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**FORMATION OF CIVIL IDENTITY IN OSSETIA: HISTORICAL
TRADITIONS AND MODERN TRENDS**

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Abstract

The paper studies integration processes of North Ossetia into Russian socio-political and cultural space. The investigation is aimed at identifying and studying socio-cultural factors promoting formation of Russian sovereignty and all-Russian identity. The most effective methods of assimilation of the new territory is Russian confessional policy. Another mechanism for establishment of Russian sovereignty is the education system that includes the inoculation of the Russian language. The work determines the role of Ossetian intellectuals as a socially and culturally dominating group, a conductor of Russia cultural policy. The most important factor of sovereignty establishment became the city space with its polyethnic population, social and cultural institutes. The study of library experience shows the success in realization of such forms and resources of such city culture as theater, cinematography, libraries, museums, cultural-enlightenment capable of forming ideas of civil world, unity and integrity of state. The paper studies the significance of historical collective memory, constructing citizenship, patriotism and reinforcing the sovereignty. Realization of this function was achieved by the popularization of events in the Russian history when organizing state ceremonies and jubilee celebrations of commemorative dates. All considered factors existed in conditions of different political regimes that introduced their content into traditional forms and created new ones. The urgency of the study of the stated problem is conditioned by the demand of historical experience in the formation of modern state national and cultural policy aimed at the establishment of nationwide identity, Russian nation.

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Keywords: Sovereignty, citizenship, cultural policy, orthodoxy, city.



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1. Introduction

The complex and long process of Russian sovereignty establishment in North Caucasus was accompanied by failed attempts of pacification of disobedient highlanders by the force of arms, uncertainty and variability of the concept of their subjection. The conception of the Russian Empire regarding the development of North Caucasus did not comply with mental sets of independent highlanders, which provoked their natural opposition manifesting differently for different folks in the region: from movement to Turkey to war conflicts. For Russia the low efficacy of force actions and necessity of seeking more effective means of interaction became obvious. In searching the new strategy of building relations, Russian administration addressed to social and cultural policy. They stated the tasks of influencing the highlanders by the benefits of education, nurturing in them the sense of identity, citizenship, belonging to common spiritual values, their involvement into single cultural field of the country.

2. Problem Statement

The present paper attempts to identify the most effective socio-cultural mechanisms working for the establishment of the sovereignty and formation of all-Russian identity of the Ossetians. We proceed from the understanding of the ethnocultural, including confessional, specificity of the peoples in the region that conditioned the differences in the chosen means of adaptation to Russian socio-cultural transformations. We believe that a notable distinction of Russian-Ossetian interaction is orthodox component that was rejected by Soviet historical science and still remains understudied. In this connection, the present paper studies the activity of Russian orthodox missions that became the basis for the development of many spheres of cultural life. A significant factor for the establishment of the sovereignty among the Ossetians became cities, especially Vladikavkaz that was bearing the origins of the citizenship and many social and cultural forms of ideological impact. The paper also suggests the problem of historical consciousness formation as a measure for reinforcing Russian sovereignty and identity, reception of the historical heritage as an important part of the cultural policy, expressed as state celebrations. Certain factors making impact on the noted processes became the study subjects in different contexts (Dzalaeva, 2016; Kanukova, 2016; Kobahidze, 2016), and are the forms of culture, yet not understood as the mechanisms for constructing the civil identity. The suggested problem statement allows for comprehensive study of all the forms, level of its demand and influence, which will substantially augment the perception of Russian-Ossetian relations, processes of establishment and development of Russian sovereignty and identity.

3. Research Questions

The studied object of the present paper are socio-cultural factors promoting the establishment of Russian sovereignty and formation of the citizenship of the Ossetians. The most important among them is the activities of orthodox missions, educational policy, priority of the Russian language in the educational system, early appearance of Ossetian intellectuals, city socio-cultural environment with its institutes, forms of artistic culture and practical aspects of Russian historical legacy reception. In total, the noted phenomena are the system of ideological provision of political processes that have proven their efficacy in conditions of different regimes.

4. Purpose of the Study

The present study is aimed at investigating the conceptual peculiarities of the cultural policy of the Russian Empire directed towards the dissemination and strengthening of the all-Russian identity principles. In particular, it states the problem of identifying the sociocultural factors promoting the establishment of the Russian sovereignty and citizenship, their efficacy in different historical periods, innovative resources in the conditions of modern society.

5. Research Methods

To solve the stated problems, we used the principles and research methods adopted in the historical science: principle of historicism meaning the research of historical and cultural processes accounting the interconnection, dynamics, chronology, which allows considering the problem with due consideration of nation existence conditions; principle of objectiveness assuming the rejection of subjective research of processes and facts and preset end results. Besides, we used history comparative method that enabled the disclosure of both the integrity of the object under study and the internal functioning and development mechanism of its elements.

6. Findings

The Russian policy assigned a special role to orthodoxy. The attempts of its dissemination were made generally among highlanders of Central Caucasus; however, they succeeded only in the case of the Ossetians, whose Christian tradition was lost or radically transformed due to historical reasons. The first orthodox mission was “Osetinskoye podvorye” which baptized a few Ossetians, including Muslims, and built small churches.

The mission was reorganized in 1752 with creation on its base of Ossetian Religious Commission. The Holy Synod and Chamber of External Affairs recognized this mission ineffective and hardly promoting the political goal of annexion of Ossetia to Russia. However, the Russian government did not lose faith in the capabilities of orthodox missionary work in terms of establishment of Russian sovereignty. The Commission was preserved as religious state institution; however, its composition radically changed: instead of Georgia religious figures, it contained Russian priests headed by protopope Afanasiy Lebedev. The Commission had the task of ideological promotion of Ossetia annexion to Russia. The missionary work of the new Commission turned out to be much more productive. In 1771–1792, 6657 people were baptized. The cases of baptized prominent Ossetian heads became more often (Gostieva, 2014). After the annexion of Georgia to Russia, the Commission moved to Tbilisi, but its activity in Ossetia remained remarkable. In 1814, in Vladikavkaz fortress, Ossetian church of Nativity of the Theotokos was founded; 14218 people were baptized. The number of new Christians from 1817 to 1821 amounted to 47100 persons. The government required from the commission to organize the parochial live and building of new churches. In 1849-1859, several churches were built in mountain villages Zaramag, Tib, Galiat, Zaki, Lats, in Sadonskiy mine and in lowland settlements Kakadur, Humalag, Ardon, Volno-Khristianovskoe, Darg-Kokh. The liturgic literature was translated into the Ossetian language (Kanukova, 2016).

In 1860, a new mission was established, The Society of Orthodox Christianity Revival in Caucasus. The governor of Caucasus Baryatinskiy believed that the Society should begin building and maintaining

churches, preaching and translating liturgic literature. The common vestries were built in all Ossetian communities of south and north Ossetia, in Vladikavkaz and Mozdok.

The Society had another important task: preparation of local liturgists for implementation of Russian policy. The first Ossetians that acquired liturgic education in Tbilisi seminary were Aleksei Koliev and Vasiliy Tsoraev followed by Aleksei Aladzhikov, Solomon Ahuskayev, Georgiy Kantemirov, Mikhail Sukhiev and others. In 1863, the seminary graduated priests Taslikov and Gudiev; in 1865, K. Tokaev and Ya. Tuayev; in 1867, Gatuev, Khetagurov and Tsagolov; in 1869, Stefan Mamitov, Gabaraev, Sikoev and Dzhioev. They delivered grammar lessons to children, built schools, translated liturgic books into natural language, familiarized highlanders with Russian language and Russian culture. The Ossetian priests substantially enlightened their people.

To make the work with population more effective, the Society Council established a committee to translate books into Ossetian language. Noteworthy, along with church literature, the priests began translating into the Ossetian language teaching guides, works of A.S. Pushkin, L.N. Tolstoy, A.P. Chekhov. Starting from 1894, they started to issue "Vladikavkaz eparchial journal". The first publications were also made by Ossetian priests A. Gatuev, K. Tokayev, A. Tsagolov, Kh. Uruymagov. The Ossetian priests were the ones who stood at the origins of the Ossetian literature (Dzaparova, 2010) and journalism (Gostieva, 2015).

An important achievement of the Society was the foundation in Ossetian villages of many parochial schools, including all girls schools, opening of Aleksandrovskiy Ossetian religious school in Ardon to prepare minor orders and teachers; later it was transformed into Aleksandrovskaya Missionary Seminary. In the post-reform period, the organization of the teaching work as a whole was entrusted to orthodox churches with Ossetian priests who received education in the Russian language, which substantially strengthened the position of the latter.

Russian orthodox missions facilitated the dissemination of literacy, Russian language, involvement into Russian and international culture, formation of citizenship. The social function of orthodoxy clearly manifested in various, including governmental, social and cultural activities that were accompanied by church ceremonies. A lot of people were gathered for celebrations on the occasion of royal crowning. In the memory of Alexander the III and his family surviving in the train crash on October 17th, 1888, the clergy of Vladikavkaz eparchy have created the icon of the Mantle of Our Lady which was annually used during liturgy and moleben. Sacred processions, liturgies, molebens and days took place during the celebrations of all historical dates, for instance, 1000 years passed after the death of Saint Methodius, 100th jubilee of A.S. Pushkin, 50th jubilee of Vladikavkaz. The liturgies and molebens accompanied the opening of new schools, libraries, different city institutions. They were also organizing requiems for the members of royal family, for killed warriors and deceased figures of the fortress-city. A solemn liturgy was an essential part of secular holidays, including artisanal and professional ones. The administration tried to engage as many citizens to the celebration as possible, reduced the working time on holidays, so maximum number of people could rest christianly. The church enhanced the solemn and official component of the social culture promoting the establishment of sovereignty.

With time, the positions of orthodoxy in the education system began to weaken. The educators, teachers and publicists acted against the parochial schools that no more met the demands of the new time.

Ossetian teachers started struggling for democratization of school, demanded to reduce the teaching of Law of God in favor of secular subjects (Biragova & Kesaeva, 2014). The political elites preferred giving secular, mainly military, education to their children. Gorskiy boarding school and military nonclassical secondary school of Terek Cossack Army and eventually cadet corps were of high demand.

The Russian language was considered as “the main factor for uniting different aboriginal tribes of the region with the Empire” for the development of secular education; in this connection it received strong priority in the teaching in local educational institutions. The active support of Russian administration enabled opening of ministry schools which educational practice included the Russian language as the main teaching language. This was regarded as a reliable means for familiarization of highlanders with Russian culture and citizenship. The Russian language was approved to be the only teaching language of subjects included into the mandatory course. Although, it allowed for certain compromises in terms of Russian and native language: increased number of class hours of the Russian language somehow was compensated by the permission to deliver local languages included into the curriculum as a subject in initial colleges. The issue of draft discipline programs for initial colleges by the Ministry of Education in 1897 finally confirmed the positions of the Russian language as the only possible education language even at starting levels (Complete collection of laws of the Russian Empire, 1884-1916).

The Ossetian language remained only as a subject of primary school and in religious schools. According to the report of the curator of Caucasus education district for year 1903, of 2086 primary schools in 1928 schools (92.3%) the instruction language was Russian; only in 158 schools the native language was permitted.

The citizens recognized the Russian language from the practical perspective, as means of social mobility, important tool for adopting a new social context. The demand in the adoption of the state language was a particular mechanism for adaptation to new social challenges and took the forms of national movement: Here and there schools were opening at the expense of locals, including all-girl schools (Kobakhidze, 2018); social decrees were composed that supported school building. The Russian school became a special socio-cultural and ideological center of “Russianness” (Dzalaeva, 2016).

The proficiency in state language became a measure of social mobility for the representatives of traditional communities (Aylarova & Kobakhidze, 2011) and mandatory condition of belonging to a city, where the Russian language played the role of a mediator in interethnic interaction and intercultural communication. The most pronounced character of this language function expressed in flatland settlements adjacent to Cossack villages and cities. These platforms of contact provided active interethnic and intercultural interaction and interinfluence that promoted the strengthening of the positions of the Russian language.

In 1868, the governor of the Vladikavkaz district has noted in his report to the superiors: “today it is common to run into an Ossetian capable of, poorly though, writing something in Russian, and those talking Russian are no surprise to anyone”.

The development of the system of religious, secular and military education facilitated the appearance of the Ossetian intellectuals who became the conductor of the Russian culture. The new social stratum was represented by confessors, militarists, teachers, writers, artists, engineers, medics and officials. In addition to the professional activities, they were united by the idea of serving to their people. That is why the main

mission of the intellectuals was enlightenment and the mechanisms for its implementation were foundation of new schools, teaching, research, translation and publication, active participation in charity and cultural-enlightenment institutions aimed at supporting the education, culture and formation of national self-awareness of the Ossetians.

An important and in many respects determinative factor of the establishment of sovereignty and citizenship became the transformation of fortresses-outposts into cities. Vladikavkaz and Mozdok should be regarded as successful Russian socio-cultural projects that changed from fortresses into administrative, economic and cultural centers. The both cities to a different extent and in different time promoted the establishment of Russia-Ossetia dialog, integration of the region into Russian economic, social and cultural space.

The urbanization processes accelerated the modernization of traditional society, activated social mobility of population, its integration into modern socio-cultural processes. The Ossetians being the first citizens of the first generations should had adapted to the city life and culture based on the advancements of Russian culture.

The historical experience shows that the successful implementation of social function, forms and resources of artistic culture capable of forming—along with moral and aesthetic values—the ideas of civic world, unity and integrity of the state. Such forms include theater, cinematography, libraries, museums, cultural-enlightenment communities.

The governor of Terek regions, Loris-Melikov, who made it into history as an expert in soft methods of subjection of highlanders, was proving to the superiors of Caucasus vicegerency the benefits of Russian theater—a platform for interethnic communication in the Russian language—which he considered as “an infallible way to the fastest assimilation of highlanders with dominating race” (Apresyan, 1939). It is of no coincidence that the theater together with the function of prestigious leisure played a social role by providing venue for free performances for unwealthy residents, students and pupils.

The repertoire of the Vladikavkaz Russian Theater confirms this suggestion. The preserved theater posters include “Uncle Vanya” by A.P. Chekhov, “Masquerade” by M.Yu. Lermontov, “Woe from Wit” by A. Griboyedov, “The Lower Depth” of M. Gorkiy, “The Fruits of Enlightenment” by L.N. Tolstoy, “Poverty is No Crime” by A.N. Ostrovskiy and other Russian classical creations. Particularly popular were amateur spectacles, theater groups, including national ones that along with their own creations, directed plays in the Russian language. For instance, the Vladikavkaz Ossetian theater groups often gave charity performances in the Ossetian and Russian languages to create Ossetian newspaper, to support youth receiving education in Russia and for city-wide demands. Jewish drama club also gave spectacles in the Russian language based on the creations of Lermontov and Chekhov.

Way more massive and effective means for reaching political goals became cinematography. In Vladikavkaz, starting from 1906 started working cinema “Pate”, then “Gigant”, electrobiographers “Modern” and “Lux Roma” by Ricchie brothers, “Fantasia”, “Electro”. In educational institutions and village reading room, they used “magic lamp”, a variant of diascope. Despite the commercial nature of the cinematography, it was regulated by the authorities, which is testified by the historical and patriotic character of films. “Origins of Christianity in Rus”, “In Turkish prison”, “Defense of Sebastopol”, “Who were our ancestors and how they lived”, “Invasion of Tatars”, “Life of Holy Mother”, “Conquest of Kazan”,

“Alexander Nevsky”, “Patriotic War”, “Fire in Moscow”, “Smolensk Battle” and other films were assembling large audience. In 1915, the Vladikavkaz town council decided to establish “people's cinematography” with charity shows and prices cut to form and widely disseminate the sense of involvement into the history of Russia.

This task was stated for other cultural institutes as well: Vladikavkaz branch of Emperor's Russian musical association, Society for Dissemination of Artistic and Industrial Knowledge and many other cultural-enlightenment institutions.

Wide opportunities for popularization of necessary ideas were provided by museums: museum of Terek Cossack Army, museum of M.A. Shults, Museum of Lebzin, Terek regional museum that dealt with preservation of cultural heritage (Kobakhidze, 2016) displayed historical and other exhibits.

In Vladikavkaz, several libraries were founded; the city population excelled by the addiction to reading. The book collections of these libraries included the creations of Pushkin, Lermontov, Belinskiy, Nekrasov, Dobrolyubov, Pisarev, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Gleb Uspenskiy. The popularization of Russian classics was actively promoted by the Society of People's Reading.

The artistic culture, as an important component of the historical mind, was actively used in the ideology of different political regimes. The Soviet power also highly esteemed its capabilities and actively used cinematography as “the most important of the arts”. With time it was replaced by television. The filming became a powerful mechanism for manipulation of the state's audience. The creations of Soviet directors, artists, composers, writers and others were used for creating the images building the public consciousness.

Other effective factor of influence were social and cultural projects based on historical narrative. The socio-cultural experience demonstrates the success of the activities that actualized the memory about historical events capable of cause a feeling of patriotism, unity and pride for the common fatherland. Vladikavkaz, as the whole country, was celebrating 200th anniversary of Sweden army defeat near Poltava, 50th anniversary after abolition of serfdom, 100th anniversary of the Patriotic War of 1812 and victory in Balkan Wars, 300th anniversary of the reign of Romanov dynasty and other events. Wide coverage of such vibrant and spectacular celebrations in periodicals allow assessing the scale of the events. Crowded celebrations, parades and demonstrations created the atmosphere of unity, demonstrated the greatness of the state, accumulated the resource of stability and formed the sense of patriotism. The results of cultural policy have vividly manifested in the beginning of the World War I, when many of the folk of North Caucasus volunteered to fulfill their patriotic and military duty (Marzoev & Atabiev, 2015). Mounted regiment and unmounted brigades went to the front, and in the rear widened unprecedented public and private charity (Caucas center, 2014).

A state holiday can work for the benefit of solution of current problems and construct the perspective for future. In this connection the Soviet regime actively developed the practice of state holidays (in May, November and other), but replaced the essence and symbols, introduced new forms: solemn assemblies, documentary and fictional films, competitions, concerts, various spectacular events, scientific conferences. The Soviet holiday culture remains to be very sustainable in the conditions of strong social transformation; it still functions as a bond, especially for the generation having nostalgia for their Soviet youth.

Modern national and cultural policy has substantially refreshed the historical experience of establishment of sovereignty and Russian identity. Practically all considered directions are demanded in modern life, which says about reconsideration of traditions in terms of distinguishing their innovative resources.

Indeed, the modern trend of confessional policy are connected with historical traditions and state the problem of their revival. After the oblivion in the Soviet years, the orthodoxy again becomes an important factor of the Russian policy. Ossetia restores old churches and builds new ones, the number of believers grows, there are attempts to restore the orthodox education in middle and higher schools (Sinanov, 2016), North-Ossetia State University has opened a corresponding MSc program. The republic prepares for the 100th celebration of Alania chrismation. Vladikavkaz and Alania eparchy carries out both liturgic activities and active social, charitable and enlightening work paying attention to any event in the republic of any significance.

The concept of modern policy envisages the consolidating role of the Russian culture and language in the preservation of the integrity of the multinational state. The establishment of civic Russian nation has refreshed the problem of language policy; large attention is paid to the preservation and strengthening of the Russian language positions in national regions. In Ossetia, there are no problems with the Russian language, which is a result of previous historical experience.

A new impetus has received the function of social integration and historical continuity of artistic culture that remained in the continuation of changing culture paradigms during social transformations. The understanding of tis role in the construction of the Russian civic nation rests on new technologies giving birth to now forms: smart mobs, flash mobs and other means of modern communication.

The reception of the historical heritage has become an important component of the cultural policy promoting the restoration of important events of national history in the public memory. The celebration of historical events became a form for embodying state ideas popularizing certain value system. In Ossetia, the traditionally careful relation to the past has been always providing the update of certain historical event, and today the reference to them is the basis for many contemporary socio-cultural practices.

7. Conclusion

An important mechanism for the formation of Russian sovereignty and all-Russian identity in Ossetia are the activities of Russian orthodox missions. Among the specific factors of church impact on socio-political and cultural process are construction of churches and development of parochial life, foundation of schools and dissemination of literacy, formation of the pool of Ossetian church intellectuals and implementation of their enlightenment projects.

As a result of the Empire's educational policy, the Russian school and Russian language became powerful resources of socialization of highlanders in all-Empire space; they opened the opportunity to increase own social status. The leading positions of the Russian language at initial stages of regional educational system determined the positive motivation to its digestion by local communities for whom the Russian language and education became important instruments for digestion of new social context.

The development of the cultural and educational environment gave rise to national intellectuals—socially and culturally dominating group, a conductor of European and Russian cultures. The Ossetian

intellectuals, when considering their native language as the central core of the national culture, became worried about its preservation and made colossal contribution to the development of not only Ossetian, but Russian culture too; they actively participated in charitable and cultural-enlightenment institutions aimed at the support of education, culture and formation of all-Russian identity.

The state space with its cultural institutes (theaters, libraries, artistic exhibitions, etc.) was the sphere of active functioning of Russian culture and language. The revealed functions of historical continuation of city culture have updated its role in the construction of citizenship and strengthening of the Russian sovereignty. The artistic culture, as an important component of historical mind, was actively, and not always consciously, used in the ideology of different political regimes.

The reception of the historical heritage is considered as an important part of the cultural policy expressed in a state holiday. The state holiday devoted to a commemorable event in the history became an important component of the historical mind and collective memory, the means to construct citizenship and patriotism. The considered socio-cultural practices based on historical tradition were successfully applied in the conditions of different political regimes that included their ideology into the contents. The majority of them has innovative resources and can be used in the formation of the values of the modern society.

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