

BELARUSIAN PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT OF GEORGIA IN THE XVIII–XIX cent.

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Abstract: The article examines Belarusian participation in the colonization and development of the Caucasus in the 18th and 19th centuries when the kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti was integrated into the Russian Empire. The influence of the Russian Empire was twofold. On the one hand, the Russian Empire established its military presence in the Caucasus. On the other hand, metallurgical industry was developing in the region. Both directions were closely interconnected: workers often were recruited from the garrison soldiers which were supposed to protect plants and metal supplies. The territory of “Rus’ Minor” and the term “Belarusian”, which was applied to a part of its population during the unification of information space, were understood as a specific tool of developing the territories which were named as “Georgian”.

Keywords: Russian Empire, Georgia, Belarusians, Unification of Information Space, South Caucasus.

УЧАСТИЕ БЕЛАРУСОВ В РАЗВИТИИ ГРУЗИИ В XVIII–XIX ВЕКАХ

Аннотация: В статье участие белорусов в освоении Южного Кавказа в XVIII–XIX вв. рассматривается через вхождение Картли-Кахетинского царства в Российскую империю. Влияние Российской империи в регионе выражалось двояко: во-первых, через военное присутствие, во-вторых, через функционирование металлургических производств. Оба направления оказывались тесно связанными, так как на заводах работали рекруты из гарнизонов, предназначенных для охраны заводов и поставок металлов. Территория же Малороссии и приложимый к части ее населения титул «беларуский» в рамках унификации информационного пространства осознавались в качестве обособленного инструмента в политике освоения той территории, которая осознавалась как Грузия.

Ключевые слова: Российская империя, Грузия, белорусы, унификация информационного пространства, Южный Кавказ.

In the 18th and the 19th centuries the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti was integrated into the Russian Empire. "Belarusian" military units played a significant role in colonization and development of the Caucasus. The presence of the Russian administrative staff before 1801 and the influence of the Russian Empire was twofold. On the one hand, in 1783, the Russian Empire concluded a treaty (known as the Treaty of Georgievsk) with the kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti and established its military presence in the Caucasus using the provisions of the treaty. On the other hand, the Russian administration supervised the development of metallurgical industry in the region. In the 18th and the 19th centuries a number of metallurgical plants functioned on the territory of the kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti, including Akhtalsky and Shamlugsky copper plants (now it is the territory of contemporary Armenia) and metallurgical plants in Borchalsky region (now it is the territory of contemporary Georgia).

Russian military and technical presence were intertwined as workers rather often were moved from one plant to another (Российский..., №78; №80; №110) or were recruited from the garrisons soldiers of the regular Russian army (Российский..., №96). These soldiers were granted a special privilege to live and board with their families (Российский..., №105). Such privilege provided Russian and Belarusian recruits with familiar food and hence protected them from stomach problems and other disorders (Российский...№58; №83). At the same period medical and pharmaceutical services started to develop (Российский..., №82; №87). Copper was an important raw material used in industry, including war industry. The production of copper increased steadily from 1800 till the Napoleonic war in 1812 when the supplies from Georgian plants were troubled (Российский..., №25).

The necessity to recruit workers from other plants and from garrison soldiers was justified by the insufficiency of the legal framework on the territory of Kartli-Kakheti compared to the rest of the Russian Empire. The section on Georgia, which listed positions that members of the nobility could occupy, appeared in the Russian Menologium only in 1804 (Месяцеслов..., 325-329). The section «Georgia» was followed by the section «Part Three. Areas that are not provinces», which included only two other Russian areas – the Land of Don Cossacks and Russian Settlements in North America. It is clear that the level of integration of Kartli-Kakheti into the Russian Empire was very low.

As for the legal status of peasants working in the plants at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, the situation was rather complicated.

In 1721 owners were allowed to buy serfs to work in their plants.

In 1762 owners were prohibited to buy serfs to work in their plants.

In 1782 the mountain tax was lifted.

In 1798 the legal right to buy serfs to work in the plants was reinstated.

In 1807 the law tying serfs to certain plants was lifted

In 1816 it was permanently prohibited to buy serfs to work in the plants (Мелуа, 2000: 697-698).

By the end of the 18th century the adjective «Belarusian» was used in the Russian military documents with reference to recruits from Belarus (Русанов, 1794: 60-71). It was distinguished from the adjective «Ukrainian» that can be met in the documents starting from 1720. Here is a timeline of the terms «Georgian» and «Belarusian» in the Russian army (Русанов, 1794: 23-33).

In 1737 units consisting of Georgians, Volokhs and Serbs were formed; 796 people in each unit.

In 1740 three companies of Georgians from Astrakhan and Kizlyar were formed. Later the number increased up to ten companies, 255 people each.

In 1741 Serbian, Hungarian, Georgian and Moldavian hussar regiments were formed.

In 1756 the Yellow hussar regiment was formed out of three Serbian and Volokh units and three Georgian units.

In 1763 the Georgian hussar regiment was established.

In 1769 the Georgian hussar regiment was integrated into the Moscow legion that at that time consisted of dragoon regiments from Georgia, Kazan, Orenburg, and Ufa.

In 1777 six chasseur battalions were established, i.e. Belarusian, Bugsky, Kabardinian, Gorsky, Dneprsky, and Finnish.

In 1784 alongside with the new distribution of recruits in divisions and corps the Caucasian regiment was formed within Tomsk and Astrakhan battalions. Kurinsky regiment was renamed into Tiflis regiment.

In 1785 the Caucasian chasseur corps were formed within Belarusian, Gorsky, Kabardinian and Sviyazh battalions.

Thus, on the one hand, natives of contemporary Belarus were recognized by the administration of the Russian Empire as a separate tool in military and economical colonization and development of Georgia in the 18th and the 19th centuries. On the other hand, the mobility of Belarusians, their readiness to serve the Russian Empire wherever it was necessary and wherever they were sent by the Russian administration contributed to their integration into the unified information and cultural space of the Russian Empire.

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