

Map 11

1865–1870: Military-Native Government in Highlander Territories

Map 12

1867–1886: The Ethnolinguistic and Administrative Composition of Daghestan

When the Caucasus War was over, the conglomeration of systems that had existed in the region to govern free highlanders and other communities (including those ruled by commandants, feudal lords, and khans) was replaced with a unified system called military-native government (*voenno-narodnoe upravlenie*). The military-native system was fully implemented in Daghestan Province after the Shamkhalate of Tarki and the Mekhtuli, Kiura, and Avar Khanates were abolished in 1867. Russian army officers (often of Caucasian ethnic origin) were appointed to administer these military-native districts and were in charge of overseeing district government, the police, and, to a large extent, the judicial system. At the same time, judicial procedure was carried out with the participation of judges who were elected by communities of highlanders, and both *adat* (traditional law) and sharia (Islamic law) were applied. This allowed highlanders living under Russian military rule to enjoy a degree of judicial autonomy and preserved elements of administrative self-governance at the village or local-community level.

The authorities saw the system of military-native rule as essential to maintaining military administration in peacetime in districts where the population was “not yet ready for civilian government” and the direct application of imperial law. The military-native districts included all the territories that in 1864–1865 were populated by highlanders within Kuban and Terek Provinces, all of Daghestan Province (with the exception of the Petrovsk and Derbent municipal governments), and the Sukhum Military and Zakataly (Zakatalsky) Districts. Map 11 shows the overall composition of military-native districts in the Caucasus.

Several principles were applied in determining the territorial organization of the military-native system that governed highlanders:

- **Administrative continuity:** Many of the districts of Daghestan Province had borders that corresponded to the boundaries of feudal domains or alliances of free communities (*jamaats*) that existed in the past. Lower-level imperial administrative units in Daghestan Province (still called *naibates* as under the imamate) were established mostly on the basis of historical *jamaats* or their confederations, and thus retained the long-standing composition of these entities, including ethnically mixed communities. Map 12 illustrates the complexity of ethnic (linguistic) and historical *jamaat* boundaries informing the Russian administrative divisions of the province.
- **Military expedience:** Some districts, especially in the mountains of Chechnya, were defined based on sectors of military operation that relied on key fortified positions to control alliances of contiguous highland communities. In addition, borders of many highland districts and even in some cases their location were determined by the boundaries of areas set aside for Cossack settlements, which, in turn, were deployed based on military strategy.
- **Economic and political coherence:** Districts incorporated ethnically diverse but economically integrated groups (linked through seasonal migration or ties of vassalage). It should be noted that districts that brought together territories settled by a variety of ethnic groups were often broken down into smaller, mostly ethnically homogeneous subunits (*uchastoks*, *naibates*). For example, in Kabardin District, all (Balkar) highland Tatar communities were united in a single administrative subunit (an *uchastok*). The Nogai of the Kумыk District also had their own *uchastok*, as did the (Avar) Taulins and Chechens of the Nagorny District, and so on.
- **Ethnic (tribal) homogeneity:** Many districts (*okrugs*) were first given form based on the predominant distribution of certain ethnic groups (as in the case of Ossetian and Ingush Districts

in Terek Province). The frequent correspondence between administrative borders and ethnic boundaries began to give new administrative expression to ethnic categories and groups, now within the empire.

None of these principles was applied in isolation. However, despite the multiplicity of criteria used to demarcate the military-native districts, a consistent administrative logic can be discerned: territorial governance tried to rely on internally coherent entities (for example, *jamaats* or local communities), controlling their coherence by incorporating local elites into the Russian estate system or even creating it, by grouping different local communities into administratively fixed ethnically defined units (which were increasingly perceived as politically relevant collectives). The very differences in the nature of this coherence—whether rooted in the administrative and judicial legacy of khan and Persian imperial governance (as in South Daghestan), the shared experience of forced resettlement (as in the Circassian districts south of the Kuban), or the cultural and linguistic unity of certain highland communities—occasioned differences in the shape of borders and the makeup of districts. However, contradictions between the various principles applied by Russian authorities and their choice, for reasons that were not entirely clear, to favor one of these principles over another at any given time left an impression that the design of the districts was arbitrary. For example, there were areas populated by highland Ossetian communities living in Tiflis Province and by Lezgins in Baku Province that were not placed within military-native districts.

Military-native government combined several conflicting tendencies. The military-native system brought a measure of uniformity to the governing of highland territories and peoples (khanates were completely abolished, free highland communities