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By Nadezhda Oskarovna Bleich
North Ossetian State University

Abstract- The publication analyzes the confessional policy of the Russian Empire, which it conducted in the 19th century in the North Caucasus. On the basis of archival and documentary materials, it is proved that the Russian state favored Muslims, which speaks of the Islamic Renaissance, which included: the legitimization of traditional Islamic institutions and their functioning, the establishment of mosques during which religious studies were conducted. It is concluded that the socio-spiritual modernization developed by the Russian Empire in the North Caucasus in the 19th century contributed to the consolidation of Islamic religion in the mountain environment. However, many projects of the ongoing reform turned out to be imperfect, and therefore to this day generate controversy not only among Russian politicians, but also among foreign political scientists. In this context, this publication may be useful not only to Russian, but also to foreign researchers in developing balanced diplomacy in solving Muslim problems.

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Confessional Policy of Russia of the Xix Century Regarding the Muslim Belief Confession of the Peoples of the North Caucasus

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I. Introduction

In the North Caucasus region there is not a single political or social problem in which the Islamic element would not be present, since the majority of foreign ethnic groups living in the Caucasus are Muslims (there are about 5 million of them in the region). Currently, analyzing the role of Islam, we have to turn to the history of relations between Russia and the Caucasus, which researchers are not always unambiguously assessed. However, not one of the scholars doubts that the interaction of the North Caucasus with Russia over the course of several centuries left its mark on the political, economic, social and spiritual life of the mountain peoples. Moreover, towards positive.

This tendency began to manifest itself especially in the 19th century, when the Islamic revival was gaining momentum in the region. One of its links is the politicization of Islam, the result of which depended on the subsequent development of events in the region, its position in relation to the Center. During this process, the mentality of Muslims was determined, their identity, the change of which Russia has never claimed. What we are observing today is a reflection of processes that began more than one century ago. This again and again makes us turn to the past in order to correctly emphasize the Islamic religion, as it still remains not just a denomination, but a powerful factor shaping the ethnic identity of Muslim communities, which have a huge impact on the value orientations of its members. And so that these moral imperatives do not acquire negative trends, the Russian government is obliged to turn to history in order to develop the right strategy and tactics of its actions in the province. In this we see the relevance and value of this article.

Author: Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor, North Ossetian State University. K.L. Khetagurov, Russian Federation.
e-mail: nadezhda-blejjkh@mail.ru

II. Discussion

In the process of gradual incorporation of the North Caucasian territories into the body of the Russian state, the ethnic communities living on them began to express hope not only of protecting their socio-economic needs with a reliable state institution, but also of tolerance. Such a conclusion proceeded from the existing practice of confessional policy pursued by the Russian Empire until the 19th century. This thesis confirms the statement of the famous enlightener I. Gasprinsky. He said the following: “According to the laws of our Fatherland, Russian Muslims enjoy equal rights with native Russians and even in some cases, in respect of their social and religious life, have some advantages and benefits” [Gasprinsky, 1881: 23].

Indeed, Islam in the North Caucasus had parity status, and people professing this religion were officially considered citizens of the united Fatherland. This is reflected at the legislative level. So, in one of the legal decrees of the “Code of the Russian Empire” the following was proclaimed: “all those who swore allegiance to the emperor become true Russian citizens, self-forcefully of nationality and religion” [Review of historical information about the Code of laws of the Russian Empire. 1837: 11]. As we see, the principle of religious tolerance was observed in the country, which implied its indisputable fulfillment.

The liberalism of the Russian Empire with respect to Islam dates back to the times of the well-known prescription of Empress Catherine the Second in 1773: “... the general authority of various faiths was transferred to secular rather than religious authorities,

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which protected inverted confessions from any influence of the Orthodox Church" [Arapov, 2005: 289]. Although there are earlier sources dating back to 1584, which tell us that even at the time of FedorIvanovich "there were no harassment of Mohammedans in Russia" [Bleich, 2014: 37-39]. We see the reason for such loyalty in an even earlier period - in the time of the Golden Horde raids on Russia. As you know, the Mongols, as Muslims, never oppressed the Gentiles and even showed them their protection. This kind of "civilizational compromise" was very widely used in other countries. However, unlike many European states, where tolerance was only partially allowed, many documents testified that "the Russians never proved their religious superiority" [RGADA. F. 1406: 287].

Travelers who observed the policies of Russian officials in the newly attached regions of the North Caucasus in the first half of the 19th century noted the differences between Russian officials and the activities of Europeans in their Eastern countries. They claimed that "the Russians attempted to build mosques, supply mullahs, etc." [TsGIA. F. 229: 47].

This fact was also confirmed during the Russian-Iranian confrontation (1826-1828), when the Persian leader Gassan Khan wanted to raze the Echmiadzin monastery, his advisers reminded him that even "the Russians had twice visited the Erivan Khanate and both times having been defeated, upon withdrawing, they never insulted the Mohammedan shrine "[TsGA RSO-A. F. 290: 23].

The imperative of tolerance was also dominant in the formation of the internal policy of the Empire in the process of the Caucasian War (1817-1864). Despite the fact that its main slogan was "the struggle for faith," Russia's respectful attitude to Islam has not changed. Although many researchers still consider the policy of the state of the XIX century "anti-Islamic." One of them is the professor of Telaviv University M. Hammer, who in his writings has repeatedly stated that such a policy "threatened the Caucasian peoples with the loss of their identity." However, the author sometimes contradicts himself, sometimes giving facts value judgments. So, in his work "Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan", he was forced to note: "... even during fierce battles, mosques were guarded by Russian troops" [Hammer, 1994: 88, 112, 267].

The fact that the largest mosque in the village of Germenchuk was built with the money allocated by the "proconsul of the Caucasus" General A.P. Yermolov [Bleikh, 2017: 187] also speaks about the attitude towards Islam during the formation of "Russian rule" in the North Caucasus.

During the Caucasian War, the search for opposition to religious fanaticism prompted Russian officials to emphasize traditionalism based on stereotypes of the functioning of "native societies" [Bleich, 2009: 289]. This method was supposed to create an obstacle to the use of the Islamic faith for anti-Russian purposes, but it was in no way directed against religion itself. On the contrary, balanced and very restrained approaches were created, since the civilizational advantages during the ongoing confrontation in the region were of great importance.

An increased interest in religious fanaticism in the second half of the XIX century. from the side of tsarist officials was observed in areas that once belonged to the imamat of Shamil and served as the main zones of military operations. In this aspect, we especially note the Chechen tribes living in the highland zone. Kabardian societies were less susceptible to anti-Russian propaganda. This fact also found reflection in the Russian confessional policy pursued in the North Caucasus [Bleich, 2015: 67].

However, not only internal, but also external factors influenced the emerging political situation. "The risk of religious contradictions was caused not so much by ideological clashes between the two faiths - the Christian East European) and Muslim (East Islamic), which were previously antagonistic in nature, but by doctrinal differences in Islam itself," said researcher R.M. Gichibekova [Gichibekova, 2012: 72].

Among Muslims of the East Caucasus, they appeared due to the influence of Iran, where Shiism was widespread, and the Western Caucasus was influenced by the Ottoman Empire, thanks to which Sunnism was established. Sunnis and Shiites accused each other of inconsistency with "the ancient decrees of Muhammad" [Bleich, 2015: 03-07]. The Shiites considered it incorrect to take into account the "opinions of the community" regarding religious practices and gave the palm to the spiritual leader (imam) in making such decisions, considering him "the herald of the infallible wisdom of the highest religious authority." The Sunnis, in turn, considered the Shiites "extremists and provocateurs." As a result of this ideological split in Islam, there was a probable danger of a regional conflict, as noted by the French writer A. Dumas when visiting the Caucasus in 1858. He wrote that because of religious contradictions, those professing Sunnism and Shiism "hate each other as sincerely and deeply as Catholics and Huguenots in the 16th century" [RGADA. F. 1406: 287]. However, between the Sunnis themselves there was a division into the Khanifat and Shafiitemadhhabs. Adherents of the first direction were Adygs, Abazins, Balkars, Kabardians, Nogais, Turkmens, Circassians, adherents of the second - Dagestan peoples, Chechens, Ingush.

As you can see, the advance of the Russian Empire to the North Caucasus in areas with a Muslim population was carried out using religion itself. In this aspect, one cannot fail to mention Muhajirism, which arose as a result of the agitation of Turkey in the 60s of the XIX century, which is still the subject of debate.

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Contrary to the assurances of the Ottoman authorities about the allegedly prosperous life, immigrants faced bans on the use of their native language and their culture, i.e. the impossibility of their spiritual development. As a result, they became impersonal, lost their ethnicity, even the administration of religious rites was to be performed in Turkish. For this purpose, representatives of the local clergy were sent to all mosques in the Caucasian diaspora. Over time, many immigrants realized that their status in Christian Russia was much higher than in the Muslim Port [TsGA RSO-A. F. 290: 32], since the latter always took into account ethnic and religious factors, special attention was paid to the spirituality of the mountain peoples.

Imperial power headed for the development of Muslim education. The opening of new mektebs (secondary) and madrassas (higher) theological educational institutions was highly encouraged. As a result, by the end of the XIX century in the Caucasus there were more than 2 thousand. However, they were located unevenly: 47% were in the eastern regions of the region and only 3% were in the western regions [Khachidogov, 2015: 67]. Therefore, the educational policy pursued by Russia needed substantial reform.

Mektebe were educational institutions of the initial stage. Their appearance did not require official permission from the authorities. But only the presence of students and the desire of the teacher. Therefore, they were in every village. Madrasahs were educational institutions of the highest order and therefore existed only in large cities. An important drawback of the educational policy was that in the aforementioned educational institutions, teachers were often emissaries from Muslim countries (Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran), who often cultivated an anti-Russian attitude among young people, which, of course, led to separatism. However, such training centers did not become popular with the population over time, and deprived of all financial support from the state, they gradually began to disappear. But to say that there was a general ban on the establishment and functioning of theological educational institutions would be wrong. Moreover, all theological literature began to be translated into Russian and the languages of ethnic groups (the fully Arabic language, which is dominant in the teaching of spiritual disciplines, was eliminated after 1917) [Bleich, 2017: 47].

In parallel with the classical mosque schools, state "state" schools began to open everywhere in the region, in which they also taught the basics of spiritual dogma. Moreover, in areas where there was multi-confessionality (for example, in the Stavropol Territory, Ossetia), the Law of God and Islam (by choice) were taught in schools. Interestingly, the right to teach the principles of Islam was granted to residents from the clergy themselves. Such schools were the object so f administrative supervision.

In the Russian Empire, they also respected traditional Islamic institutions, one of which was the custom, at least once in a lifetime, to perform a hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca in order to worship the "tomb of the Prophet Mohammed". All conditions were created for those wishing to visit Muslim shrines: help was allocated from the treasury, there were specially equipped “pilgrimage ships” with everything necessary “for the masters to perform the hajj”. In the event that individual pilgrims to holy places returned to their homeland with anti-Russian sentiments, they were monitored by the Ministry of the Interior, but in general, a ban was not established on pilgrimages for the faithful.

The construction of new Muslim temples was also encouraged. For their development, donations voluntarily collected by the population were used. From their midst, the communities chose themselves and spiritual mentors. The administration did not intervene in these decisions, therefore the “verdicts of mountain societies” usually did not meet with obstacles [TsGIA RG. F. 229: 47].

III. Conclusion

The main attribute of the confessional policy of the Russian Empire of the XIX century is the strengthening of the foundations of the Muslim faith. It became possible only after the North Caucasian peoples entered the legal and socio cultural field of Russia. For the above period, interested foreign countries could not achieve this in the Muslim regions of Russia.

Due to the correctly conducted confessional policy of the Empire in the North Caucasus, the Islamization of the population began to increase, and even in those areas that before incorporation were subject to this process very superficially. The signs of the “Islamic renaissance” in the body of the Empire were the legitimacy of Islamic classical institutions, the unhindered administration of religious instruction.

The consolidation of the principles of dogma was undertaken by the Russian authorities primarily to “increase citizenship and morality” in the western and eastern suburbs, but in the latter civilization was more pronounced. The reorganization in the North Caucasus in the economic, political and socio-spiritual spheres contributed to the rooting of the authority of Islam in the life of a foreign ethnic society, and contributed to the Muslims of the highlanders.

As a result, the Muslim faith strengthened its position, gradually acquiring reserves that are constructive for the evolutionary integrity of Russian statehood. It ceased to play an aggressively negative role, transforming in the North Caucasus periphery into an element of national consolidation. However, many Russian projections to upgrade the North Caucasus region remained only on paper. This also affected the

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attitude to Islam, as a result of which modern politicians and scientists have many mysteries. Therefore, the Muslim issue today is in the spotlight and requires the development of a more balanced solution to the Islamic problem.

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