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Integrating People of Terek Oblast into Socio-Cultural Space of Russia: Help of Charity (The Second Half of 19th – Early 20th Centuries)

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the entry of the peoples of the North Caucasus into the Russian socio-cultural space on the basis of the entry of the region into the Russian Empire. In the research the authors focus their attention on the issues of implementing such socio-cultural activity as charity within the mentioned process. Being traditional phenomena for worldview bases and cultural practices of the peoples of the North Caucasus that joined the Russian Empire and the peoples of the Russian Empire itself, encouragement for doing good and charity as such became significant factors contributing to peoples' cultural rapprochement. This is confirmed by the analysis of specific historical data, facts of creating charity communities and diverse charity activities in Terek Oblast in particular, covering the second half of XIXth – early XXth centuries, that is presented in the article. At the same time the authors primarily consider the process of public care of the development of education in the region and the substitution of the efforts of the state that were organised into charity communities by society in the sphere of concern for socially disadvantaged groups of the region's population.

Keywords: Charity, Socio-cultural space, Education, Assistance to socially disadvantaged population, Terek Oblast, the North Caucasus, the Russian Empire.

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1. Introduction

By the time when the Russian Empire starts to feel rather confident in the North Caucasus in terms of military administrative activities, in socio-cultural meaning many peoples of the mountainous part of the North Caucasus since the first half of XVIII century "have been included into the of Arab-Islamic type of culture, in spite of the uniqueness of views on Mohammedanism that were refracted in the local pre-religious beliefs..." [15; 72].

Naturally, the Russian authorities started addressing the issues of the arrangement of new region closely through the implementation of land, peasant and judicial reforms, resolving the urgent problems related to military service (after the end of the Caucasian War), the organisation of management of resettlement processes, etc., on the other hand, the Russian authorities could not fail to understand the special significance of involving population of the region into the Russian socio-cultural space. They were also aware of the fact that the present cultural rapprochement is achievable, first of all, by appealing to the general phenomena that were at the basis of the worldview values and cultural practices of the affiliated peoples of the North Caucasus and the peoples of the Russian Empire.

Charity became one of these general socio-cultural phenomena since at all times all peoples more or less acknowledged the duty to help the weak and the poor.

2. Methodology of the research

In the process of studying the given problem the authors addressed to civilisation approach in its connection with culture-centred approach. The main research principles included the principles of historicism, objectiveness and the principle of comprehensive study of history.

The principle of historicism enabled to investigate the research subject in its development.

The principles of objectiveness assisted in considering historical reality in general, regardless of personal views and affections.

The principle of comprehensive study of history obliged to seek full coverage and reliability of information under analysis as well as to consider all aspects and all interconnections that affect the investigated process.

The used research methods included the historical-comparative, historic-systemic methods and the method of diachronic analysis.

3. Discussion and research results

Hadith of Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari submitted by Buhari and Muslim encourages the following: "Alms should become an integral part of every Muslim. If a person does not have anything, he must earn his living with his own hands and give part of his earnings to charity. If the physical condition does not allow him to work, he should simply help the poor and those who are in need. If he even cannot do this, let him encourage others to do good..." [16]. The majority of the peoples of the mountainous parts of the North Caucasus alongside adopting Islam formed a tradition and a habit to realise their charity aspirations through for directions: non-refundable assistance in the form of alms and donations; Zakat payment; proving interest-free money loans to those in need without set deadline of return (according to opportunities of a person who took a loan); waqf which is an inalienable charitable endowment typically involving donating a building, plot of land or other assets. At the same time such daily "doing good" must cover strangers as well including those of another faith.

In its turn the Russian charity had a long history by the moment of the North Caucasus entry into the political space of the Russian Empire as well as broad coverage, different types and forms of manifestation. All those based on traditions formed in Russia that adopted Orthodoxy and perceived Christian ideology of mercy and care of one's kin with particular sentiments. Moreover, in the period under study charity actions in fact became one of the main directions in public activity in the conditions of developing Russian civil society.

As the realisation of a feeling of benevolence towards a weaker member of society, private charity in the conditions of reformed and post-reform Russia had a diverse social basis and various forms of manifestation. These forms include alms given by a peasant, a petty bourgeois or a worker to those in need due to a tradition of compassion and mercy. They may comprise personal charity of the nobleman and merchant (bourgeois) caused not only by the mentioned motives but also by the popularity of the idea of public prestige or the desire to realise own civil ambitions, career aspirations in the forms acceptable in the conditions of the existing regime. This is also voluntary organised charity in the form of the activities of public organisations that alongside to the mentioned motives sought to realise their civic duties in such a way.

The activity of private charity communities became the most up-to-date and effective in the achieved results form of realising private initiative in the sphere of assistance to those in need in Russia. Their main types included "general charity" organisations; associations aimed at creating and supporting activities of charitable institutions; communities providing assistance only in a single form. The total number of charity organisations of the first group including organisations of mutual assistance had reached 2 634 by 1902 (55.3% of all charity communities). They possessed real estate in the amount of 22 870 865 Russian roubles and funds with 18 298 802 Russian roubles, the expenses were 12 698 610 Russian roubles.

By 1902 there were approximately 600 private companies that aimed at establishing and maintaining charity institutions (12.6%) including 302 organisations assuming responsibility for children's shelters, 8 organisations that took care of children's labour houses, 58 organisations in charge for other children's establishments, 56 organisations taking care of labour houses for adults and 176 organisations in charge of other establishments for adults. They possessed real estate in the amount of 15 348 290 Russian roubles and funds with 17 026 983 Russian roubles, their profit was 5 879 502 Russian roubles, whereas the expenses totalled 5 060 110 Russian roubles. The number of communities that carried out a single form of assistance reached 1 528 that is 32.1% of total number of charities that were of private legal character. It is known that 544 346 people and 36 587 families received assistance of charity societies in 1901 [1; pp.34-35].

When the authorities hampered the manifestation of any public initiative in the political sphere, the increasing charitable public activity, on the contrary, found approval and official support. It was due to the reasons described by the researcher S.L. Dyachkov who states that "...voluntary charitable societies, being a significant part of the non-state sphere of the modernised Russian society, performed, as the main function, the process of correcting the activity of power structures in the sphere of social protection and social assistance, thus, overcoming the shortcomings of the state management" [2; p.27].

In the region under study, according to the justified claim of N.G. Malakhova, a well-known researcher on the problems of the history of establishing and developing Russian state management in the North Caucasus, "There were significant "disadvantages" and "peculiarities" connected with the desire for gradual integrating and establishing such a system of state management that would match the level of "developing citizenship" that was reached by the Gortsy peoples" [4; p.225]. At the same time the encouragement of the organised public charity movement in the conditions of the "military-popular governance" established in relation to the Gortsy peoples became one of those diverse and thoughtful forms of development and

management of the North Caucasus, through which the solution of many problems of its entry into all major spheres of the Russian space was achieved.

According to one of circulars distributed by the Ministry of Public Enlightenment in 1867, "the most politically significant task" was "gradual enlightenment of outlanders" and their rapprochement with "the Russian spirit and Russia". That is why in the middle of XIX century a situation occurred when "in the Caucasian academic district a single Russian school covered 5 635 residents, whereas there were 1 309 residents for a single Muslim school" [4; p.185]. In this regard the establishment and activities of charity organisations that provided assistance in accessing to education were more than demanded.

Moreover, in Terek Oblast since January 1860 the Society for Restoring Orthodox Christianity has been successfully acting in the Caucasus; it was established to promote Christian values by means of, inter alia, rendering assistance to the representatives of the Gortsy peoples in accessing to education.

The Society's members representing not only the North Caucasus but also a number of other regions worked hard both in the sphere of developing academic programmes, training manuals in local languages and in collecting financial resources, opening elementary schools in Christian city congregations. Due to active work the Society took care of 75 such schools by 1865 [5; p.12].

Naturally, the most revenue was obtained from the Society's activities that were connected with assistance to Ossetian children who mainly professed Orthodoxy in receiving education. Thus, in the history of the formation of the modern Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, there was a memorable situation with the creation of a school for Ossetian girls. It was established in 1862 and developed further under the patronage of the Society for Restoring Orthodox Christianity in the Caucasus; later it was transformed first into a female gymnasium, and then – into teacher's seminary.

Important charity activities eventually began to include such forms of work as tuition fees paid for individual schoolchildren in need, cash grants or scholarships to the best pupils from poor families, purchase of teaching aids, clothes, shoes for students in need, payment for medicines and the provision of financial assistance to individual educational institutions. As a matter of fact such charity communities were established on the territory of Terek Oblast both following the example of the Society for Restoring Orthodox Christianity in the Caucasus and by analogy with charity communities that had already been established in Russian in large numbers.

Not only specialised communities of assistance to pupils or educational establishments successfully carried out such activities but also a number of communities of general charity character, associations of orphans care and national or confessional public charity organisations. For example, established in January 1883 in Vladikavkaz [8; p.24] "Charity Society for Expanding Education and Dissemination of Technical Data among Gortsy of Terek Oblast" declared its aim as "assisting to school education for Gortsy population of Terek Oblast and disseminating useful technical and handicraft knowledge among them; providing material aid for disadvantaged Gortsy in Terek Oblast and students of secondary and higher education establishments; open elementary schools and Gortsy population of Terek Oblast in due course" [9; p.45]. This charity organisation played a great role in expanding education among the North Caucasus youth. Due to material aid Grotsty children were able to receive not only secondary but also higher education in metropolitan educational establishments. This fact is confirmed by the data of annual reports of the Society's board that contained last names of poor but talented Gortsy who were given scholarships and allowances. It is significant that while doing charity work in education and enlightenment spheres a number of societies sought to harmonise interethnic relations in the course of such activities. For example, the society of the "Trustee Community" established in Terek Oblast in September 1906 announced its decision to contribute to its work by also eliminating "antagonism, enmity and mistrust among people of different nationalities and religions" [12; p.4].

Low living standards of a great part of both local and new population made services of providing all other types of social aid demanded in the majority of oblast's towns. One-time or permanent cash benefits, organisation of collection and delivery of food and clothing, the provision of free medical care, the organisation and provision of shelters for the elderly, orphans, disabled people and other forms of work were practised by the charitable public associations of the region with the special regard of the needs of changing society.

Representatives of Russian and small but growing in numbers national intelligentsia, national estate and merchant elites and the officers were the originators of creating public organisation in the region. Representatives of some Gortsy peoples also petitioned to the Chief of Terek Oblast for approving charters of newly established charity communities. For instance, in August 1909 a petition for approving a charter of the Society of Assistance to Disadvantaged Students – the Ingush was submitted to the Terek Oblast Administration. It was signed by its following founding members: army's petty officer Elbert Nalgiev, excise collector Duda Uzhakhov, lieutenant Khamchiev, teacher Katiev, technician Murat Aliev, captain Musa Shadiev, princes Katsy Marshani and Ausultan Marshani and others [14; p.4].

The beginning of 1890s was infamous for the residents of Terek Oblast due to aggravated situation in Vladikavkaz with large number of migrants. "These migrants here already in Vladikavkaz for the most part start to live in poverty and beg door-to-door..." [10; p.15]. In this regard the creation of "Vladikavkaz Community of Assistance to Immigrants" was initiated by the staff of the newspaper "Terskie Vedomosti" headed by the future well-known organiser and propagandist of the national charity movement E. Maksimov. The newspaper not only came up with the idea of creating such a special charity organisation but also published all the materials connected with that. Seeking to facilitate the fate of migrants in need and at the same time to assist local population in avoiding problems associated with the great masses of disadvantaged and socially insecure people, the newspaper's staff published a list containing their names in one of the issues [6]. At the same time "Terskie Vedomosti" continued to support already established county's tradition to regularly publish on the pages of printed media the messages about donations to those in need and about benefactors' visits to poor families due to grand religious celebrations; they also published articles about planned and held charity performances, lotteries and fairs and about activities of charity organisations. Such publications became a norm of the information life of society.

Sometimes the need for urgent actions required fast change in the mechanism of organising charity activities, as it was, for example, after cholera epidemic in 1892 which claimed numerous victims resulting in a great number of socially insecure orphans in Vladikavkaz and in all Terek Oblast. Renowned in her charity activity, a wife of the chief of Terek Oblast A.I. Polkovnikov decided to establish "Society for Custody of Children and Poor People" in Vladikavkaz in that urgent situation. At the same time, realising the fact that it took time to follow the procedure of creating societies, petitioned to the authorities of Terek Oblast with the request to establish "Day Care Centre" before establishing "Society for Custody of Children and Poor People" [11; p.3]. Madam Polkovnikova appealed not only to the authorities but also to the population in order to collect necessary resources to establish the orphanage. Due to local newspapers of 1892 the idea was actively supported by the public: people of diverse social levels donated money, clothes, food; musicians and drama groups in order to collect resources repeatedly arranged concerts and performances [7].

The desire of the organised public to supplement the actions of the authorities in the social sphere, to help socially insecure population of Terek Oblast during the period under study is illustrated by the dynamics of the growth of the number of various charitable societies. Proceeding from the content of the "List of Societies, Unions and Clubs Existing within Terek Oblast" of August 10, 1913 [13; pp.3-5], only thirteen charitable societies operated on the territories of compact residence of Gortsy of the region. Naturally, all of them were created and worked, above all, in the cities of Vladikavkaz, Grozny, Nalchik, Kizlyar which

population not only was subject to property stratification in the conditions of accelerated socio-economic modernisation to a much greater extent but also grew at the expense of residents of nearby villages and immigrants from the internal regions of Russia.

4. Conclusion

The history of creating public charity organizations in Terek Oblast in the second half of XIX – early XX centuries that acted under the control of the authorities and that solved numerous problems of socially insecure population including Gortsy peoples is an example of correct socio-cultural development of new territories by Russia. Such activities, on the one hand, corresponded to the established cultural habit of charity of the peoples that join Russia, on the other hand, demonstrated the interest shown by the Russian state and society in the fate of the affiliated peoples. Organised public activity in the sphere of providing aid for representatives of Gortsy peoples, that inhabited Terek Oblast, in receiving education promoted their inclusion into Russian culture and Russian-speaking space which enabled to actively integrate the region into the common Russian cultural and socio-economic environment.

Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that the data do not contain any conflict of interest.

Footnotes

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