



# Chechen and blood feud: representation of Chechen during the First Chechen War in 1996 Russian film "Prisoner of the Mountain"

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## ABSTRAK

Film merupakan salah satu seni yang sudah dikenal luas, mulai dari media yang hanya sekedar hiburan hingga penggunaannya sebagai media propaganda. Penelitian ini akan menganalisis representasi etnis Chechnya dalam film drama perang Rusia tahun 1996 berjudul *Кавказский Пленник (Kavkazkij Plenik) 'Prisoner of the Mountains'*. Penelitian ini akan menggunakan metode Cinema Study yang dilakukan Boggs dan Petrie (2008) untuk mengetahui ide pokok film melalui plot, latar belakang, dan karakter, serta sinematografi melalui visualisasi dan dialog. Teori yang digunakan adalah teori representasi Stuart Hall (1997). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menunjukkan bagaimana film Rusia ini menggambarkan etnis Chechnya. Pada tahun dirilisnya, di Rusia, perang yang dikenal sebagai Perang Chechnya Pertama antara Pemerintah Federal Rusia dan Separatis Chechnya masih terjadi. Film tersebut menggambarkan masyarakat Chechnya sebagai masyarakat terbelakang dan sangat religius yang hanya ingin hidup damai dan bukan sebagai musuh negara, seperti film masa perang pada umumnya.

## ABSTRACT

There Film is an art that has been widely recognized, from media that is only for entertainment to its use as a propaganda medium. This research will analyze the representation of Chechen ethnicity in the 1996 Russian war drama film titled *Кавказский Пленник (Kavkazkij Plenik) 'Prisoner of the Mountains'*. This study will use the Cinema Study method by Boggs and Petrie (2008) to find out the main ideas of the film through plot, background, and characters, as well as cinematography through visualization and dialogue. The theory used is the theory of representation by Stuart Hall (1997). This research aims to show how this Russian film describes the Chechen ethnicity. In the year it was released, in Russia, a war known as the First Chechen War between the Russian Federal Government and the Chechen Separatists still occur. The film depicted the Chechens as a backward and highly religious people that only want to live their lives in peace rather than as enemies of the state, like the usual wartime film.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Apart from being a medium of entertainment, movies are also often used as a medium to convey opinions, tell an event that has happened, or spread ideology and propaganda. Susan Sontag (Rudiker, 2021; Williams & Williams, 2021). Argues that one of the Nazi propaganda films titled "Triumph of the Will" is powerful propaganda and as important as documentary art made by "genius filmmakers" (Ludwig, 2020; Maddock, 1935). Film can also be used to represent a social issue through its narrative, such as in the 2012 animated film "The Lorax" (ardiyanayah, M, 2023; Mizan-Rahman, 2024). An adaptation of the children's book of the same name, this movie clearly tries to raise the issue of environmental damage and climate change (De Meyer et al., 2021; Jones & MacLeod, 2022). Drama movies are a type of movie that tells a serious narrative or story. Broadly speaking, all movies are a form of drama or comedy because every movie has a narrative that aims to entertain or tell a serious story to the audience (mclennan, 2023; Trisnani et al., 2021). Drama and comedy films have eleven "supergenres" that define the story, characters, and atmosphere in the movie, one of which is war. War drama films usually tell the story of a group of people or soldiers who are isolated and, one by one, their members are killed until the last person, or

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represent the horror and impact of war on society or the characters shown (Masuda & Misumi, 1971; McIntosh, 2021). The Chechens "ЧЕЧНЕ" or Noxchij "Нохчий" are an ethnic group that inhabits much of the northern Caucasus mountains in what is now the Chechen Republic, a federal subject of the Russian Federation. In Soviet times, the area now known as the Chechen Republic and the Republic of Ingushetia was known as the Checheno-Ingush ASSR. Chechens were not the only ethnicity living in the region; since ancient times, they lived in the region with the Ingush. There is much debate among scholars as to whether the Chechens and Ingush are one ethnicity or different ethnicities from each other, or whether the reason for the separation of their identities that we see today is a result of the separation imposed by the Soviet government (Dembińska, 2023; Kolosov, 2020). The First Chechen War, officially referred to as 'Операции По Восстановлению Конституционного Порядка В Чечне 1994-96' or 'Operation to Restore Constitutional Order in Chechnya 1994-96', was a regional conflict fought between Russian federal forces and Chechen separatists in Chechnya and the surrounding Caucasus mountains. Following the issuance of Presidential Decrees No. 2137 (30.11.1994), No. 2166 (9.12.1994), and No. 2169 (11.12.1994), as well as Government Decree No. 1360 (9.12.1994), Russia conducted operations to stabilize and maintain government authority in the Chechen region and the north of the Caucasus.

The conflict ended on December 31, 1996, with the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Chechen region. The estimated death toll of this conflict was in the range of 40,000 to 45,000 civilians killed, another 50,000 lived as internal and external refugees; and a large number had to move permanently to other places such as Moscow, Saint Petersburg, other major cities in Russia, and some of Russia's neighboring countries. That although the conflict between the two sides stopped on a large scale, there were still frequent skirmishes between the Federal Forces and Chechen separatists that would grow back into a second major conflict in 1999 (Fan et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2020). 'Prisoner of the Mountain' in English release, is a Russian war drama film that focuses on two Russian POWs captured by a Chechen who are planning to exchange them for his son, who is captured by Russian forces. During their time in captivity, one of the two Russian soldiers changes his view of Chechens from his interactions with the younger sister of the person he will be exchanged with and from seeing the lives of the villagers where he is held captive. The movie is an adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's short story of the same name (Caspar, 2021; Febriana Sulistya Pratiwi., 2022). The movie is the work of Sergei Vladimirovich Bodrov, a Soviet and Russian director, producer, and father of the famous Russian actor Sergei Sergeevich Bodrov. The film shows how two captive Russian soldiers, a cynical sergeant named Sasha (played by Oleg Menshikov) who is always trying to escape and a young and naive soldier named Ivan Zhilin (played by Sergei Bodrov) who tries to befriend their captors and attempt to escape their captivity before they were exchanged for Abdul's (played by Dzhemal Sikhharulidze) son. This film was Russia's nominee in the Academy Award and Golden Globe Award nominations for "Best Foreign Language Film." The movie shows the lives of ethnic Chechens who live in the countryside at the Caucasus mountains and as a society that adheres to Islam. It also shows the differences between Sasha's character as a Russian and the Chechens, along with the differences between Zhilin and Sasha. Zhilin is a young boy who suddenly finds himself in an unexpected situation and tries to fit in, compared to Sasha, who is very rude and always tries to escape from the village.

## 2. METHOD

Stuart Hall says representation means using language as a medium to understand something, after which a meaning is produced and exchanged. Hall also explains that in language, signs and symbols are used, whether in the form of sound or written words, electronic images, musical notation, or an object, to represent a meaning, and that meaning can have different meanings according to how the language is conveyed. Representations that are conveyed incorrectly can lead to misunderstandings about the objects represented. Yan and Santos said representations of societies and countries tend to focus on non-Western representations produced by the West, which causes many stereotypes to be associated with a particular society or country. So the meaning of a representation can be determined based on how and who conveys it. One example of representation caused by stereotypes is the representation of Arabs and Middle Easterners in several Hollywood films. Asserts that the representation of Muslims as terrorists in American cinema is not the result of a temporary or indirect media reaction after the September 11 attacks, but something that has been rooted deep in Hollywood history. Representations can also mean, in a minimal form, that they are what represents or something that represents other things thus, the representation of something is very dependent on how the representation is done. In this research, what will be analyzed is how a film represents an ethnicity and its culture that at that time was fighting against Russia, which is shown in the scenes in the film. The movie shows the Chechens in terms of their culture and religion. Islam as the religion of the Chechens is shown very clearly in the villages and small towns

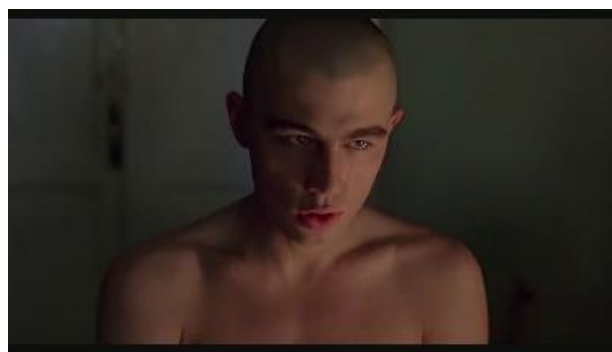
that are the setting of this movie. The representation of the Chechens in the small town under Russian control is interesting, as the presentation of the harmonious life between the Russian soldiers and the Chechens as a peaceful (albeit noisy) forest inhabited by a wide variety of creatures expresses a longing for unrealizable uniformity, while at the same time trying to reassess the image of such bustling plurality, providing diversity. Film is a medium that is often used to convey an idea other than just as an entertainment medium. Besides telling a story, movies also contain meanings that can be shown directly or hidden in the narrative. Films such as propaganda films or documentaries are the most obvious examples, where the film not only tells a story or journey but also shows that the story contains elements of representation that promote an ideology or tell a different culture and lifestyle compared to the culture and lifestyle of those watching the film. The method that will be used in this research is the Boggs and Petrie cinema study method. Film is a unique and powerful art form that has similarities with painting, sculpture, music, literacy, and drama. Film is an art that combines narrative and cinematography. To find out what message a film carries, we must first know the narrative of the film, because the narrative is the center of the problem of the film and the focus that unites the work. Boggs says that narrative consists of three main elements: plot, setting, and character. He also says that films generally focus on one of the five main elements of the film, namely: 1) theme, 2) plot, 3) emotional effect or mood, 4) character, and 5) style or texture. All five elements are present in all movies, but only one will be more dominant. This will be the main point of this research: to find out the theme of the movie and then the central idea of the movie. There are two elements that a movie must have, cinematography and sound. Cinematography consists of several things, such as the placement of objects and characters, camera movements, and shooting angles. Then there is sound that relates to sound effects, dialog, and musical accompaniment. (Boggs, 2008, p. 125-257). These two elements are the main part of a movie, because these two elements are the determining factors for its success or failure. To analyze the film, it will be divided into several parts to show the storyline of the film. Then each part of the film will be analyzed for narrative, cinematography, and dialogue in the hope of showing how the film represents ethnic Chechens who, in the year the film was released, namely in 1996, were at war with Chechen separatists in the Caucasus.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Results

#### How the Chechen Being Represented

In this section, it will be discussed how the representation of Chechen ethnicity in the film "Prisoner of the Mountain" is represented through the representation in the film scene, representation and character, dialog between characters, and background in this film. The opening of the movie shows the state of Russia during the confrontation between federal troops and Chechen separatists. As can be seen from the following early scenes of the film, Russia, at the time of the war, carried out a large military mobilization.



**Figure 1.** Zhilin During Health Check-Up. (00:02:06)

Boggs and Petrie (2008, p. 53) say that in a movie, the visual elements or background (setting) of a movie and the atmosphere created by these elements can appeal to the senses of the audience and influence their emotional reactions. On December 8, 1991, the Soviet Union had effectively dissolved, and Russia was in a period of instability. Satellite states of the Soviet Union had proclaimed their independence from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the Constitutional Crisis in 1993 even led to several oblasts and republics within Russia declaring their independence, nationalism being the biggest driver in this phenomenon. The desire for an independent Chechnya dates back to the August Coup of 1991, when

Chechens, led by former Soviet general Dzhokhar Dudayev, wanted to form a separate state from Russia (Perrie et al., 2006, p. 364). The Russian president at the time, Boris Yeltsin, saw what was happening in Chechnya as illegal, as his government considered Chechnya to be part of the Russian federation system and not a separate state like other Soviet republics that could proclaim their independence. The Russian government then issued a decree aimed at re-establishing federal rule in Chechnya, and armed conflict between Chechen separatists and Russian forces began. During the First Chechen War, Russia mobilized its troops to stop Chechen independence. To do this, Russia needed troops to subdue the Chechen separatist movement. The snippet of the film above shows that Russia mobilized aimed at Russian youth, hoping for a quick victory. The Russian troops sent to intervene in Chechnya were hastily assembled from various units (Malek, 2009, p. 87). The movie also features an army officer overseeing a medical examination. One of the young men who participated in the activity asked the officer.

- Young man : Товарищ майор, можно спросить?  
(*Tovarishh major, mozhno sprosit'?*)  
"Comrade Major, can I ask something?"
- Officer : Слушаю...  
(*Slushaju...*)  
"I'm hearing..."
- Young man : Куда нас пошлют служить?  
(*Kuda nas poshljut sluzhit'?*)  
"Where will we be send to?" Officer : Куда Родина прикажет.  
(*Kuda Rodina prikazhet.*)  
"Wherever the Motherland commands."

From the conversation between these two background characters, we can get an idea of the state of the Russian army in this war. The Russian military recruited young Russians in the conscription system to fill the vacant positions in their army with young people who did not have any military experience to be sent to the battlefield in Chechnya. The footage above shows that Zhilin has been assigned to a military base in Chechnya. This reinforces the representation of Russia being short of frontline personnel and Zhilin being quickly assigned to a conflict area. The next image shows Sasha firing his weapon at the prison where Chechen prisoners are held. He is annoyed that the prisoners are making noise. This shows that the Russian military doesn't really care how they treat their Chechen prisoners, or it could also show Sasha's dislike for them. Sasha, before firing his weapon, was talking to the commander of their base, and he fired his weapon in front of the commander without any punishment or consequences from the commander. In this scene, the Russian troops are hit by a surprise attack from Chechen separatists. That this happens frequently, as Russian troops have great difficulty controlling the southernmost part of Chechnya. The terrain and topography of the region have been a major advantage for Chechen guerrillas, allowing them to ambush Russian troops. Zhilin is shown hiding from enemy fire, while Sasha swiftly returns fire from the enemy and even manages to kill some of their attackers, showing that Zhilin is not prepared for the realities of war. Conscripted members are still sent on active duty, even though they were promised they would not be. One example of the deployment of inexperienced conscripted personnel was during the 2008 Georgia War, where 30 percent of the troops involved were conscripts, some of whom were killed during the conflict.

Before the ambush, Sasha shouted at a group of Chechens who were Chechen separatists in disguise.

- Sasha : Эй! нерусский, стоять!  
(*Jej! nerusskij, stojat'!*)  
"Hey! non-Russian, stay still!"
- Chechen : Русские свињи!  
(*Russkie svin'i!*)  
"Russian swine!"

From this dialog, it can be seen that Sasha sees Chechens as non-Russian, or he sees them as inferior to Russians. The Chechen separatists also call the Russian soldiers they attacked pigs, which are

considered dirty, lowly animals because they often bathe in mud. This dialog shows Sasha's hatred as a Russian towards Chechens and Chechen separatists towards Russians. After the ambush, Sasha and Zhilin were found unconscious. They are then taken by Abdul and Hasan to their village in the mountains, where Abdul plans to trade them both for his son. In this clip showing the aftermath of the attack, some of the separatists inspecting the military vehicle they attacked and one of the separatists holding the weapon he took from the ambush. He and Abdul are shown wearing hats called *папакха* (Papakha), which are traditional fleece hats widely worn by Chechens and Caucasians. One of the Chechen separatists who ambushed the Russian troops told Abdul to kill Sasha because he thought Abdul only needed one prisoner, but Abdul refused to do so on the grounds of avoiding Sasha informing Russian troops that one of his members was captured, which could cause Russian troops to counterattack.

The scene above shows that the Chechens are a technologically backward society. Judging from the way they transport Zhilin and Sasha, they rely on horses for transportation. Their village is also shown to be very simple; in picture 10, it can be seen that their village does not have an electrical installation. In the next scene, you can also hear the sound of the Adhan, which is a call to worship for Muslims, and Abdul, who is performing this worship in the form of prayer. This shows that Islam is part of Chechen life, most of which adheres to Islam. Dina can be seen asking her father Abdul if he wants to eat. In Chechen culture, children are expected to always follow their parents' words and obey them. A conversation between Abdul and two village elders. The village elders, as representatives of the villagers, expressed the villagers' concerns about the presence of two Russian soldiers in their village. They wanted Abdul to expel the two soldiers from the village, but Abdul refused because he wanted to exchange them for his son. From this statement, it can be interpreted that the highest position in Chechen society is held by the parents or the elderly. In the same picture, Dina is helping to bake bread with another woman, showing the position of women in Chechen society who are expected to be housewives. Hasan and Dina are shown flattening straw with the help of a donkey. This image shows that Chechens are still very traditional in their daily work, using animals for agricultural activities rather than machines. The picture above shows someone who wants to shoot Zhilin and Sasha. In the next scene, it is explained by Dina that the person lost two of his son in the war, and his third son works as a Russian policeman. The purpose of him wanting to kill the two soldiers is because he wants to avenge his son. There is a saying in Chechnya that "Chechens never forgive blood". Blood feuds are not uncommon in Chechen and Caucasus society. That blood feuds can last for generations, with one act of blood revenge followed by another in an endless cycle of violence. Sasha and Zhilin walking back to the village. In this scene, there is a conversation between the two captives about what they will do if they are successfully exchanged for Abdul's son.

Sasha : А ты бы хотел сюда  
вернуться? (*A ty by hotel sjuda  
vernut'sja?*) "Do you want to  
return here?"

Zhilin : Нет.  
(*Net*)  
"Nope"

Sasha : А вот я бы хотел... только в новом камуфляже... в красовочках... чтоб у тебя  
огнемёт, у меня СВД... зайдём во дворик наш... Нас там встретят: Вот эти вот  
Хасан, Абдул... Вот так в этом дворе и останутся. (*A vot ja by hotel... tol'ko v novom  
kamufljaže... v krasovočkah... čtob u tebja ognemët, u menja SVD... zajdëm vo dvorik naš...  
Nas tam vstretjat: Vot èti vot Hasan, Abdul... Vot tak v ètom dvore I ostanutsja.*) "I  
would... only with a new camouflage... with pretty clothes... You with your  
flamethrower, and me with my SVD... We go to the courtyard. Hasan and Abdul will  
meet us there. and they will stay forever in the courtyard."

From the dialog between Sasha and Zhilin above, it can be understood that Sasha really hates his detention; this perception is very clear from his monologue about his plan to return to the village just to kill Abdul and Hasan if he and Zhilin are successfully exchanged for Abdul's son. Worldview is related to our position in the world and how we should act, so Sasha's view of Abdul and Hasan, where he plans to kill them, can be justified by his current situation, where Sasha is Abdul's prisoner. A different view can be seen in the following interactions between Zhilin, Dina, and Abdul. In the two scenes above, Zhilin is seen trying to establish a good relationship with his captors. He is shown giving gifts to Dina and repairing Abdul's watch. Zhilin's attitude towards Abdul is in stark contrast to Sasha's, where he even plans to return just to kill Abdul. Chechen's Brawling. (01:05:55) showed in [Figure 2](#).



**Figure 2. Chechen's Brawling. (01:05:55)**

The three pictures above show a group of Chechen separatists gathered in their hideout. The Chechen separatists fought against the Russian federal forces using guerrilla tactics because of their smaller numbers compared to the Russian federal forces. Their tactics were so effective against the Russian forces that they managed to maintain their independence for a few more years until the Second Chechen War. Also shown in the above scene is the Chechens' interest in the sport of grappling, which persists to this day. Many Russian MMA athletes are either from Chechnya or train there. A marriage ceremony. (01:19:11) showed in [Figure 3](#).



**Figure 3. A marriage ceremony. (01:19:11)**

After escaping, Zhilin and Sasha started running away from the village. While on the run, they both encountered a shepherd. Sasha tried to take the shepherd's weapon, but he resisted, and eventually Sasha killed him. When they were recaptured, their captors asked who had killed the shepherd, to which Sasha confessed to killing him. Zhilin was then taken back to the village, while Sasha was taken somewhere. Sasha was eventually killed to avenge what he had done to the shepherd. Tribal law allows its people under certain conditions to seek justice through bloodshed; many of the local norms that are considered "traditional" are actually compatible with "modern" humanitarian and human rights norms. Arriving at the village, it can be seen that the body of the murdered shepherd is being prayed over by the villagers, showing that this village is a close community where everyone in the village knows each other. In [Figure 25](#), a wedding ceremony in the village is shown. Zhilin asks Diana when she is getting married, and Zhilin says he wants to marry Dina. Dina says that they can't get married, then she explains that she can't get married this year, and she explains that in this village they get married early. A father shot his son. (01:26:09) showed in [Figure 4](#). Blood for blood, even if it is our own blood. [Figure 26](#) shows a character who is initially shown wanting to kill Zhilin and Sasha to avenge his son who died in the war, but instead he kills his own son, who works as a Russian policeman. He sees his son working for the enemy as if he were the enemy who killed his son. Because the incident took place on a military base, chaos ensued, and several prisoners tried to escape; one of them was Abdul's son, who was eventually shot to death.



Figure 4. A father shot his son. (01:26:09)

Dina : Дзарахмат умер. Ты проживёшь ещё ночь.  
*Dzarahmat umer. Ty prozhivjosh' eshho noch'.*  
 "Dzarahmat is dead. You have one more night to live."

Zhilin : Помоги мне?  
*Pomogi mne?*  
 "Help me?"

Dina : Не могу. Ты должен умереть.  
*Ne mogu. Ty dolzhen umeret'.*  
 "No. You have to die."

From the dialogue between Dina and Zhilin above, it can be interpreted that Dina is no stranger to the tradition of revenge killing, because those who died were members of her family, namely her older brother. She knew that her father would definitely avenge his son by killing Zhilin. Abdul also went to town to pick up the body of his son. Sons in Chechen society are very valuable to their families because this can be related to the Islamic religion, which views men as the leaders of the family. Abdul then took Zhilin and his gun to a place far from the village. Arriving at a place, Abdul then pointed his gun at Zhilin, as if he wanted to shoot him, but he then shot towards the sky. Abdul turns out to have freed Zhilin and chooses not to take revenge like some of the previous characters.

### Discussion

This film depicts the Chechen people as a group of people who live in the mountains of the Caucasus. Chechen ethnicity is shown through visual and verbal representations between the characters Abdul, Dina, separatists, and villagers. Visual representation can be seen from the interactions between the characters Abdul, Dina, and the villagers, and Zhilin and Sasha, as well as the appearance of the village. Verbal representation can be seen in several dialogues between Abdul and Dina and Zhilin and Sasha. This film represents the Chechen ethnicity during the First Chechen War (Caspar, 2021; Febriana Sulistya Pratiwi., 2022). When compared to the short story by Lev Tolstoy that inspired this film and the previous film that came out in 1975, there are differences in these three mediums. The difference is that in the short story, Zhilin was taken captive to be exchanged for ransom and not for Abdul's son, and the ethnicity shown in the short story is not Chechen, but Tatar. Whereas in the 1975 film, Zhilin and his captors are shown to have a negative relationship. The similarities between the 1975 film and short story are that both are set in the 19th century during the Russian Empire, while the 1996 film is set during the First Chechen War of 1994–1996. Despite the differences, these three mediums still represent the ethnicities neutrally and do not portray them as enemies of the main character (Ahdab, 2014; Flag & Queer, 2023). When viewed from the background context of the year when this film was made, namely in 1996, the First Chechen War was still ongoing when this film was produced (Flag & Queer, 2023; Tetyana, 2011). Film is one of the media used to spread propaganda when a country is in a period of conflict or war. Propaganda during wartime usually serves to describe military success, the armed forces, and the economy that must be faced by the enemy, as well as the moral superiority of the propagandists compared to the enemies they are fighting (AHA, n.d.). Instead of depicting the Chechen ethnicity as an enemy of Russia that must be fought, this film instead depicts the Chechen people as traditional people who just want to live their lives in peace (Sico,

2023; Soulier, 2020). A character is a person represented in a narrative, who is interpreted by the reader or audience as someone endowed with certain moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities based on their dialog and actions. Sasha hates Chechens, as can be seen from the initial scene when he shoots at the prison building because of the prisoners who won't shut up, then during the ambush scene, he calls Chechens "nerusskij" (Non-Russian) and the Chechen separatists who ambushed Sasha also show his hatred towards Russians by calling them "Russkie svin'i" (Russian pigs). Sasha's hatred of Abdul can be seen again in his conversation with Zhilin after returning from helping Hasan and Dina, where they were both almost shot by someone who wanted revenge. Sasha said that if he and Zhilin were successfully exchanged for Abdul's son, he would return to kill Abdul. Sasha also did not hesitate to kill Hasan and a shepherd when he and Zhilin managed to escape temporarily (Shabalina & Bykov, 2021; Sifakis, 2024).

There is also a difference in perspective between Sasha and Zhilin as Russian characters towards the Chechen characters. Compared to Sasha, Zhilin has a different *vision du monde*. According to Immanuel Kant, *weltanschauung* (vision du monde) or worldview emphasizes the ability of the human mind to understand and create a complex world order full of infinite possibilities for the perception of infinite world characters. This perception of the world can be seen in Zhilin's interaction with Abdul's daughter, Dina, where she gives Dina a gift in the form of a bird ornament. During their detention, Zhilin also tried to befriend Hasan, and Abdul, Zhilin even repaired Abdul's watch and helped Dina and Hasan grind wheat. Zhilin has a positive perception of Abdul, Dina, and Hasan compared to Sasha who has a negative perception of the other characters, Sasha is even responsible for the death of Hasan and the shepherd (Hoppen, 2021; Rivki et al., 2021). This film also shows that Chechen society is a very religious Islamic society. Islam has a very big role in their lives, as can be seen from Abdul, who performs prayers, and Dina, who always obeys her father's orders. In Islam, respecting elders is very important (Franke, 2021; Matrokhim, 2020). Chechens are also no strangers to the tradition of killing other people to avenge their families. RT, which is one of Russia's largest news agencies, released a documentary in 2013 that tells how the tradition of revenge killing in Chechnya still exists and is still a problem there, and the local government is trying to solve it through the establishment of a reconciliation agency. In 2019, Magomed Daudov, a Chechen politician, declared a blood vendetta against a blogger from Chechnya, Tumso Abdurakhmanov, because Tumso was considered to have insulted the deceased former leader of Chechnya, Akhmat Kadyrov, by calling him a traitor. The tradition of blood feud that often occur in Chechnya is something that is inconsistent with Russian law, as announced by the press secretary of the president Dimitry Peskov in connection with another blood vendetta statement case involving another Chechen politician, Adam Delimkhanov, and the Yangulbaev family. From these two cases, it can be seen that the recent example of the Chechen blood vendetta occurred not because a family member was killed but because several individuals criticized the Chechen government under Ramzan Kadyrov, and this blood feud tradition was actually not justified by the Russian government (Cerfolio, 2020; Matusitz & Simi, 2022).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This film depicts the Chechen people as a group of people who live in the mountains of the Caucasus. Chechen ethnicity is shown through visual and verbal representations between the characters Abdul, Dina, separatists, and villagers. Visual representation can be seen from the interactions between the characters Abdul, Dina, and the villagers, and Zhilin and Sasha, as well as the appearance of the village. Verbal representation can be seen in several dialogues between Abdul and Dina and Zhilin and Sasha. This film represents the Chechen ethnicity during the First Chechen War.

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