

## The Eastern Plot of L.N. Tolstoy



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**ABSTRACT:** The article considers the development of the concept of the Caucasian peoples in the works of Leo Tolstoy: from the depiction of the Highlanders as natural, somewhat idealized types ("Cossacks") to the affirmation of their universal human nature ("Caucasian prisoner") and the return to the novel type of a person in whose fate the most important features of Russian life of the late XIX century were reflected. ("Hadji Murad").

**KEYWORDS:** The Cossacks, The Prisoner of the Caucasus, Hadji Murat, Homer, chi-asmatic symmetry, Xenophon, Anabasis.

### INTRODUCTION

The theme of the Caucasus is present in the works of Leo Tolstoy from the 1850s to the 1900s. The question of the writer's attitude to the war in the Caucasus and the image of the indigenous Caucasian population, despite all the study of Tolstoy's work, remains largely open. Indisputable in the history of the study of this issue is the indication of three chronological stages in the writer's treatment of the topic: 1) 1851-1862 - the time of Tolstoy's stay in the Caucasus, direct participation in military operations ("Raid", "Logging") and the completion of this stage by writing the story "Cossacks"; 2) 1872 - the creation of the story "The Caucasian prisoner"; 3) 1896-1904 - the time of work on "Hadji Murad".

All three periods are marked by Tolstoy's great interest in the highlanders, but the content of this interest and the nature of the description change in accordance with the evolution of the writer's artistic consciousness.

During Tolstoy's stay in the Caucasus (1851-1854) and in the following decade, his attention was focused on a benevolent interest in the Highlanders – their ethnography and folklore. Tolstoy arrived in the Caucasus perfectly prepared at Kazan University, where he studied Arabic and Turkish-Tatar languages; took lessons in Oriental languages from Professor Mirza Mamed-Ali-Kezam-Beni (1802-1870), a famous orientalist who believed that it was impossible to study the language of the people without delving into the originality of the national way of life, customs, customs [1].

### THE MAIN FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Tolstoy collects, records songs, fairy tales, imbued with deep sympathy for the highlanders. Later, he will send A.A. Fet samples of folk art, and he will translate them into poems. Tolstoy's circle of close friends includes mountaineers from the Old Yurt - Sado Messirbiev and the Chechen Durda.

At the same time, Tolstoy takes a direct part in the war as a 4th-class firework. The question of Tolstoy's understanding of the nature of the war with the mountainous Caucasus seems complicated and has no unambiguous solution. During the XVIII – the first half of the XIX century. The colonization of the Caucasus took place in the form of battles, raids, extermination (deforestation). Tolstoy fell into a well-developed system of oppression, where cruel forms of extermination were leveled by pictures of peaceful cohabitation of mountaineers and Russians in the conquered territory. So, in chapter IV of The Cossacks, Tolstoy writes about the relationship of the Grebensky Cossacks with the Chechens, which began from the time when the "Old Believers fled from Russia":

Living among the Chechens, the Cossacks were reborn with them and assimilated the customs, lifestyle and customs of the mountaineers. Until now, Cossack families are considered to be related to Chechens, and the love of freedom, idleness, robbery and war are the main features of their character. <...> Panache in clothes consists in imitation of the Circassian. The best weapons are obtained from the highlander, the best horses are bought and stolen from them. A good Cossack flaunts his knowledge of the Tatar language and, having walked around, even speaks Tatar with his brother [2. Vol. 3. pp. 164-165].

Russian Russians and mountaineers at the time of his stay in the Caucasus were overshadowed in Tolstoy's mind by philosophical and moral searches for a real, unromanticized Caucasus based on Russian material. In "Raid" and "Logging" he creates essays on the types of Russian soldiers and officers as a demonstration of the antithesis of natural and artificial (fictional, romantic) life. Tolstoy finds the embodiment of naturalness in nature, in the behavior of ordinary people (soldiers, officers), free from romantic affectation in the spirit of Marlinsky. The fighting highlanders appear under the name "enemy": "The enemy, without waiting for

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an attack, hides in the forest and opens rifle fire from there"; or: "At this time, with a quick unpleasant hiss, a non-friendly core flies by and hits something, the groan of the wounded is heard from behind" [2. Vol. 2. pp. 24-25]. But at the same time Tolstoy captures the predatory nature of the Russian war:

There the roof collapses, an axe knocks on a strong tree and a plank door is broken down; here a haystack, a fence, a sack lights up, and thick smoke rises in a column through the clear air. Here is a Cossack dragging a bag of flour and a carpet; a soldier with a joyful face takes out a tin basin and some kind of rag from the bag; another, spreading his arms, tried to catch two chickens that were clucking around the fence; a third found a huge cuman with milk somewhere, drinks from it and then throws it to the ground with loud laughter [Ibid., pp. 26-27].

The complexity of Tolstoy's position and his hero's position on the nature of the war between the Russians and the Highlanders is twice fixed in direct generalizations. The first appears in the description of the "mysterious charm of the sounds of the night":

Nature breathed a conciliatory beauty and strength.

Is it really too crowded for people to live in this beautiful world, under this immeasurable starry sky? Can a feeling of malice, vengeance, or the passion of extermination of one's own kind really remain in the soul of a person amid this charming nature? Everything unkind in a person's heart should, it seems, disappear in contact with nature – this most direct expression of beauty and goodness [Ibid., p. 21].

For the second time in the story "Raid", the interrogative intonation is removed by refusing to accept the "victorious courage of the Russians":

The sight was truly magnificent. Only one thing for me, as a person who did not take part in the case and was unaccustomed, spoiled the impression in general, was that it seemed superfluous to me – and this movement, and animation, and screams [Ibid., p. 26].

The understanding of the injustice of war is directly recorded in the diary entry of January 6, 1853:

War is such an unfair and bad thing that those who are fighting are trying to drown out the voice of conscience. Am I doing well? God, guide me and forgive me if I do wrong [Ibid., vol. 21, p. 85].

In the process of working on the Cossacks, Tolstoy develops a concept for the Highlanders based on the inclusion of the people of the Caucasus in the universal human space. In many ways, this was a consequence of reading Homer, assimilation of Homeric equalization of people of different nationalities and religions in the development of human society. One of Tolstoy's techniques, leading the tradition from Homer– is chiasm in the construction of chapters. It is known that work on the "Cossacks" continued for 10 years. Tolstoy developed hundreds of character sketches, scenes, many of which were rewritten, re-staged. "Such a transfer of sheets from manuscript to manuscript was one of the techniques of Tolstoy's work, and very often, by transferring individual sheets and entire chapters, he gave the text a different sequence" [3. p. 372]. Researcher Paul Friedrich in the work

"Tolstoy, Homer and genotypic influence" [4] showed that, as a result of permutations, the first part of the story (chapters I, II and III) turned out to be chiasmatic to the last three chapters (XLII, XLI and XL). Chapter III, which closes the first part, and chapter XL, which begins the finale of the story, signified by the collapse of Olenin, correlate according to the role of the landscape and the appearance in these chapters of one of the ancient peoples of the Caucasus – the Nogais.

Two chapters - III and XL - embrace Olenin's happy stay in the Caucasus. Chapter III - the culmination of the first part: Chapter I - Olenin's departure from Moscow, he is on the threshold of a new life; chapter II –

"memories and dreams" on the way, and chapter III - the phenomenon of the Caucasus, the Caucasus mountains before Olenin. An important detail of this chapter is the fact that a Nogai coachman points to the Venison Mountains:

The morning was perfectly clear. Suddenly he saw, twenty paces away, as it seemed to him at first, pure-white masses with their delicate outlines and a bizarre, distinct aerial line of their peaks and the distant sky. And when he realized all the distance between him and the mountains and the sky, all the vastness of the mountains, and when he felt the whole infinity of this beauty, he was afraid that it was a ghost, a dream. He shook himself to wake up. The mountains would be the same.

– What is it? What is it? – he asked the driver.

- And the mountains, - the Nogai answered indifferently [2. Vol. 3. P. 162].

It is extremely important that Tolstoy has an indifferent, nameless Nogaets<sup>1</sup> involved in the beauty that opened Olenin's eyes.

Chapter XL – the beginning of Olenin's collapse: Mariana, Lukashka and other Cossacks did not recognize their comrade in him, Olenin felt indifferent contempt on their part. This state of bewilderment and loneliness corresponds to the landscape, as in chapter III, but this time a picture of an endless bare steppe is given:

The sun was just starting to rise. About three versts from the village, the steppe opened up on all sides, and nothing was visible except a monotonous sad, dry plain, with sand dotted with traces of cattle, with grass faded here and there, with low reeds in hollows, with sparse, slightly beaten paths and with Nogai nomads far, far away visible on the horizon. The absence of shade and the harsh tone of the terrain were striking in everything [2. Vol. 3. p. 292].

The steppe is as majestic as the mountains, but is distinguished by its severity and prosaic. And in this steppe only Nogais meet Venison:

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All over the steppe, eight versts along the road, they met alive only one Nogai caravan, which, being placed on a cart, was slowly moving a verst away from them. He was a Nogai who moved with his family from one nomad to another. They also met two ragged, high-cheeked Nogai women in one hollow, who, with whips behind their backs, collected manure from cattle walking on the steppe in them for dung [Ibid., p. 293].

### CONCLUSION

The poor beggars of Nogai are drawn by Tolstoy as an old eternal people who do not care about Olenin's experiences. They are part of nature itself - mountains, steppes – and are significant by their very existence. That is, Tolstoy, on top of the main idea of his "Caucasian Novel", connected with the spiritual quest of the Russian intellectual, established an epic framework in the perception of the Caucasus as a space that spiritually and actually belonged to the highlanders.

The story displays images of Chechens avenging the murdered man. It is characteristic that their image is associated with the description of the earth:

The Abreks were sitting under a mountain in a swamp. Olenin was struck by the place in which they were sitting. The place was the same as the whole steppe, but the fact that the Abreks were sitting in this place, it was as if it suddenly separated from everything else and was marked by something. It seemed to him, yes, exactly the very place in which the abreks were supposed to sit [2. Vol. 3. pp. 294-295].

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