resulted in a forcible annexation of Chechnya to Russia, although all this was accompanied by political acts of allegiance. Since that time, the Russian command repeatedly attempted to establish a system of administrative authorities. The Chechens, represented by their leaders, were well aware of those advantages they could take of a peaceful neighborhood with Russia. Local representatives of Russian authorities began to include and actually represent Chechnya as part of Russia. Bey-Bulat Taymiev was one of those leaders whose standing in the community was often used by governments to influence the public. The Russian authorities reached out to Bey-Bulat Taymiev to convince him to transfer to the Russian service and, expressing the will of his people to put an end to the armed struggle, he ultimately expressed his consent. The Russian officials were aware of Taymiev's authority among his people and took a keen interest in him. Gudovich invited him to Tiflis. The governor petitioned for Bey-Bulat's promotion to the next rank and his request, given the profitability, was granted. A dashing rider who had authority and respect among the Chechens was accepted into the Russian service. However, the efforts to take over the region were ambiguous since the governors changed, the policy changed, the methods of conquering changed, far from being profitable and short-sighted not only for the Chechen side.

In March 1809, Cavalry General Alexander Petrovich Tormasov took up the position of the governor of the Caucasus, following Gudovich.

Tormasov continued Gudovich's policy. Being an opponent of tough measures, he also tried to apply political methods. It was this governor who took measures to establish trade contacts with the mountainous Chechnya, since the highlanders needed salt, iron and other household items that could be purchased from the Russians in the fortress. The Chechens basically exchanged agricultural foods, animal husbandry products, as well as handicrafts and objects that were typical of Chechen life.

The reaction of the Chechens commonly fitted the policy pursued by the governors. Under Tormasov, Russian-Chechen relations returned to normal, the Chechens did not attack the line, the region was reportedly calm.

Having defeated France in the Patriotic War of 1812, Russia again switched its attention to the Caucasian issue. Following the decision of Tsar Alexander I, General A.P. Yermolov was appointed a sovereign's vicegerent to the region. In May 1816, Yermolov was appointed commander-in-chief of the Caucasus. Yermolov presented his plan of conquest. It differed from the policies implemented by Gudovich and Tormasov. Yermolov planned to transfer the line from the Terek to Sunzha, to evict the Chechens from and move the Cossacks to this territory, to build a line of military fortifications along the

Sunzha to protect the Cossack villages, to impose a military and economic embargo against the highlanders and force them to surrender. On April 1818, Yermolov arrived in Chechnya in the village of Chervlenaya. The Chechen foremen were summoned to the village. Having completely thrown off all the peace initiatives that had been undertaken before and had a good result, Yermolov declared in an offensive manner that he did not need peaceful swindlers, and would start brutal exterminations. The foremen were puzzled by a new turn of events, while Yermolov announced the construction of the Grozny fortress. The geographical location of the new fortress was taken into account, the fortress blocked the access to the Terek and Sunzha for the Chechens through the Khankala Gorge.

It was clear to everyone that peaceful conquests were largely gone, the governor's demands indicated that a military stage of relations was brewing, Yermolov wanted to establish solid power at any cost. However, being still a far-sighted person, realizing that Russia could be drawn into a protracted war, Yermolov tried to enlist the support of leaders who had authority among the Chechens.

Two people were put in a report compiled by an informant as having political weight in Chechnya: Chulik Kindergeev and Bey-Bulat Taymiev. Kindergeev was attracted to the right bank of the Terek, and in 1809 he founded a village opposite the village of Ischerskaya (Gelaeva, 2013). There was only Bey-Bulat Taymiev left. By the time of Yermolov's governorship, Bey-Bulat Taymiev was already the generally acknowledged leader of the people. Bey-Bulat met Yermolov's predecessors, was in the Russian service, in the event of suppression of the people, he spearheaded the armed struggle.

Yermolov met with Taymiev in Vladikavkaz in 1816. He realized the importance of this person and enlisted him in the service as a lieutenant. This did not change the core of Yermolov's policy. The Yermolov period ruled out a compromise peaceful annexation of the region, despite the fact that he was looking for such leaders from among the conquered people who would provide significant support in suppressing their own people. Yermolov fortified a ford on the Sunzha River and founded the fortress of Grozny. Yermolov blocked trade and exchange possibilities, leaving a narrow choice for the Chechens either to obey under any conditions, or starve in the mountains. The Chechens chose to fight for their right to live on their land. By September, the construction of the Grozny fortress was completed, followed by the measures to introduce the Russian administrative and judicial authorities.

Making an example for all who dared to disobey, in September 1819 the richest lowland village of Dady-Yurt was devastated together with its residents. It was a show of strength with an aim of frightening and causing fear to subdue.

Yermolov's robust military policy was a striking force that destroyed the age-old way of life of the Chechens. Trying to speed up the process of conquering the Chechens, Yermolov ordered the construction of roads. Tired of the wars, but unwilling to subjugate the cruel general, the Chechens came to their senses, hoping that everything would be okay and waited. However, Yermolov was relentless in his plan. By 1820, the system of the military and economic blockade had been established.

In 1820, the Chechen leaders started to search for peace with Russia, although it was at this time that the viceroy Yermolov committed most atrocities. By this time, the Terek cordon line was moved from the Terek to the Sunzha.

The Chechens were in a difficult position. Bey-Bulat Taymiev supported the uprising of the Germenchuk qadi Abdul-Kadyr, who made religious and liberation calls and stirred up the people to

revolt in 1822. An attempt was made by the Caucasian leaders to unite the Caucasian people. Bey-Bulat Taymiev who was striving for the alliance with other Caucasian peoples, in 1824 supported the uprising led by Magomed Yaragsky in Dagestan under the flag of Muridism. He gathered an army of two thousand people. The detachment of General Grekov headed for the village of Atagi, where it was supposed to face the detachment of Bey-Bulat Taymiev, but Bey-Bulat left an open battle trying to save people, and at this time Grekov with his army forced the Atagin people to swear allegiance and returned to the Grozny fortress.

The detachment of Bey-Bulat, divided into two parts, moved to the Karabulaks and Kumyks. In turn, Grekov, fearing the annexation of the Dagestanis to the Chechens, ordered to strengthen the Gerzel-Aul fortification. However, Bey-Bulat, bypassing, attacked Amir-Adzhi-brtovsky, after that the fortification of the Evil Trench, and then the Peregradny Stan. Bey-Bulat went to the Grozny fortress. His intention was to cut off the fortress from the Tersk cordan line. The task was facilitated by the fact that the Nadterek Chechens, who were going to seize Stary Yurt, joined his movement. After lifting the siege from Gerzel, the generals Grekov and Lisanevich, who were in the fortification, urgently gathered 318 Chechen representatives promising them a guarantee of security. They were required to pledge of allegiance to Russia. In the current situation, this would have happened, but Lisanevich began to scold the people's representatives with swear words in the Kumyk language that was partly understood by the Chechens. The foremen were summoned one by one. Uchar-Khadzhi, mullah of the Nadterechny and Sunzha Chechens, became the third to be summoned. When Uchar-Khadzhi did not budge, Lisanevich tried to pull him out, Uchar-Khadzhi mortally wounded Lisanevich, and then Grekov who rushed to help him. Before his death, Lisanevich managed to shout not to let anyone out alive, which was done by the soldiers in the fortress. All 318 Chechen representatives, who were promised security guarantees, were killed. The Gerzel-Aul massacre sparked an explosion of indignation in Chechnya. In 1825, Bey-Bulat Taymiev led the uprising. In 1825 at the all-Chechen congress in Mayrtup, B. Taymiev suggested that all those who had gone to the mountains return to the plain in order to resist the Russian troops on the plain. Bey-Bulat also called on the Chechens at this congress to make peace with each other, to lead a proper lifestyle. At the same time, he demanded the election of special commissioners who were supposed to monitor compliance with the established rules.

In 1826, the uprising was suppressed by Yermolov, who, however, condemned Lisanevich's actions and even met Taymiev through intermediaries and resumed peace negotiations. Bey-Bulat, who tried to save his people, agreed to negotiate. He was reinstated in the officer's rank. In 1827–1828, Bey-Bulat advocated for the annexation of Chechnya to Tarkovskoye Shamkhalstvo. Thus, it is inferred that he would lean toward annexation to Russia, since Shamkhalstvo was a vassal of Russia. Further, there was a decline in the movement of the Chechens. In 1831, he was killed by a bloodline, according to some sources, according to others, he died of wounds in 1832. In these years, the era of Bey-Bulat Taymiev, a striking politician and military leader who tried to do everything to prevent hostilities, ended for Chechnya.

## 7. Conclusion

During the period of Bey-Bulat Taymiev, Chechnya was a developed region, but Russian-Chechen relations, due to some brutal governors, turned into military confrontation. Bey-Bulat was a multifaceted person. During the period of his military and political activity, he made every effort to establish peace. More than once, he made compromises in negotiations with Russian generals trying to steer Russian-Chechen relations into peaceful courses. Yet, when these attempts did not succeed, he twice excited major rebellions in Chechnya and took the lead of the Chechen liberation struggle.

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