

Socio-Political Situation in the North Caucasus at the Beginning of the XVIII Century

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Abstract. The 18th century is a turning point in the history of the peoples of the Caucasus. The progressive decline of Iran and the Ottoman Empire, the active entry of Peter's Russia into the international arena put the question of the fate of the Caucasus among the most important problems of world politics at that time. Having become one of the main sources of contradictions in the relations of these countries, this region, due to its important strategic positions, attracted the attention of European powers, primarily England and France.

1 Introduction

The creation of the Russian multinational state was a complex and lengthy process, which was based on a trend towards mutually beneficial historical partnership. The inclusion of other ethnic territories led to political, economic, religious and ethnic integration within the framework of a single state entity. These phenomena were carried out in various ways, methods and forms, depending on the specific situation and the geopolitical conjuncture taking shape in a particular historical period. This is especially true of the Caucasus, one of the most complex and ethnically diverse regions of the world.

Now that the North Caucasus has become one of the most conflict zones of our state, it is necessary to carefully study the mechanisms of political interaction between the Russian government and local elites that took place in the 18th century.[1, p.54]

The North Caucasus has always been a complex region both economically and politically, as well as ethno-religiously. At the turn of the XVII-XVIII centuries. its territory was inhabited by numerous nationalities and tribes, who, depending on the natural and climatic conditions, were engaged in agriculture, cattle breeding, trade, crafts, hunting, beekeeping, and were respectively at various stages of the formation and development of feudal relations.

At the turn of the XVII-XVIII centuries. Kabarda was the largest state in the North Caucasian geopolitical space, uniting a number of peoples of the Central Ciscaucasia under the rule of the Kabardian princes from the house of Inalovich. [1, p.21] By the end of the

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17th century. the process of ethnic consolidation of the Kabardians was completed, which makes it possible to clarify the boundaries of their localization - from the upper reaches of the river. Kuma in the west to the river. Sunzha in the east. Kabarda was divided into two unequal parts: the lands from Kuma and Kuban to the confluence of the Baksam and Terek rivers were called Big Kabarda, Small Kabarda stretched along the right bank of the Terek to the village of Nizhny Naur. Big Kabarda occupied the northern slopes of the Caucasus Range from Elbrus to the sources of the Malka and Terek rivers.[4, p.43] In the neighborhood of Kabarda, to the west of the Kabardian settlements and to the south of the Adyge tribe of the Besleneevs, the Abazins, Karachays and Balkars lived. The Abazins, who constituted the totality of the Abkhaz peoples of the North-Western Caucasus, lived in the upper reaches of the Laba, Urup, Big and Small Zelenchuk and in the Kuma basin. The lagging behind of Kabarda manifested itself long before the end of the 17th century, and was due to the geopolitical position of the state, through whose territory a number of military-strategic and trade routes passed. The Kabardian patrimony, being a backbone component of the state's defense capability, at the same time, according to V. Kh. Kazharov, became one of the main reasons for the absence of a centralized state. [3, p. homogeneity of agricultural products obtained within the patrimony. The same should be said about the development of handicrafts, which had an exclusively patrimonial character and were adapted mainly for military needs. Foreign trade, largely due to the relatively long coastline along the Black and Caspian Seas, on the contrary, has achieved significant development. The main sectors of the mining and manufacturing industries of the Kabardian patrimony - sheep breeding, horse breeding, beekeeping, hunting, as well as weaving, felt, weapons, and jewelry production - were connected with the foreign market, sending a considerable part of their products outside the country. [5, p.58] Of particular importance for the Kabardian princes was the main North Caucasian trade route - from Transcaucasia through Dagestan and Kabarda to the Crimea and Azov. Participation in transit trade and the subsequent redistribution of rare and prestigious goods among princely vassals strengthened hierarchical ties within the specific principalities. As a result, a strong state was formed in the absence of adequate economic resources.

2 Research Methodology

Researchers who have developed theories of state collapse converge in the opinion that excessive expansion leads to resource tension and state disintegration.

Another important factor leading to the disintegration of the state is called the geopolitical principle, according to which states located in the center of a geographical region tend to break up into smaller units over time [4, p.165]. Ossetians were located in the central part and on the northern slopes of the Main Caucasian Range. "From the 15th to the 18th century," clarifies the Caucasian scholar B.V. Skitsky, "Ossetians lived in the mountains of the central part of the North Caucasus. In the north, the border of their settlement was the foothill plain, which was the land property of the Kabardian feudal lords. In the east, the border passed along the Terek basin, in the west - along the river. Uruk, a tributary of the Terek. All Ossetian societies (Tagauri, Kurtatinsky, Alagirsky, Digorsky) were located on this territory." [2, p.45] Part of the Ossetians lived in Georgia, adjacent to the local population. Transshipment routes passed through the territory of South Ossetia, connecting the population of this region with North Ossetia, Russia, Georgia and the peoples of the North Caucasus. Ossetians settled most compactly on the central and southern slopes of the Caucasus Mountains. According to the data of 1783, there were 35.75 thousand Ossetians [1, p.34]

3 Results and Discussions

At the turn of the XVII-XVIII centuries, a significant Nogai population lived on the territory of the North Caucasus. “Until the 18th century,” notes N. G. Volkova, “written sources show a picture of the numerous movements of this people, due not to the specifics of their nomadic lifestyle, but to foreign policy events and the feudal struggle within the Nogai Horde, which led in the middle of the 16th century, to the division into the Small and Large Horde and the formation of the Karanogay group” [6, p.89]. After complex and numerous mass movements by the 18th century, Nogais made up three politically and territorially isolated communities. The Caspian group consisted of 44 auls and roamed mainly in the Kizlyar steppes. Some of these Nogais, under pressure from the Kumyk feudal lords and Nogai murzas, migrated to the left bank of the Terek, to the Mozdok steppe, they began to be called Karanogais (black or simple Nogais), who did not have murzas. The second group consisted of the Kuban (Beshtaigor , or Pyatigorsk Nogais, who settled along the mouths of the rivers Indzhik (Zelenchuk); Ars, Small and Big Yankil and numbered 10 thousand surnames. The third is the Nogai horde proper, which roamed from Kabarda to the Kerch Strait as part of four cubes (Yedisian , Yedishkul , Dzhamboyluk and Akkerman) and numbering 70 thousand cauldrons (boilers). In general, the Nogais roamed from the lower reaches of the Danube to the confluence of the Sulak and Terek, including the entire North Caucasian plain from the Azov to the Caspian Sea.[4 , p.45]

South of the lands of the Vainakhs, from the Terek to the river. Samur and from the Caspian Sea to the southwestern slopes of the Main Caucasian Range, Dagestan was located. 26 nationalities and ethnic groups lived on its territory, among which Avars, Dargins, Kumyks, Laks, Tabasarans, Lezgins, etc.), which were part of them or located outside them. Shamkhalism was the most extensive and influential among political formations. Tarkovskoe , Utsmiystvo Karakaytag , Kazikumukh and Avar khanates and fiefs of Tabasaran . Owners of Buynak , Kazanishche , Erpel, Dzhengutai , Utamysh , Endirey , Aksai, Tsakhur and Rutul acted as independent rulers in relations with foreign powers. Along with the feudal estates, the largest unions of “free” societies - jamaats (Akushinsky, Andalalsky , Andysky, Kubachi, Tsudakharsky , Antsukhsky , Akhtynsky, Rutulsky and on the border with Georgia and Azerbaijan Dzharzsky and Talsky) played an active role in the political life of the region. The total number of the indigenous population of Dagestan fluctuated between 450-500 thousand [2, p. 56]

The political structure of the Western Circassians was distinguished by a combination of preserved elements of communal power with elements of early feudal-type management. Due to the slow pace of class stratification and the formation of feudal relations, the so-called democratic Adyghe tribes (Shapsugs, Natukhais , Abadzekhs and their offshoots) continued to be controlled by popular assemblies, where representatives of noble families played a decisive role. The formation of princely power was delayed by them because of the policy of the Crimea, aimed at inciting strife between representatives of the local tribal nobility . On the contrary, among the Zhaneevites , Temirgoevites , Beslenevites , Abazins and Nogais, who were located closer to the borders of Kabarda and Russia, the institute of princely power took shape quite early. Russian sources of the 16th-17th centuries. list representatives of the tribes, later known as the founders of the princely families of the Sibokovs , Kanukovs , Kangurzins , Begishevs , Babukovs , Bagoshevs , etc. [6, p. 165]

The western part of the region was characterized by extreme political fragmentation . Each prince and ruler acted in relation to his subjects not only as the largest owner of land and livestock, but also as a military leader. In addition, the Western Circassians retained many relatively independent communities and tribal unions, where, along with the foremen, popular assemblies retained significant influence. To address the most important issues

throughout the XVIII century. four meetings of general Adyghe significance were convened . The political fragmentation of this region played into the hands of the Ottoman and Crimean invaders, who kindled internecine struggle under the guise of “protection” and “help” to achieve their far-reaching plans. Such “mediation” was costly for the Adyghe and Kabardian rulers, who annually paid “tribute to the Crimean Khan, consisting of three hundred slaves - two hundred young girls and one hundred young men no older than twenty years old .”[1, p.34]

Not only the Western Circassians, but also the Kabardian people suffered from the endless strife of the feudal nobility, guilty of dividing the region into separate parts. By the beginning of the XVIII century. separate related associations turned into independent princely families, and most of the lands of Kabarda came under the rule of three princely families - Atazhukins , Dzhambulatovs and Misostovs . The political fragmentation of Kabarda led to endless strife, exacerbated the internal and external situation in the region. The internecine struggle became especially fierce from the beginning of the 18th century, when two warring princely groups were formed: Baksan (along the Baksan River) led by Islam-bek Misostov and Kashkatav (along the Chegem River) - led by Arslan-bek Kaytukin . Their struggle to strengthen their power, the seizure of foreign lands and fortresses, long civil strife provided a convenient pretext for the intervention of aggressive neighbors - the Crimeans and the Ottoman Turks. Under such conditions, there could be no question of creating a political center, permanent all-Kabardian authorities and a single state entity. Kabarda remained divided not only territorially, but also politically, although there were local governments. Each princely family of Greater and Lesser Kabarda, having a separate territory, a certain number of vassals, a subject population, a court, an army and an administrative apparatus, pursued its own policy.[2, p.32]

The unequal level of socio-economic development of the lowland and mountainous Chechnya and Ingushetia also gave rise to differences in the political structure of individual parts of this region. In its mountainous regions, as well as in the corresponding zones of the central part of the region, undeveloped forms of local and central government have been preserved; numerous communal and rural unions, controlled by people’s assemblies, were politically close to similar structures in Ossetia Karachay and Balkaria. In the lowland regions, partly under the influence of Dagestan and Kabarda, but mainly as a result of their own development, the institutions of princely power were formed early. The peculiarity of the political orders of Chechnya and Ingushetia was expressed in the fact that, along with the emerging princely power, popular assemblies had a significant influence on the political life of the Chechens and Ingush.[4, p.23]

Political map of Dagestan at the turn of the XVII-XVIII centuries. in connection with the further strengthening of feudal fragmentation, it became “even more motley” [1, p.34]. As in the previous period, there were dozens of feudal estates and unions of rural communities that did not have permanent borders between themselves and with neighboring peoples. The largest and most influential of these were the feudal estates and “free” societies of Kumykia , Kaitag , Avaria, Darginia , Dacia, Tabasaran and Lezginistan . On a par with Tarkov Shamkhals , Kaitag utsmi, Avars and Kazikumukh khans, Tabasaran rulers , the leaders of the unions of rural communities independently communicated with foreign states, concluded agreements, accepted citizenship, considered issues of war and peace. But this situation did not last long. Taking advantage of the fact that the isolated existence of small “free” societies in the disturbing situation of that time was virtually impossible, neighboring feudal lords encroached on their independence, forcing them to accept their patronage. Thus, four societies were under the rule of Shamkhal of Tarkovsky, utsmiya Kaitag - seven, Khan Kazikumukh - seven, etc. [4, p. 45]

There were frequent clashes between “free” societies and feudal lords. Relations between them were determined more by hostility than by treaty agreements.

The situation in Dagestan was also complicated by the fact that since the conclusion of the Iranian-Turkish treaty of 1639, its territory was nominally part of Iran. The power of the Safavid shahs extended to the coastal region from the river. Samur to the river. Sulak, including the lands of the Lezgins, Tabasarans, Kaitag Utsmiystvo and Shamkhalate Tarkovskoye . However, many local rulers and leaders of “free” societies only formally recognized the suzerainty of the Safavids , receiving salaries and other rewards from the shah's treasury for this. As for the population of Central Dagestan, not only did they not recognize Iranian rule, but they themselves often opposed the conquerors. The Ottoman government sought to take advantage of this circumstance by influencing individual rulers and leaders of “free” societies through their supporters from among the local feudal lords and the Muslim clergy. Such a policy of neighboring warring powers undermined the productive forces of the region, hindered the process of political consolidation, and kept the internal and external position of the region unstable. The Turks and Persians, as noted by R. M. Magomedov, kindled enmity between the highlanders, in every possible way hindered the unification policy, and encouraged fragmentation. “The political situation in Dagestan, besieged from different sides by Turkey and Iran, who claimed it ... was characterized by continuous civil strife and wars” [3, p.65].

But the Ottoman and Crimean rulers failed to achieve their goals. The stubborn struggle of the mountain peoples for independence and defeat in the war with a coalition of European powers at the end of the 17th century. diverted the attention of Ports and Crimea from Caucasian affairs to the European theater. Weakened by dynastic strife and internal unrest, pre-Petrine Russia also could not pay enough attention to the North Caucasus. The pressure from Safavid Iran, which entered a period of deep socio- economic decline, was torn apart by internal contradictions and exhausted by the liberation struggle of the conquered peoples, noticeably dropped. Thus, the last decades of the XVII century. for the peoples of the Caucasus were a time of relative calm. There has also been some calm in the northern regions.

4 Conclusions

However, this lull did not mean the stabilization of the situation in the region and the onset of peace for the mountain peoples. None of the rival powers abandoned their strategic plans for the Caucasus. At the turn of the XVII-XVIII centuries. Kabarda, Dagestan and other lands remained the object of a sharp diplomatic struggle between the rulers of Isfahan, Moscow and Istanbul.

The existing situation was complicated by the fact that the Karachays, Balkars, Ossetians, Chechens and Ingush, who were dependent on the feudal rulers of Kabarda, Dagestan and Georgia, had their own interests, largely different from the interests of the latter.[6, p.46] advantage over Russia, they hoped to get rid under her protection not only of the despotism of local rulers, but also of the threat of enslavement by neighboring eastern sovereigns.

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