
INTEGRATION OF THE OSSETIANS INTO THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL SYSTEM OF RUSSIA

Elena Sergeevna Shavlokhova*

*Academy of Marketing and Social Information Technologies – IMSIT, Str. Zipovskaya, 5,
Krasnodar, 350010, Russia*

(Received 22 November 2016, revised 5 May 2017)

Abstract

An attempt to examine the processes associated with joining of Ossetia to Russia as the integration of the peoples from the North Caucasus into the Russian legal and administrative system has been made in the article, based on archival material. The Christianization of the population is one of the steps of the integration process. In the XVIIIth century there were some difficulties, mainly in foreign policy which influenced these relations. Ossetian Ecclesiastical Commission took a significant place in the developing of Russian and Ossetian relations. The Astrakhan Archbishop knowing the Ossetian life very well, prepared a report; it was announced to the Ossetian Commission by Archpriest John of Bulgaria - head of the Ossetian commission between 1779 and 1780.

On the basis of this report two important issues were formulated: the spread of Christianity and the resettlement the Ossetia population to the plain. Missionary activity of Ossetian commission was not restricted only with the activities associated with the baptism of the population. Pagan sanctuary honoured by the Ossetians became the starting point of Christian worship. They became a kind of ecclesiastical institutions. Christianity was actively accepted and found support from the Ossetian lords, and as they were a class-divided society, it had become an indicator for other people. Adopting Christianity was related to the emergence of the Ossetian writing.

Keywords: Caucasus, Christianity, administrative, legal relations, Russian-Ossetian relations

1. Introduction

The integration of the peoples of the North Caucasus into the administrative and legal system of Russia has a long history and has been in various forms. A part of the North Caucasus adopted Russian citizenship voluntarily, while others were attached to Russia with the help of the wars between Russia and Iran and Turkey. Western Caucasus, Chechnya, Dagestan Alpine were attached during the Caucasian war which was the longest one in the history of Russia [Acts collected by the Caucasian Archaeological Commission, in the XIIth century - Vols. VI-X, Tbilisi; 1875 - Vol. VI, p. 941; 1878 - Vol.

*E-mail: e.shavlokhova@mail.ru

VII, p. 964; 1881 - Vol. VIII, p. 1009; 1884 - Vol. IX, p. 1011; 1884 – Vol. X, The TS, p. 936].

Russian-Ossetian relations were not permanent and were occasional up to 40-ies of XVIII century. Permanent Russian-Ossetian relations began only in the 40-s of XVIII century. It was due to a change in the political situation in the North Caucasus [1]. Foreign policy changed: Kabarda was declared to be independent from Turkey according to Belgrade peaceful act in 1739 and the Azov was attached to Russia [Russian State Historical Archive (RSHA), F. 821; The Department of Religious Affairs of Foreign faiths, Op. 133, AD 639]. At that period of time the Ossetians needed the land and in connection with the above mentioned events they were able to meet their longstanding wishes of joining piedmont plains to the territory of the Ossetians.

2. Method

The basic methods of research are the basic principles of scientific knowledge: objectivity, consistency and historicism. After applying these methods a number of multi-method researches and scientific attitudes have been used. They were also used for constructing the analysis of the problem and its constituent elements. The work is dominated by concrete historical approach, in which each method alone will be used to solve certain problems.

One of the methods of this study is the dialectical materialist method, for the need to identify causal relationships in all spheres of society. Consistencies, integrity, dynamism of social processes were taken into account in this study.

3. Results

The Georgian clerics Joseph and Nicholas went to the Empress Elizabeth in 1742. She was the representative of Russia for them and they supported the Russian government's performance against Ossetia and promised to make the Ossetians Russian citizens [2]. In 1743 the Board of Foreign Affairs was asked to consider issues relating to the exact Ossetia borders, international position of it and to inform Elizabeth about it. Chancellor A.P. Bestuzhev-Ryumin was the head of this Board and prepared the report.

Kabardian princes such as Mohammed Atazhukin, Adilgireya Gilyaksanov and Kumyk owner Alicia Khamzin being in St. Petersburg at that moment gave all necessary information about Ossetia. The Ossetians did the following as confirmed by Kabardian princes, “before everyone followed Christian law, and now ... they have followed fasting as it is in Christianity” and that “they have stone churches, which are empty now” [3].

In accordance with the data collected by the Board of Foreign Affairs, the materials were transferred to the Senate and it was taken the decision to send a missionary commission consisting of 21 clerics to Ossetia. The commission had the following objectives: to spread Christianity among the Ossetians, to prepare them for an alliance with Russia and to make the Ossetians Russian citizens.

It is known that in ancient times, the Ossetians were Christians, and after the fall of Constantinople and with the weakening of Georgia, they could not have preachers. They were called Christians, but they did not have the priests. Sometimes the priests from Georgia came to them but in most cases the priests wanted to earn, not to bring the teachings of Christianity. And so the Ossetians were more superstitious, i.e. they worshiped pagan gods. There were very few Christians.

In 1744 the Russian government rewarded the Georgian clergy for having gone to Ossetia to preach Christianity there. This activity was initiated in connection with the order of the Holy Synod. It hoped to lead the Ossetians to the Christian religion, as they maintained the tendency of opinion and there were traces of the old church buildings. Their ancestors were Christians and so many people were baptized due to their great desire.

A decree was issued in 1747 and it sounded that the Ossetian people who came to Kizlyar could be baptized, and if they wanted to return to their homes they would be given the notable award in the amount of 20 rubles, while the rest of them were given so-called ‘feeding money’. It was important to make them take the Russian citizenship. Clerics who wanted to come to Ossetia were given a salary and money in the amount of 500 rubles to buy canvas and other things for distributing to South Ossetia.

In 1747 Georgian Archimandrite Pachomius arrived in Kizlyar from South Ossetia. In 1751-1752 he and the Ossetian foremen were in St. Petersburg and they received 500 rubles for poor Ossetian people being baptized, and for the Archimandrite Pachomius was set the salary. He was appointed as the head of the so-called Ossetian commission, and in the same 1752 he was released with gifts to Ossetia from the royal court. In 1773 Ossetian courtyard in Kizlyar, consisting of a vegetable garden, fishing grounds and hay meadows was delivered to the government. Other conditions had been created to attract this population.

In 1756, foremen were sent to Kizlyar and Astrakhan to assist the newly baptized Ossetians. The foremen were paid 10, and an ordinary person was paid 3 kopecks a day. People coming to sell their cattle and to trade were not taxed, but Russian merchants buying their products would pay a fee. The things and food used in churches were not taxed according to the decree of 1758.

The following order was enacted in 1761: the Ossetian commission headed by Archimandrite Pachomius and other clerics should be guarded by the Cossacks when they were travelling from Kizlyar, and the Ossetian clerics, their utensils and other belongings of the commission should be kept in Ossetia by guard.

However, when the introduction of Christianity began in the Caucasian mountains, the Kumyk and Kabardian Amanats being in Kizlyar were paid attention to. In 1763 it was decided to distract them from their barbarous manners by artificial means, as the Russian government considered. It was necessary to teach them the humanity and to treat them better; this would lead to

communication with the Russians. It was important to teach them the Russian language and literacy.

It should be noted that in the Xth century the ancestors of Ossetians, Alans living in Alanya, accepted Christianity, and it was an important political step in joining of Ossetia to Russia. Christianity did not take on, and was lost because of the Mongol-Tatar yoke and the destruction of Alanya. The next stage of Christianization in Ossetia was in the XVIIIth century.

The Ossetian commission baptizing the Ossetians, the Ingush and the others, wasn't a success being in the hands of Georgian clerics. Although Christian law sermons under the order of the Holy Synod were held to the Ossetian and the Ingush people for a long time, this was without success. In connection with this disastrous result, many chiefs of Kizlyar said they did not see any benefit in it as people were rude and wild and they could not accept Christian truth. They were baptized for selfish motives, to get supply, which was offered by the Russian government, but they remained in their original state of mind.

The Ossetian Commission concluded that the best way of handling the Ossetians, the Ingush and other highlanders to Christianity was by educating young people. In this regard, His Majesty prepared a report of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in September 27, 1764, which said that it was very important to open a school in Mozdok for training newly baptized Ossetian children, teaching them the Christian law, and the Russian language. Every student was provided with food and clothes, and a teacher was paid 2 rubles per a month [4]. The building and management of the school was entrusted to the Astrakhan governor and commandant of Kizlyar. In 1765 Colonel Gak being in Mozdok received a decree about creating such a school. According to this decree a wooden house was built in Mozdok and it was the school, where teachers and students could live. The teachers knowing well the mountain languages had to work in the school [RSHA, F. 1022; The Ministry of Education of the Russian Empire. Op. 1, D. 28 - Journal Interdepartmental meeting on the formulation of school education in areas with mixed ethnic and non-Orthodox population].

In 1767, students were allowed to go home to their parents for some time. Senior children were kept individually in schools and were paid 4 rubles per a month, but it was observed that the avaricious fathers of these children and relatives came to Mozdok and took their salaries, leaving them in extreme poverty without clothes and shoes [5].

The abbot Gregory was a member of the Ossetian commission. When Archimandrite Pachomius retired, Gregory was promoted to archimandrite in 1767. He was appointed to be the member of the Ossetian Commission and received a significant reward from the Russian government and funding for meeting the Ossetians visiting him. In 1770 Archimandrite Gregory retired and Georgian Archimandrite Porphyry was appointed in the Ossetian commission [Central State Archive of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania (RNO-A CSA), F. 11; Terek oblast government, Op. 1, D. 845; Op. 6. D. 246].

The Holy Synod examined the previous activity of archimandrites and determined that baptizing of the Ossetian people was at a low level. And all this happened because of the negative activities of the preachers themselves. Preachers did not fulfil their duties, i.e. they did not preach, or they went to remote villages and they preached in Russian or Georgian but people did not understand these languages. The population that had been baptized was left without instruction. After some time, preachers returned, but not to preach, instead to frighten population that they not follow rules and laws. Preachers frightened the newly baptized and sought to earn. It was exhausting for the Ossetian population, and they did not want to be baptized, as for preachers this activity was a profit.

In connection with the above mentioned facts the Holy Synod gave the activity of Ossetian commission to Kizlyar commandant in 1771. Nothing was done without him as he knew all the features of the peoples living in these territories. At the same time he had to defend the preachers in case of emergency and to take complaints from the Ossetians to the preachers. Kizlyar commandant also supervised the convoys and the carts, which went to the spiritual leaders from the secular authorities. In the same year spiritual leaders from Russia were sent to the Ossetian commission. Athanasius Lebedev was appointed as the Head of the Russian preachers. He kept his post until 1777, and later in 1781 was replaced by a Bulgarian priest [6]. The house for Athanasius Lebedev was built in Mozdok using money of the treasury and the Holy Synod gave secret instructions how to act when it was necessary to convert the Ossetian people to the Greco-Russian religion. It is important to note what the requirements were. Firstly, it was important to teach adherents of different faith only from the Gospels, Acts and Epistles of the Apostles, and not to burden them with unnecessary considerations. Also they were told that there was God, and He gave the man the law, and the law had to be followed. God should be loved and honoured with all your heart, and the idols should be completely forgotten. Parents should be loved and honoured; people should obey the authorities. On holidays all should pray to God and try not to be offended. They should give up murder, theft, slander, lies, deceit. Sobriety, diligence, fidelity and purity of marriage should be the main reference points in society. The dogmas, consisting in the Creed, Our Father Prayer, and others were also explained to them. They should honour icons, and know what was depicted on them. The Ten Christian Commandments should be kept; they are the foundation of the Christian faith [7].

Church services were made in the Russian language. Creed, the Lord's Prayer and Decalogue were explained in their own language. Those who accepted the Christian faith could be taken as students into the open school in Mozdok. They were watched not to forget their own language, but they were taught reading and writing in Russian, and if some of them were the best students, they were sent to Astrakhan to the seminary, which was opened in 1777. The seminary students were converted into the priests, and then they were sent back to read the sermon. There were nine Ossetian men in the Astrakhan

seminary in 1784 [State Archive, F. 1318; People's Commissariat of Nationalities, Op. 1, D. 142].

4. Discussion

This issue attracted the attention of Soviet and Russian scientists. B.V. Farmakovskiy and D. Kydyrbekuly observed the early history of the population of the North Caucasus. B.V. Farmakovskiy examined the earliest contacts with the Slavic inhabitants of the southern areas of the country [8], and D. Kydyrbekuly studied mainly the development of the ethnic peculiarities and features [9].

The establishment of relations between the Russian and Ossetian population can be noted from 1742, and it is due to the fact that Russia paid attention to Ossetia, thus the latter became a part of Russia's foreign policy. In 1900, it was possible to talk about the final approval of the imperial administration and forming Vladikavkaz as the administrative centre. These items were studied by the following authors: Z. Vaneti, A. Gagstgauzen, N.F. Dubrovin, I.P. Zubov, G.Y. Klaprot, S. Kokiev, O.V. Margraf, M.A. Misikov, V. Puff, V.A. Potto and A. Yanovsky. The researchers have identified the political issues of the history of the highlands peoples, such as joining to Russia, Ossetian migration to the lowlands of the North Caucasus, the development of trade. They also wrote about the highland peoples' life, family structure, and religious aspects.

The works of experts in Caucasian studies such as N. Nefedev, I.O. Debu, D.V. Rakovich, P.G. Butkov, Kovalevsky, S.V. Petrovsky and G. Tsagolov contain a huge amount of valuable information. The issues of cultural and political ties between Ossetia and Russia are studied in the works of the above-mentioned specialists.

Such scholars as E.H. Apazheva, M.M. Bliev, Z.N. Vaneev, N.G. Volkova, J. Debu, K.D. Kulov, V.I. Larina and H.S. Churg discussed the issues of the North Caucasus as a whole, as well as paying close attention to the history of the Ossetians. Issues as the Ossetians attitude to the central Russian authorities and Caucasian governors' activity are considered in the works of these researchers. At that period, the problems of traditional culture were more discussed than questions of political history.

5. Conclusions

The Ossetian commission existed until 1793. In the process of its work, a diocese in the third grade was established in Mozdok and its school for teaching children of the highlanders. Having considered the problem of adopting Christianity by the Ossetians it is important to note that this was a complicated and long process associated with political and cultural vicissitudes. The choice of the Ossetian population was very important, as Ossetia shares borders with Muslims and only Ossetia adopted Christianity.

It should be noted that in the Xth century the ancestors of Ossetians, the Alans, accepted Christianity, and it was an important political step in joining of Ossetia to Russia. Christianity did not survive and was lost because of the Mongol-Tatar yoke and the destruction of Alania. And the next stage of Christianization of Ossetia was in the XVIIIth century.

The following factors were the most difficult: the preachers did not know the national language and, the local population misunderstood them. The next one was the dishonesty of the preachers who came to Ossetia to earn. They frightened and actually robbed people. A very important factor was the influence of neighbouring nations, such as the Muslim Kabarda, which raised difficulties.

Acknowledgment

The article has been published with the help of financial support of the Russian Foundation for Humanities, within the framework of the project research ‘Ossetia’s joining Russia as the process of integration of the peoples from the North Caucasus into the administrative and legal system of Russia (the end of XVIII – early XIX centuries)’, project No. 16-11-23014.

References

- [1] Y.A. Gordin, *Russia and the Caucasus*, CJSC ‘Red Star’, Dovlatovskiy Fund, St. Petersburg, 2003, 192.
- [2] M.M. Bliev, *Russian-Ossetian relations*, Vol. I, Er, Ordzhonikidze, 1976, 514.
- [3] D. Lavrov, *Lavrov Notes about Ossetia and Ossetians. Collection for descriptions of places and tribes of the Caucasus*, Vol. 3, The printing house of the Chancery of the Chief Civilian from the Caucasus, Tbilisi, 1883, 45.
- [4] K. Koch, *Reise durch Russland und nach dem Kaukasischen Isthmus in Jahren 1836, 1837 und 1838*, vol. I, Drue und Berling Gette, Stuttgart, 1843, 349.
- [5] B.K. Gmelin, *The Lutheran Church from 1702 until 1990*, Part 2, Nauka, Moscow, 1990, 38.
- [6] E.S. Shavlokhova, Proceedings of the Russian Herzen State Pedagogical University, **81** (2008) 131-138
- [7] J. Reineggs, *Allgemeine historisch-topographische Beschreibung des Kaukasus*, Bd. I., Gerftenberg und Dittmar, Gotha und St.-Petersburg, 1796, 73.
- [8] B.V. Farmakovskiy B.V. Archaic period in Russia, in *Materials on the archaic history of Russia*, The Imperial Archaeological Commission, St. Petersburg, 1917, 136.
- [9] D. Kydyrbekuly, *Koshpeliker kombolane?*, 8th edn., Hakitat, Istambul, 1994, 200.