

CRITICISM AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Review

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REVIEW

of the monograph by E.I. Kobakhidze, V.Z. Dzidzishvili entitled “Essays on the history of the Georgian diaspora in Ossetia.” Vladikavkaz: SOIGSI VSC RAS, 2022. 260 p.

Abstract. The review of the monograph by E.I. Kobakhidze and V.Z. Dzidzishvili, titled “Essays on the history of the Georgian diaspora in Ossetia” (Vladikavkaz, 2022), critically examines the primary research findings of the team of authors. The review underscores the work’s relevance and high scientific merit. The authors conduct a comprehensive analysis of the Georgian diaspora’s formation and present status in North Ossetia within a broad chronological framework. The monograph emphasizes the early development of religious, cult, educational, and cultural aspects within the diaspora structure. Despite acknowledging challenging and at times dramatic periods in the relations of Georgia and Russia, the monograph convincingly illustrates the resilient adaptive capacities of the Georgian diaspora in Ossetia. Simultaneously, it highlights their capability to preserve their native culture and ethnic identity. The authors substantiate these claims by offering numerous narratives of the lives and biographies of prominent diaspora members, thereby demonstrating the significant involvement of Georgians in the socio-political and cultural life of North Ossetia. The comprehensive final conclusions of the study, grounded in an extensive source base and broad historiographical coverage, address the multifaceted nature of the tasks undertaken. The reviewers also commend the practical significance of the research, noting its potential as a noteworthy contribution to the field of Russian Caucasian studies. Furthermore, they recognize its value for federal and regional authorities responsible for managing issues related to interethnic relations.

Keywords: Georgian diaspora; migration processes; North Caucasus; Ossetia; Vladikavkaz; Alagir; Mozdok

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КРИТИКА И БИБЛИОГРАФИЯ

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Рецензия

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РЕЦЕНЗИЯ

на монографию Е.И. Кобахидзе, В.З. Дзидзишвили «Очерки истории грузинской диаспоры в Осетии». Владикавказ: СОИГСИ ВЦ РАН, 2022. 260 с.

Аннотация. Представленная рецензия на монографию Е.И. Кобахидзе и В.З. Дзидзишвили «Очерки истории грузинской диаспоры в Осетии» (Владикавказ, 2022) рассматривает основные исследовательские выводы авторского коллектива. Отмечается актуальность и высокий научный уровень работы. Подчеркивается, что авторами в широких хронологических рамках исследования дан всесторонний анализ процессу формирования и современному состоянию грузинской диаспоры в Северной Осетии. В монографии акцентируется внимание на довольно рано сформированные религиозно-культурные, образовательные и культурно-просветительские элементы диаспорной структуры. Не остались без внимания и непростые, а порой и драматические периоды в отношении Грузии и России. Тем не менее, авторы монографии убедительно показали высокие адаптационные возможности грузинской диаспоры в Осетии и, в то же время, способности к сохранению своей самобытной культуры и этнической идентичности. Доказательством высокой степени включенности грузин в общественно-политическую и культурную жизнь Северной Осетии стали нашедшие отражение в монографии многочисленные описания судеб и биографий видных представителей диаспоры. Многоаспектность поставленных задач предопределила развернутые итоговые выводы исследования. Они основаны на значительной источниковой базе и широком охвате историографического материала. Рецензенты высоко оценивают и практическую значимость исследования. Полученные результаты станут весомым вкладом в развитие отечественного кавказоведения, они также могут быть полезны федеральным и региональным органам власти, в профессиональном ведении которых находятся вопросы межнациональных отношений.

Ключевые слова: грузинская диаспора; миграционные процессы; Северный Кавказ; Осетия; Владикавказ; Алагир; Моздок

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The technological innovations of the 19th-century Industrial Revolution brought about a transformative era, offering new means of global mobility and rendering the world more ethnically complex. The rise of ethnocultural diversity can be observed across all regions of the world, at times in unforeseen ways. Even in states with seemingly stable populations, the advent of new diasporas and the expansion of existing ones became evident. Contemporary migration processes have garnered significant research attention, particularly in the exploration of diaspora-related issues. Concurrently, the term “diaspora” retains its debatable nature and continually acquires new meanings [1, p. 43–63; 2, p. 64–74; 3, p. 74–78]. It can be asserted that the foundational definition of diaspora has undergone substantial development, “significantly elucidating the essence of the term and providing opportunities for both further scientific refinement and the examination of the social phenomenon itself” [4, p. 28].

As we enter the third decade of the third millennium, novel economic, political, and social factors have emerged, fostering sentiments conducive to emigration. This dynamic landscape necessitates an exploration of diasporas within historical continuum, discerning the nuances of ethnic group evolution. This entails analyzing not only quantitative shifts but also the intricacies of ethnocultural development, the preservation of identity, and the dynamics of interaction with the host community. It is from this comprehensive perspective that the authors of the monograph, “Essays on the History of the Georgian Diaspora in Ossetia,” approach their study of the diaspora.

E.I. Kobakhidze and V.Z. Dzidzishvili initiate their study by examining the intensive migration processes in the Caucasus, which led to the formation of the Georgian diaspora in Ossetia. Rather than confining their exploration to the chronological bounds of the 18th – early 20th centuries, during which Georgians predominantly migrated to the northern slopes of the Caucasus and Ciscaucasia, they delve extensively into the history of Georgia’s relationships with Ossetia and Russia. Their focus extends beyond political contacts, encompassing issues such as the early spread of Christianity in the North Caucasus.

Drawing from a wealth of historiographical material, the authors consider the internal political landscape of Georgia during the era marked by the power struggle for dominance in the Caucasus. They aptly observe that as the Russian Empire expanded southward, engaging in fierce military and political rivalry with Ottoman Turkey and Persia, it strategically bolstered the influence of the Christian population in the North Caucasus. Notably, the focal points for the concentration of Christian settlers, primarily Georgians and Armenians, were to become the city of Derbent and the fortress of the Holy Cross. Nevertheless, a shift in the foreign policy landscape, specifically the Treaty of Ganja concluded between Russia and Persia, compelled St. Petersburg to relinquish its claims to Derbent, Baku, and other Caspian territories. This prompted the search for alternative centers for Armenian-Georgian colonies, leading to the establishment of Kizlyar in 1735 along the Terek River and Mozdok in 1763. In close proximity, stanitsas with a Georgian population, such as Shelkovskaya/Sarafannikovo, Novogladkovskaya, and Sasoplinskaya/Sasoplo, emerged. Throughout the 18th century, the Georgian population of the neighboring lands experienced growth with the addition of new groups of settlers, including merchants and escaped captives from diverse regions of the North Caucasus and Crimea.

Significant research focus is dedicated to examining the evolution of settler colonies, with particular emphasis on shifts in the geopolitical landscape in the Caucasus during the transition from the 18th to the 19th centuries. This period had profound implications not only for the local ethnic group of Georgians of the Terek region but also for the broader Georgian ethnos. Two hundred and forty years ago, in 1783, the Treaty of Georgievsk was ratified, establishing Russian protectorate over Eastern Georgia (Kartli-Kakheti). Subsequently, in 1801, a manifesto was issued, formalizing the annexation of Georgia to Russia. As the researchers highlight, “the incorporation of Georgia into the Russian Empire influenced migration processes, creating opportunities for the economic expansion of Georgian residents, now Russian subjects” [5, p. 19]. A pivotal aspect of the described events was the construction of the Georgian Military Road, with its central point being the Vladikavkaz fortress. Transformed into a city in 1860, Vladikavkaz evolved into the largest hub of the Georgian diaspora in the North Caucasus, serving as its spiritual and cultural center.

In the 19th century, new focal points for immigrants from Georgia began to emerge. Among them, the authors underscore the significance of the settlement of Alagir, which was situated within the Vladikavkaz district of the Terek region. The establishment of a lead-silver factory drew in Ossetians, Russians, and Georgians. Additionally, Georgians moved to Alagir from the mountainous region of Racha, linked to the Alagir Gorge by the Mamison Pass and the Ossetian Military Road. The authors acquaint readers with F.O. Omiadze, the head of the Georgian community, who settled compactly at the entrance to Alagir¹. It is noteworthy that a distinctive aspect of the research approach lies in close attention given to specific historical representatives of the Georgian diaspora. The authors not only rely on archival sources but also extensively utilize the field material they have collected.

In Vladikavkaz in the 19th century, Georgians settled compactly in the villages surrounding the fortress, and later the city itself, including Shaldonskaya, and in separate quarters in Molokanskaya, and Ossetianskaya. Similar to many cities in the Caucasus, Vladikavkaz was a multi-ethnic environment, drawing numerous immigrants due to its rapid development. The city's favorable geographical position fostered active trade, solidifying its status as the capital of the Terek region. Consequently, closed mono-ethnic urban areas did not emerge; Georgian houses coexisted with Russian, Ossetian, Ingush, Armenian, and others. The settlement system appeared more aligned with the professional/class principle than the ethnic one, as wealthier and more privileged townspeople inhabited the central areas, while artisans populated urban villages. Even the Ossetian village, initially associated with the Ossetian aul at the fortress, later saw the arrival of immigrants from Georgia.

Highlighting the notable presence of Georgians among the townspeople at the end of the 19th – the beginning of the 20th centuries, the authors move beyond mere statistical data, although informative, but also consider the prominent figures who shaped the Georgian diaspora in Ossetia. Many of these figures went on to establish entire dynasties, tracing their roots back to Khevi, Mtiuleti, and other historical regions of Georgia. The monograph

1. The Rachins who moved from Alagir to Georgia during the Civil War founded the village of Kakheti (Lagodekhi district). Giorgeti (in Soviet times – the village of Ordzhonikidze), which exists to this day. The memory of the life of ancestors in Ossetia, of the school in Alagir, for the opening of which guests from Georgia, including Yakov Gogebashvili, came, remains to this day. In 1989, the village library kept the manuscript of M.I. Metreveli “Alagir Georgians” (მაქსიმე ილიას-ძე მეტრეველი. ალაგირელი ქართველები) (Tbilisi, 1969).

provides details about multiple generations of distinguished figures from families such as Chopikashvili, Dudauroi, Tinikashvili, Maisuradze, Tsereteli, Burduli, Buthuzi, and many others. Despite a less pronounced pace, the migration of Georgians to the North Caucasus lasted throughout the 20th century.

In the process of assimilation into the host community, Georgians, as well as representatives of other ethnic groups, retained their distinctive identity. The authors appropriately highlight the monumental role of the Vladikavkaz Georgian school, established in 1888, and its accompanying church dedicated to St. Equal-to-Apostles Nina, the enlightener of Georgia (1898), in the life of the diaspora. While underscoring the temple's significance in the history of the Georgian community, the authors, however, inaccurately label it as the first Georgian church in the entire North Caucasus [5, p. 79]. Temples conventionally serve as pivotal centers for diaspora structures. In the second half of the 17th century, for instance, the St. Nicholas Monastery in Moscow played this role for the Georgian colony, and subsequently, in the 18th century, the Donskoy Monastery became a focal point where the largest tomb of Georgian military and political figures from that period was established [6, p. 715–716]. Notably, for Georgian settlers in the North Caucasus, well before the establishment of the Church of St. Nina in Vladikavkaz, such centers included the Exaltation of the Holy Cross Monastery in Kizlyar (mid-18th century), Nikolaevskaya Church (1804), and the Church of Descent of the Holy Spirit (renewed in 1829) in Mozdok.

The religious and educational activity of the Georgian clergy in the North Caucasus are described in detail. The Alans' early exposure to Christianity and enduring connections with Transcaucasia contributed to the success of missionary activities. It is noteworthy that the authors devote substantial attention to analyzing the roles of specific individuals in fortifying Orthodoxy and promoting literacy in the region. Notably, they highlight the contributions of Bishop Gaius (Takaov), Archpriest I.D. Mamatseva, D.G. Chonkadze, and others.

Transitioning to the most recent period in the history of the Georgian diaspora in North Ossetia, the authors note, on one hand, “the expansion of the geography of settlement of Georgians in the North Caucasus,” and on the other hand, a decline in the number of Georgians within North Ossetia, particularly evident in the last three decades. Nevertheless, it is emphasized that “the Georgian diaspora in Ossetia continues to remain quite numerous” [5, p. 88]. As of the monograph's writing, the results of the All-Russian Population Census 2020/2021 had not been published. Analyzing its data today, we find that Georgians persist as the sixth-largest ethnic group in the republic, although the diaspora's numbers have decreased by 2339 people compared to 2010, totaling 6756 people, or 1% of the total population of the republic. A similar trend is observed in other regions of Russia, with the overall number of Georgians in the country decreasing from 157803 people to 112765 people.²

In 1990, there was an organizational and legal formalization of the diaspora structure. In the republic, the national-cultural association “Ertoba” (“Unity”) was established, and somewhat later in the Mozdok region, the “Georgian national-cultural association ‘Iveria’” was founded.

The modern ethnocultural life of the diaspora is thoroughly analyzed on the example of “Ertoba” association, that actively engages in the cultural life of the republic, collaborates

2. Federal State Statistics Service [Internet]. [date of access: 08/01/2023]. Available at: https://rosstat.gov.ru/vpn_popul.

with Georgian Secondary School No. 19 in the city of Vladikavkaz, and with other national and cultural associations. Regrettably, less attention has been given to analyzing the current state of Georgians in Mozdok and the activities of the “Iveria” association. However, this discrepancy can be attributed to the fact that the modern Georgian population in Mozdok numbers only a few hundred people.³ Unlike other pioneer ethnic groups in Mozdok, such as Armenians, Georgians have proven to be more susceptible to assimilation and resettlement to other regions of the country. Nonetheless, exploring the contemporary ethnocultural and ethnodemographic processes among the descendants of the historic Georgian population of Mozdok would be a compelling avenue for research.

The authors of the study clearly illustrate the significant feature of the Georgian ethnic group – the high degree of integration into the socio-political, economic, and cultural life of North Ossetian society. E.I. Kobakhidze and V.Z. Dzidzishvili highlight, “There is not a single sphere of life in the republic where representatives of the Georgian diaspora are not present” [5, p. 102]. The monograph, through numerous biographical sketches, vividly portrays the contribution of Georgians to various aspects of modern life in the republic. The account of Georgians’ participation in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945 follows the same comprehensive approach. Notably, the meticulous research involved in locating and confirming biographical data is evident. The abundance of references to conversations with veterans and their descendants, coupled with rich illustrative material, indicates the careful preservation of the memory of war heroes within the families of the republic’s residents.

The authors’ scientific research concludes with an essay dedicated to the rituals and holiday calendar of the Georgians in North Ossetia. The formation of the Georgian diaspora by immigrants from various regions of Georgia has enriched the holiday calendar of Georgians in North Ossetia. Today, more than 200 years later, some of these celebrations have transcended local boundaries, assuming a pan-ethnic character, while others remain specific to people from particular regions. Notably, the national-religious holiday Lomisoba, dedicated to St. Georgy Lomissky, has, in the last 10–20 years, extended beyond the confines of the ethnic community to become a noticeable phenomenon in the life of multicultural North Ossetia.

In conclusion, it is essential to highlight that this monograph holds considerable significance, offering valuable insights into the analysis of the diaspora phenomenon and shedding light on the history and present state of the Georgian diaspora, not only in North Ossetia but also in the broader context of the North Caucasus. The research has contributed new data to the scientific discourse, adding to the body of knowledge and proving to be of undeniable interest for both domestic and international scholars.

3. “Iveria” – with faith and hope for friendship [Internet]. Newspaper “Mozdoksky Vestnik”. August 15, 2019. [date of access: 07/17/2023]. Available at: <http://Mozdoksky-vestnik.rf/iveriya-s-veroy-i-nadezhdoy-na-druzhu.html>.

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