

## The Role of The Ottoman Empire in The Fate of Dagestani Muhajirs

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“Dagestani Muhajirs” are mainly settled in Turkey. Small groups of Dagestanis also live in Syria, Jordan, Germany and the United States.

It is known that migration occurred throughout the history of the Ottoman Empire. For example, Sultan Bayezid II (1447–1512) in 1492 gave shelter for the Sephardim Jews-refugees from the Spanish Inquisition, who were settled throughout the empire and whose descendants are to be found in Istanbul. It is within the Ottoman Empire where the Cossacks who fought in 1708 under the leadership of the ataman Ivan Mazepa on the side of the Swedish king Karl XII (1682- 1718), against Tsar Peter I (1682–1725), as well as part of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, settled in 1775, in Western Anatolia and the upper Danube.

After the expansion of Russian possessions on the Black Sea coast of Crimea, the number of refugees from the Crimean Tatars and Nogais for the short period from 1790 to 1800 exceeded half a million people.

Since 18<sup>th</sup> century the problems of ethnic, as well as ethno-cultural survival became intertwined with demographic factors for the Adige (Circassian) peoples and to a lesser extent for other North Caucasians.

According to Professor Barasbi Bgazhnokov, of the Kabardino-Balkaria Institute of Humanitarian Studies, “during the last 60 years of the Caucasian War, more than 2 million Circassians died in battle, as well as from hunger, deprivation and disease. On the eve of the mass eviction to Turkey, there remained in the Caucasus a little over 1.2 million people”<sup>1</sup>.

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1 Barasbi Bgazhnokov, “Voinskij klass i demograficheskoe prostranstvo Cherkessii v XVII -seredine XIX v.”; *Vestnik Instituta Gumanitarnyh Issledovanij Pravitel'stva KBR i KBNC RAN*. Vyp. 11, Nal'chik, 2004, s. 75

After their eviction into the Ottoman Empire in 1864-1865 and subsequent years, the number of Circassians of the Black Sea in their historical homeland amounted to about a tenth of the total mass of their population.

According to Professor S. G. Kudaeva of Adyghe institute's research, at the beginning of the 1870's in the Kuban oblast' (1860-1918) of Russian Empire the total population of Adyghe peoples numbered only 60.4 thousand people. According to data for 1901 in the general composition of the population of the Kuban region, the Caucasian mountaineers accounted for 5.5% of the total population<sup>2</sup>. The problem of determining the number of North Caucasian Muhajirs is complicated by the fact that not all the archival data has been put into scientific circulation. In this regard, from the substantial historiography on North-Caucasian Diaspora, special attention should be paid to Bedri Habiçoğlu's monograph, "Kafkasya'dan Anadolu'ya Göçler" (Istanbul, 1993), written on the basis of materials from the Ottoman archives. The author suggests five periods of resettlement of the mountaineers of the North Caucasus into the Ottoman Empire: 1) 1858-1863; 2) 1863-1864; 3) 1865-1877; 4) 1877-1878; 5) 1878-1907.

Each of these periods is distinguished by the following statistics<sup>3</sup>:

1) From November 18, 1858 to November 28, 1859, 17.003 persons (Nogai - 11.309; Circassians and Abazins - 5.694) were forced to emigrate. They were settled in Adana and Dobruja. By December 27, 1859, the total number of Muhajirs had reached 26.000, and by 2 May 1861, 150.000 persons. (Of these, 50.000 died.) Of the remaining live 27.705 persons (4.011 families) were sent to the province of Adana, of which 3.970 died along the way. Until October 1863, another 10.000 persons arrived at the ports of Trabzon, Sinope, and Samsun.

2) During the period 1863-1864 known as "buyuk goch" (great migration) 300.000 persons were deported through the ports of Kerch, Taman, Anapa, Novorossiysk, Tuapse, Sochi, and Khost. In November to December 1863, about 10 thousand highlanders arrived in Trabzon. As counted, 5.450 persons were transferred by boat to Istanbul, Smyrna and Varna. Of these, 2.400 people died.

In August 1864, 27.337 persons were exiled from Taman, 16.453 from Anapa; from Novorossiysk, 61.995; from Tuapse, 63.443; from Sochi, 64.754; and from

2 Svetlana Kudaeva, *Adygi (cherkesy) Severo-Zapadnogo Kavkaza v XIX veke: processy transformacii i differenciacii adygsokogo obshchestva*, Majkop 2014, s. 198-246.

3 Bedri Habiçoğlu. *Kafkasya'dan Anadolu'ya Göçler*, Istanbul, 1993, s. 80-94.

Khost, 20,731 people. The nearest port of destination - Trabzon - was not able to accommodate such a mass of people. They began to be diverted to Samsun, Sinope, Istanbul, Varna and other ports. Mortality among the Muhajirs reached horrendous proportions. In Trabzon, for example, every day 180-250 people died. During a single month April, 1864 25,000 Muhajirs died.

3) In May 1865 together with former tsarist general the Ossetian Musa Kundukhov 3000 families of Chechens moved, in June 1867, 4000 families of Abkhazians, and in 1873, 3500 families of members of other peoples of the North Caucasus and Dagestan.

4) On April 24, 1877, the Russian-Turkish war began. In June of the same year, Russian troops recaptured Tuna and Dobrudja, where both the Turks themselves and a large number of Muhajirs (from the Crimean Tatars, Nogais and Circassians) were previously settled. Their houses were destroyed. A large number of people were killed. Part of the refugees moved towards Edirne and Istanbul. By March 1878, the total number of refugees had reached 300,000, of which 180,000 had arrived in Istanbul. Some of them were sent to Rumelia, others settled in Anatolia, Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon. During the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) about 10,000 Abkhazians arrived in Trabzon, Samsun and Sinope.

5) In the period from 1878 to 1907, the resettlement of the North Caucasian highlanders within the Ottoman Empire was irregular. As example, in 1888 3.500 Muhajirs arrived in Samsun, in 1890 - 9,165; and in 1899 - 4,867.

The generalized statistics on the number and ethnic origin of all North Caucasian Muhajirs are as follows, according to Bedri Habiçoğlu:

Circassians (including Kabardinians) - 700,000 people;

Abkhazs and Abazins - 50,000;

Nogais - 30,000;

Chechens - 45,000;

Dagestanis - 20.000<sup>4</sup>.

In 1877 an anti-colonial uprising flared up in Dagestan and Chechnya that resulted in thousands of dead, the destruction of villages, and the deportation of 1.500 families to Siberia. At the same time thousands of Dagestanis and North

4 Habiçoğlu, *age.*, s. 80-94.

Caucasians participated in the Russian-Turkish war, some on the side of the Russians, and others on the side of the Ottomans.

21.000 North Caucasians fought on the side of Ottoman Army *only* on the Caucasian front of the Russian-Turkish war. The son of Imam Shamil Ghazi-Muhammad who was granted the title of Pasha, along with Musa Pasha Kundukhov, at the head of the ten thousand troops, was appointed to the military directorate of Erzurum and Kars. On the Russian frontline, Dagestan, Kabardino-Kumyk and Chechen horse regiments fought. As result of the Russian-Turkish war, the cities of Kars, Artvin, Batum (the treaty of January 31, 1878 in Edirne and the Berlin Treaty on July 13, 1878) were ceded from Russia.

Emigration of Dagestanis to Turkey also continued in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the eve of, and after the establishment of Soviet power in Russia, Turkey became a safe haven for thousands of Russian Tsarist officers, also to Cossacks, who did not swear the oath to the Tsar, and for the multinational intelligentsia of the Russian Empire, which opposed Bolshevism and Soviet power. Among them were General Minkail Khalilov the military ruler of Dagestan in 1919; the most eminent artist of Dagestan Khalilbek Musayasul and his brother Bagautdin, the Tsar's Army colonel; almost all the members of the government of the Mountain Republic (the state, proclaimed in November 1917 in the territory of Dagestan and the mountain districts of the Terek region by the Central Committee of the Union of United Highlanders of the North Caucasus, Dagestan and Abkhazia), many other famous personalities and patriots from all part of the North Caucasus.

Soviet Russia maintained friendly relations with Turkey. According to Moscow Treaty on Friendship and Brotherhood between Soviet Russia and Turkey of March 16, 1921, Turkey returned Kars, Ardahan, and Artvin provinces. Under the same agreement residents of these districts were given "the right to freely leave Turkey, taking with them their belongings and their property or their value"

The Kars Treaty of friendship between Turkey and the Transcaucasian republics specifically stipulated privileges that facilitated the crossing of the border.

During 1918 to 1924 the Dagestanis who had lived there since the 1860s as Muhajirs and since 1878 as Russian subjects, as well as Dagestani- residents of Dagestan engaged in the migration to Kars, had the opportunity to make the round-trip between Dagestan and Kars freely, similar for example, to Baku or Tiflis. Among the temporary migrant from Dagestan to Kars were those who

came for work or trade, who had planned to return to their homes and families before the winter cold fell, or, as one of the descendants of the Muhajirs told us “By the time slaughter of livestock for drying...there were no difficulties with the transition to Dagestan and back till Lenin’s death...then Stalin closed the border completely”. As a result, dozens of male migrant workers were absolutely isolated from the wives, children and relatives who remained in Dagestan.

Later the ranks of the Diaspora were supplemented by civilians, exported by fascists to Germany from the occupied territories of the North Caucasus, former prisoners of war, and others

In conclusion, it is worthy of note that the fate of Dagestan Muhajirs in the Ottoman Empire was marked by adaptation and integration to the political, economic, social, cultural realities of their new homeland.

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