

Map 5

1791–1801: The Caucasus Defensive Line from Kizlyar to Taman

Map 6

1801–1829: Russia's Acquisition of Transcaucasia and the War in the Greater Caucasus

I have provisionally placed the first stage of Russia's conquest of the Caucasus between the Treaties of Kuchuk Kainarji (1774) and Jassy (J; 1791) and the Treaties of Turkmenchai (T; 1828) and Adrianople (A; 1829), which granted Russia international recognition of significant territorial acquisitions in the region. By 1830 the military and political conquest of Transcaucasia by Russia was complete. During this same period an imamate (Islamic state) was established in the North Caucasus that would soon come under the leadership of Shamil, an Avar *uzden* (free commoner) from the village of Gimry in Daghestan. This marked the beginning of the era of organized military resistance to Russia by a significant portion of the mountain communities of Daghestan, Chechnya, and Circassia that came to be known as the Caucasus War.

Maps 5 and 6 reflect the process of Russia's territorial acquisition between 1791 and 1829. In the central Caucasus, the building of the Azov-Mozdok Defensive Line (1777–1778) was accompanied by an escalation in conflict with Kabarda (1765–1779) and the loss of a portion of Kabardin grazing lands along the Kuma and Malka Rivers. To the west, the extension of the empire to the Kuban River (1783) brought all of Ciscaucasia from the Caspian Sea to the Sea of Azov within Russia's borders. Caucasus Province (Kavkazskaya Oblast) was established here as an administrative region of Russia, comprising, along with Astrakhan Province (Astrakhanskaya Gubernia), the territory of the Caucasus Viceroyalty and thus administratively joining the Lower Volga with newly Russian Ciscaucasia. In 1792, almost a decade after the Nogai Horde was expelled from Kuban, the western portion of the province was turned over to the Black Sea Cossack Host, comprised of former Zaporozhian Cossacks, to be settled and administered.

In Transcaucasia the destructive campaigns of Agha Mu-

hammad Khan Qajar, who was attempting to return the provinces to Persia, promoted a heightened interest in acquiring Russian protection and even in becoming Russian subjects among local elites. Furthermore, after the incorporation of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakhetia as the Province of Georgia (Gruzinskaya Gubernia, 1801), a combination of armed force and diplomatic maneuvering brought the Turkic khanates of northwest Persia (1804–1813) and the kingdom and principalities of western Georgia and Abkhazia (1804–1810) under Russian control.

By 1813, when the Treaty of Gulistan (G) drew a new Russo-Persian imperial border through the cluster of Turkic khanates and along their boundaries, Russia possessed most of Transcaucasia and was achieving international recognition of its conquests. However, communication between the empire's two Caucasian territories—the areas north and south of the Greater Caucasus mountain range—remained extremely vulnerable. The Georgian Military Road (Mozdok-Tiflis) stretched through mountain territories that were only precariously controlled by Russia.

The completion of a solid defensive line (from Taman [Fagnagoria] to Kizlyar) between 1791 and 1801 divided imperial territory in the North Caucasus from mountain populations that had varying degrees of dependency on or independence from Russia. Wherever mountain communities came into contact with the Russian military border, a complex network of relationships developed that included, on one hand, the germinal stages of government of local populations living beyond the line and the expansion of economic ties and, on the other, the increasingly familiar practice of exchanging armed raids. Raids on the defensive line and Russian settlements by parties of highlanders were followed by Russian reprisals, retaliatory raids that, based on the principle of collective guilt, often struck entire mountain communities.

The traditional practice of raiding existed in the Caucasus

long before the Russian Empire expanded into the region. The institution of valiant horsemanship was not only a way of life for local aristocrats; it was a means of establishing the social hierarchy. Raids were also important for egalitarian free (independent and self-governed) highland communities, both in economic terms (revenue from captives and pillaged livestock was a marked feature of the economy of the Greater Caucasus) and in determining personal and clan status.

But in addition to creating new targets and thus new economic incentives for raiding, Russia's expansion and retaliatory response to raids changed the ritualistic and economic nature of this highlander social institution. It evolved from a routine, seasonal element of the highlander way of life into a political institution with completely different motivations in which economic or status considerations now played a less prominent role. The raid was increasingly seen by mountain leaders as part of the fight against an infidel who threatened not only the pastures in North Caucasus lowlands but the very way of life and freedom of highlanders.

Dating back to the years of Sheikh Mansur's fomenting of rebellion (in the eyes of the imperial administrators) among mountain dwellers (1785–1791), this confrontation influenced the way a significant portion of mountain populations perceived the tsarist empire, a perception that took on a corresponding religious expression (the growing strength of Islam and a belief in *ghazawat*, or holy war). Mansur's insurgency also heralded a decisive shift in the main thrust of armed opposition from the insurrection of Kabardin principalities to the free mountain communities of Chechnya, Daghestan, and western Circassia. A portion of Kabardin rulers who rejected Russian suzerainty withdrew (along with their subjects) beyond the Kuban after the insurgencies of 1804 and 1809. (Called Khazhrety, this group of