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LAND, COMMUNITY, AND THE STATE IN THE CAUCASUS KABARDINO-BALKARIA FROM TSARIST CONQUEST TO POST-SOVIET POLITICS, By Ayse Dietrich*, Published by Bloomsbury Publishing, Written by Ian Lanzillotti, Year of Publishing: 2022. Subject Area: History of the Caucasus. Book Type: History. Total Number of Pages: 329. ISBN: 978-1-3501-3744-8, hardcover, \$103.50.

This book focuses on the role of the tsarist and Soviet states in shaping intercommunal relations and identities, how ethno-national categories are used as a means of imperial governance and social engineering in the North Caucasus. The author concentrates on the relationship between the Kabardians and the Balkars, ethno-cultural diversity, the importance of the socioeconomic aspects of Soviet urbanization, bureaucratization, social mobility, the schooling system, literacy and conflict in the North Caucasus from the late 18th century tsarist rule to post-Soviet Russia.

Chapter 1 examines the early phase of Russian empire-building and social engineering in the North Caucasus between 1760 and the 1820s, their policies to extend Russian rule toward Kabarda and the transformation of intercommunal and land relations, and how the formation of the region's current ethno-demographic makeup was accomplished by weakening Kabarda through the destruction of the long-established Kabarda-centered system of intercommunal relations. This chapter also examines their struggle against Russian rule, how Russian culture began to influence Kabardian culture, and how social and economic ties between Kabardian and mountaineer elites were preserved during the Russian conquest. The author states that after the Ottoman Empire returned Kabarda to the Russian Empire in 1774, however, despite the signing of Küçük Kaynarca Peace Treaty, which officially ended the war in Russia's favor, fighting between pro- Ottoman and tsarist forces continued in Kabarda and Kabarda remained an independent state which became an ally of the Ottoman Empire.

Chapter 2 explores the period from the conclusion of Russia's conquest of Kabarda in the 1820s to the end of the Caucasus War in the early 1860s, and discusses the aftermath of Russia's violent suppression of the last Kabardian uprisings by 1825. It then examines the failure of the tsarist state to stabilize intercommunal relations and pursue imperial integration in the Central Caucasus, as well

as the problems with the establishment of regional security in the Central Caucasus which had been “pacified” by the deportation and resettlement of the population and by destabilizing intercommunal relations and weakening social cohesion through the removal of “pacified” mountaineers from strategic locations and settling Cossacks in their place. The author states that by pursuing population politics, tsarist officials destroyed imperial integration, had difficulties in administering the territory of Kabarda and produced new land tensions between Kabardians and their neighbors.

Chapter 3 examines a number of major events such as peasant and land reforms, the abolition of serfdom, reorganizing the administration of the region, how tsarist policies transformed social and economic relations within and among Kabardian, mountaineer, Cossack, and European settler communities during the late imperial period, why the reforms of the 1860s not only failed to solve land problems in the North Caucasus, but also increased existing tensions. The chapter also discusses how the beginnings of modernization led to a sharp increase in Russian colonization and increased violent ethnicized conflict in the region.

Chapter 4 examines the period after the conclusion of the Caucasian War, and the violence during the 1905 Revolution which took the form of intercommunal land conflict between Cossacks, on the one hand, and Chechens and Ingush on the other hand which intensified with the delimiting of ethno-national borders. The author states that the mass mobilization surrounding border and land disputes between Kabarda and its neighbors also demonstrated “double assimilation”: assimilation into the newly promulgated national communities and assimilation into the supranational Soviet state. The chapter also provides information on the deportation of the Balkars from the North Caucasus to Central Asia under Stalin, the nature of Kabardino-Balkaria as a unitary autonomous region, and the power-sharing agreement of the Kabardian, Balkar and Russian elites to remain united.

Chapter 5 focuses on the links between ethnic processes and the deportations, and how the deportations affected intercommunal relations and ethno-national identities, Kabardino-Balkaria’s experience during the war, focusing particularly on the six-month Nazi occupation and its aftermath. Chapter 5 also examines Soviet nationalities’ policies during late Stalin period and the experiences of the Kabardians and the Balkars.

In *Chapter 6* the author discusses the issues of ethno-political mobilization in Kabardino-Balkaria and neighboring republics during and immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, why tensions between Kabardians and Balkars did not turn into interethnic violence while neighboring regions witnessed ethno-political conflict and violence, and increased ethno-political conflict by the mid-1990s.

This book is an excellent source of information on intercommunal and land relations in the Central Caucasus in the period from the Russian conquest in the 19th century to the post-Soviet era in general, and the social and political structure of Kabardino-Balkaria in particular. As this region has not been well-researched, it should be of particular interest to scholars researching the North Caucasus.

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