

*Demography*

## Migration Processes in the Principality of Mingrelia in the First Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

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The present study is based on some new documents found in the archival materials, which complement the narrative sources about the plague epidemic and the famine spread at the beginning of the nineteenth century that caused migration of a part of population. The dynamic of the migration processes resulted from the pandemic and famine in Georgia was never reported before in any historical documents of Georgian or Abkhazian historiography. The work refers to peasants' escape from one landed estate of Mingrelia Principality to another such as from Odishi to Samurzakano when the plague spread from Akhaltsikhe Sapasho throughout Georgia, in 1811. The work is based on unpublished material reviewing the statement of Davit Dadiani (1846-1853), the prince of Mingrelia, about returning the peasants run away from Odishi to Samurzakano during the plague, famine and crop failure in 1811-1812. The statement is followed by a list of the peasants including 70 surnames. However, the accurate number of the peasants escaped from Odishi to Samurzakano is hard to define as the list includes the whole families. Finding such documentary recourses is of great importance for studying the ethno-demographic processes. Besides, they provide information about the policy adopted by the authorities for prevention of the peasants' massive migration. Moreover, the list is very compelling in terms of researches in social relations and onomastics. © 2021 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

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The paper is based on the information found in the Central Historical Archive, National Archives of Georgia. The facts about the peasants' volunteer or forced migration from one part of the country to another or even within the region are known from medieval centuries. Escapes mostly occurred among the accused peasants. In many cases, peasants were forced to run away from their

landowners. It was one of the main forms of peasants' resistance against serfdom (*batonkmo* in Georgian). The main reason of migration was that the peasants tried to escape the cruel landowners, to avoid feudal duties and find a shelter. But there were some other reasons as well: natural disasters, crop failure, epidemics and warfare. Migration was not easy for peasants as

they had to leave the home areas and go to an unknown place.

## Materials and Methods

Georgian narrative and documentary historic sources furnish a lot of information about famines caused by crop failure. Sometimes, even the kings and queens lived in poor conditions because of famine. In the 1750s, Georgia faced great starvation. A part of population left for the north Caucasus. The same situation was in 1811-1812. It is impossible to calculate the demographic loss of that period. However, one of the documents provides some information about the infectious diseases, which often broke out in Georgia. In the 1870s, 1348 people died from infectious diseases in Tbilisi [1].

In the first third of the century, the principality of Mingrelia consisted of the following parts: Odishi, Samurzakano, Lechkhumi and Svaneti (Kvemo Svaneti). They were ruled by constables (*mouravi*) who could be military officers simultaneously. They were appointed by the principal [2].

At the end of 1811, the plague spread over Georgia from Akhaltsikhe Sapasho. It was followed by crop failure and famine. People had no food, so they ate herbs, grinded acorn, vine boughs and even the roots of plants [3]. As the Georgian poet and general of Russian army Aleksandre Chavchavadze (1786-1846) writes, the unsuccessful military Campaigns by Gudovich in Akhalkalaki and Erevan, and by Tormasov in Akhaltsikhe, then the Persians' invasion and their marauding even in Tbilisi (Tbilisi) had fatal results: first, the unregulated use of cattle for military transport during the campaigns killed a countless amount of cattle. Second, due to famine in 1811 and especially in 1812, people stranded in the forests and had to feed themselves on grass [4].

The famine and plague spread fast over the west Georgia and was followed by a great number of victims. Only in Imereti, 32 750 people died in a

year, and 7450 moved to other places to live [3]. Governor of the Caucasus Aleksi Ermolov (1816-1827) wrote in 1817 that a third of the population of Imereti died and a two third went to the Ottomans or other parts of Georgia seeking a shelter while raging the plague and famine [1].

From Odishi people also ran away to Abkhazia and Samurzakano to survive. According to a historic Niko Dadiani (about 1780-1834), "a deadly disease, plague spread in Guria and Odishi was followed by famine that caused the sickness and death of thousands of people. Many people left for Abkhazia that was found safe at that time. Such a hard situation lasted for two years. The population of those regions halved, and many villages even disappeared" [5]. The trouble was added by a brutal violence of Abkhazians who started selling the asylum seekers as slaves. The ruler of Samurzakano, Manuchar Sharvashidze, who was appointed as a governor of this region in 1809 by Levan V Dadiani (1805-1846), advised his suzerain to arrange a military campaign in Abkhazia to prevent selling the asylum seekers as slaves and establish the order [6].

A part of the peasants fled to Abkhazia were returned to Imereti and Mingrelia by the executives of the principle but many of them stayed in Samurzakano and Abkhazia [7]. The escape of peasants to Samurzakano took place even in the next years. D. Lemonjava found nine cases of peasants' escapes from Odishi in 1838-1839, 48 cases in 1840-1842 and 29 cases only in 1843 [8]. The dynamic of running away of the peasants from Odishi to Samurzakano seems to be increasing.

In February, 1840 the principle of Mingrelia was deprived of the right of running the territory between the rivers Enguri and Galidzga by the Russian authorities [9]. They introduced their rules kept by executives. On August 3, 1847, after 25 years from spreading the plague, the principle of Mingrelia Davit Dadiani (1846-1853) applied to Caucasian Viceroy Mikheil Vorontsov (1844-1854) about a disagreement between his executives

and the authorities of Samurzakano concerning the peasants escaped from Mingrelia to Samurzakano. To return those peasants the principle also applied to the governor of the coastal line of the Black Sea, as Samurzakano was under his control. The governor of the coastal line did not pay attention to the request about returning the peasants to their previous locations. Davit Dadiani noted that due to that negligence, several families being in his subordination were encouraged to cross the border and found living places in Samurzakano. The principle insisted on the immediate return of the fugitive peasants to their previous locations [10]. The application was attached by the list of those peasants who ran away from Mingrelia to Samurzakano in different periods of time [10]. The list includes the names of peasants escaped from the principality of Mingrelia: Zugdidi, Tsaishi, Kheta, Nojikhevi, Abastumani, Khorga, Khibula, Chakvinji, Kuliskari, Ledgebie, Sachkondidlo, Senaki, Bandza, Jolevi, Teklati. The list includes the names of 70 peasants coming from 15 villages. The principle of Mingrelia had an accurate information about the time when the peasants ran away and the locations where the fugitive peasants found the shelters. For example, Kvaji Pazhava and his family left Zugdidi ten years before and got a shelter at landowner's Manuchar Anchabadze, the son of Temurkva Anchabadze. Two brothers Vartagava with their families left Tsaishi and found a living area at a landowner's Tada Anchabadze, the son of Tlaps Anchabadze. Two sons of Utuia Kiria fled five months earlier from the same village and were at a landowner's Zurab Zvanbaia. Some peasants left their living places with the whole families. For example, five families of the Gurtskaias appeared in the village Saberio at the Chkotuas'. Kikoia Gvilia who ran away eight years earlier was in the village Okumi, at Bolikhukhu Emukhvar's.

Among the fugitive peasants except the peasants belonging to a landowner there was also one church peasant. Simonika, a church peasant

escaped from the village Khorga three years earlier and settled at Khukhuloba Anchabadze's.

Vata Partsvania, a peasant escaped from his own village Ledgebie and found a shelter at Eristu Anchabadze's, in Mukhuri. He left his wife, got married to another woman and converted to Islam. His legitimate family lived in Tskhiri, at landowner's Makhu Lakirbaia.

A part of fugitive peasants moved to Samurzakano twenty years earlier. Paata Tsomaia, soon after spreading the plague, ran away from Sachkondidlo to Okumi, where he lived with his family. The family of Makalatia lived in Gudava since 1812. Because of rapid spread of plague 12 people of surname Sigua moved to Nabakevi from Bandza to live at landowners' Murzakan and Tada Anchabadze. Five members of the Kakulia's family appeared in Tkvarcheli from 1813.

In some cases the fugitive peasants changed their surnames. For example, Kikoia Mikandze, escaped from Khibula two years earlier, lived at the sons' of Khitu Anchabadze, where he was called Tagu.

Among the fugitive peasants there were women. The daughter of Anjaparidze, Kvaji from Jolevi found a shelter at Kocha Narmania's. The daughter of Gigoia Anjaparidze lived at a peasant's, Jurumia Toria who belonged to a landowner Levan Sharvashidze.

On the list of fugitive peasants there is a Jew, Moshe, who was an inhabitant of Senaki but 7 years earlier escaped to Samurzakano and lived with his child at Giorgi Jamuleti's son's.

The list includes 70 surnames, but it is difficult to find out an accurate number of peasants, migrated to Samurzakano, as the list includes the whole families. One family with the surname Turava lived in Etseri at the son's of a landowner Khitu Anchabadze. Two families with the surname Gergaia fled and found a shelter at a landowner Rostom Emukhvari's. The principle Levan V Dadiani (1805-1846) made them return but they ran away again and lived in Okumi, at the children's of

Bolikhukhu and Sesirkva Anchabadze. According to the list, the number of peasants escaped from Odishi to Samurzakano was about two hundred.

On August 3, 1847, the viceroy of the Caucasus sent a letter of Davit Dadiani to the administrator of Kutaisi and asked to take measures for returning the fugitive peasants [10]. On April 1848 he also applied to the head of the third department of government of the coastal line of the Black Sea, general-mayor Gogenbakh and requested to act in agreement with Davit Dadiani to return the runaway peasants, as a part of them had not returned to their previous locations yet. On May 26 he asked Davit Dadiani to inform him about those peasants who had not returned to Mingrelia. The viceroy of the Caucasus also informed Davit Dadiani about the fact that Samurzakano had got in subordination of governor of Kutaisi and he sent the cases of fugitive peasants to its governor. From then, the principle of Mingrelia would have to apply to the governor of Kutaisi about returning the runaways [10].

Soon, a governor of Kutaisi, general-mayor Konstantin Beliavski (1847-1851) contacted Davit Dadiani regarding the cases of peasants. He suggested making the control stricter across the dividing lines to prevent the peasants from escaping from Mingrelia to Samurzakano. If the peasants did not have the permissions to cross the border they would be sent back, to Mingrelia [11].

## Results and Discussions

There are no evidences in archive papers about whether the peasants returned to their previous living areas, and we cannot assume that because we do not have additional resources. However, according to the researches, the surnames given on the list are not many in Mingrelia or some of them are not attested. For example, nowadays, there is a small number of surnames: Mikandze, Beshia,

Bzhinava, Ivardava, Kakuberi, Totochia. The people with some surnames such as Mikandze, Partsvania, Jakhua, Kakuberi, do not live in the area indicated on the list. Moreover, we cannot find the following surnames in Mingrelia: Anarkia, Rachvelidze, Ujroshvili, Chikashvili, Vachinadze. This provides us with the reasons to think that: 1. It is possible that the main cause of having a small number of surnames is the relocation; 2. The migration mentioned above; 3. The absence of some surnames points out the fact that most of fugitive peasants did not return to their living places. Unfortunately, there is no general finding about the surnames in historic Samurzakano, Abkhazia that makes it difficult to reach any conclusion.

## Conclusion

The process of migration did not take place in different parts of Georgia but only within a particular part. The archive material, which refers to 19<sup>th</sup> century, introduces the cases of peasants' escapes from one part of Mingrelia principality to another, from Odishi to Samurzakano in the period of plague. Although we are provided with the information about only 70 surnames, it could have more massive character. Especially, the list includes the whole families. It is possible that most of fugitive peasants returned to their living areas, but it is more likely that a part of those peasants preferred to stay. This is an important material to study ethno-demographic and ethno-genetic (a genetic marker of surnames) history of Odishi (Mingrelia) and Samurzakano (Abkhazia) of that period.

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## დემოგრაფია

მიგრაციული პროცესები სამეგრელოს სამთავროში  
XIX საუკუნის პირველ ნახევარში

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სტატიაში, ახალი საარქივო მასალების საფუძველზე, განხილულია საქართველოში 1811-1812 წლებში გავრცელებული შავი ჭირის ეპიდემიის დროს და შემდეგ სამეგრელოს სამთავროს ერთი კუთხიდან მეორეში, ოდიშიდან სამურზაყანოში გადასახლებულ გლეხთა სია, რომელიც ერთვის სამეგრელოს მთავრის დავით დადიანის თხოვნას კავკასიის მეფისნაცვლისადმი, ადრინდელ საცხოვრებელ ადგილებში მათი დაბრუნების შესახებ. ეს დოკუმენტური მასალა კიდევ ერთი მნიშვნელოვანი წყაროა XIX საუკუნის სამეგრელოსა და აფხაზეთის (კონკრეტულად სამურზაყანოს) სამთავროების ეთნო-დემოგრაფიული და ეთნო-გენეტიკური სურათის წარმოსაჩენად და მიგრაციული პროცესების კვლევისათვის.

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