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Review of the Materials of the Baron F. F. Turnau's Military Survey Expeditions on the Black Sea Coast of the Caucasus in the 1830s

Abstract

The article analyses the corpus of documents from the fonds of the Russian State Military History Archive, formed in the 1830s during the General Staff officer Feodor Turnau's expeditions of to the Black Sea coast zone, which lay outside the Imperial control. Although his activities among the Circassian tribes can be termed one of the best Russian secret scouting missions and his memoirs published in 1864 are still considered an important source for studying the military and political history of the region, materials and reports of the survey missions have never been examined in modern Caucasus studies. The author compares the

data included by Turnau in his secret reports to the Imperial authorities with what he mentioned in his memoirs. It shows which issues the Imperial authorities and the Caucasus Army command were interested in during the Russo-highlanders confrontation of the second half of the 1830s. The materials collected by F. F. Turnau can be useful not only in terms of clarifying certain aspects of his personal activities, but also in demonstrating the running of secret survey scouting in unexplored and dangerous ethnic territories off the Imperial frontier. They show high erudition and good training of the candidates selected from the ranks of the General Staff officers to run these scouting missions. The correspondence of the Caucasus Army commander with the central authorities in St. Petersburg on the issue of Turnau's captivity shows differences in their understanding of the Russo-Caucasus relations. The author comes to the conclusion that the corpus of collected materials on topography, ethnography, political and cultural description of the Transkubanians could have formed a basis for a revision of the Imperial stand on the subjugation of tribal groups. Although this political alternative was missed, the materials collected by Turnau became a precious addition to the Caucasus studies source base.

Keywords

Military survey of the Caucasus, military statistics, ethnocultural descriptions, historical sources, archive documents, General Staff, Quartermastership.

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