

**Some Aspects of Social Adaptation of the North Caucasian Immigrants
in the Ottoman Empire in the Second Half of the XIXth Century
(on the Immigrants' Applications to Authorities)***

During the second half of the XIXth century the Ottoman Empire had adopted at least one million representatives of the North Caucasian peoples – Adyghes, Daghestanis, Chechens, Ossets, Abkhazians, etc. (or Circassians (*Çerkez*) in their common name generally used in the Middle East), – who migrated to the Sultan's domains in the result of the ultimate subjugation of Caucasus by Russia and establishment of military-colonial administration there. In spite of indisputable initial disposition of the major part of the immigrants for turning into loyal subjects of the Ottoman state and invariably benevolent and patronizing attitudes of the Porte, the process of their adaptation to social, political, cultural and other realities of the new country was attended by considerable asperities, elimination of which often required years and even decades. These complexities stemmed, on the one hand, from peculiarities of the traditional feudal-patriarchal social structure of the North Caucasian groups, which differed considerably from the system of the Ottoman society of the modernization epoch, and on the other hand – from faults and mistakes committed by authorities in the process of colonization of the immigrants, which can be explained first of all by general inefficiency of the state's administrative-bureaucratic machinery. Disastrous material position of the overwhelming majority of the refugees, their grave moral-psychological condition, entailed by ties and hardships, experienced during the lasting war in Caucasus and the followed forced exodus, came to be additional factors, aggravating their settlement and adaptation¹.

The Ottoman sources contain extensive and detailed information on migrant groups, that were arriving from Caucasus, and on measures, taken by the authorities for their settlement and placement. Among these materials, which include primarily correspondence between official structures, special place is occupied by a comparatively innumerable category of documents, issued by the North Caucasians themselves, which reflect on their view of the problems, confronted in the new homeland and, in some cases, on the ways of their resolution. These documents, which are the subject of the present study, include first of all individual and group petitions, sent by the refugees to various official structures: to administrations and *meclises* of *kazas*, *sancaks* and *vilayets*, to the central ministries and departments, to the chancelleries of the

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¹ See details on immigration of the North Caucasians to the Ottoman Empire and the attendant problems in: B.Habiçoğlu, *Kafkasya'dan Anadolu'ya Göçler*, İstanbul, 1993; A.Saydam, *Kırım ve Kafkasya Göçleri (1856–1876)*, Ankara, 1997; S.Erkan, *Kırım ve Kafkasya Göçleri (1878–1908)*, Trabzon, 1996.

Grand Vizier and the Sultan, but most often to the specialized service – the Commission (Directorate) on Immigrants' Affairs (*Muhacirin Komisyonu*, or *Muhacirin İdaresi*). Though a comparatively small part of these documents was available to us, it gives, in our opinion, a certain idea of major issues of immigrants' concern both on the stage of colonization and during the following period of social adaptation and evolution in the Empire². The studied materials are represented by two types of documents: complaints and petitions, submitted to the authorities by individuals or small groups of the migrants with the purpose of certain local problems' resolution, and applications, sent to the central Ottoman authorities by the people, aspiring to leadership within the North Caucasian immigrant community (or its considerable part) and, correspondently, to presentation of its "nation-wide" interests. Below both types of petitions will be considered separately.

At the end of the 1850s – the first half of the 1860s and at the end of the 1870s – the beginning of the 1880s, when the most intensive inflow of the North Caucasians to the Ottoman Empire took place, the attention of the authorities, provided with special governmental instructions, was concentrated on resolution of problems, connected with placement and provision of the new subjects with necessary material resources to ensure their prompt and smooth involvement in independent productive activity. However, in the result of drastically high inflow rates of tens and hundreds of thousand of people, often unanticipated by the Porte, combined with scarce treasury resources and lack of local qualified bureaucrats, the exerted efforts, aimed at resolution of the mentioned tasks, were not always effective, the fact being confirmed by plenty of applications and requests on the mentioned problems.

Optimum choice of colonization areas was the major prerequisite for the successful settlement of the immigrants. As a rule, the Porte worked for timely determination of colonization regions and for assignment of available spare lands that could be populated, considering the interests of both the state and the refugees. However the migrants often laid special claims and requests on this vitally important problem. Applications, submitted to local and central instances by the leaders of numerous groups after their arrival to the country, contain requests for permanent placement in the certain areas. These preferences were determined both by the reasons of economic character (inclination to settle down in the regions favorable in the view of nature and infrastructure) and factors of social nature (striving for preservation of the community integrity, avoidance of objectionable neighborhood, etc.). An example for this is the petition submitted in 1861 by 56 families of Hatuqwais (a subgroup of Adyghe), sent to the Kayseri *sancak* of the Ankara *vilayet*, who, regardless of the instructions requirements, were not

² In various funds of the *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi* (BOA) we found more than 200 documents, representing either original texts of the petitions (as a rule supplemented by other relevant documents) or summaries of their content made by bureaucrats in the course of official interdepartmental correspondence.

provided with any assistance from the part of the local population – semi-nomad *Afşars*. The petitioners asked to place them on the nearby Uzunyayla plateau in the south of the Sivas *vilayet*, inhabited to some extent by the settled population, able to back up the refugees until they collected the first harvest; besides, the choice was motivated by the fact that a part of their compatriots had already been residing there³. At the same time nearly 200 Daghestani and Chechen families, unsatisfied with climatic conditions of the Aydın *vilayet*, asked to let them back to the Sivas *vilayet*, where the major part of their compatriots, who arrived with them, had settled down⁴. Leaders of over two thousand Chechen families, placed in the Kürdistan *eyalet* for the winter of 1865–1866, applied for the establishment for them of the extensive colony on the Habur river (the Euphrates tributary), on the border of the Mardin and Zor *sancaks*. They motivated their request by two reasons: agrarian advantages of the area and placement opportunities for the whole group⁵.

However, in a considerable part of the studied documents the major or the only motive for the North Caucasians' choice of certain areas is their inclination for compact residence, stemming from the lasting traditional intra-communal links and by the fear of their loss in the alien and unfamiliar environment. Thus, the petition (most probably dated by the beginning of the 1860s) of Hatozukoğlu Çolak Mehmed Bey, the leader of nearly 400 “Circassian and Kabardai” families, recorded, that in the result of his wards' lasting wanderings between Samsun and Çorum, ignorance in the Turkish language and separation during the winter period they found themselves in extremely difficult situation. To overcome it he asked for the permission to “gather them anew” and to settle in the spare areas in the Emlâk *kaza* of the Çorum *sancak*⁶. In 1861 the leaders of other Kabardai communities, placed in the Bolu *sancak*, being anxious about the intention of the authorities to separate them and to settle, in accordance with the instruction requirements, amidst the indigenous population, submitted a petition to the Grand Vizierate. The petitioners underscored the “fatality” of this decision and asked either to search out sufficient spare areas in the same *sancak*, or to let them move to the Uzunyayla region⁷, which evidently became by the beginning of the 1860s one of the major centers of attraction of the North Caucasians in Anatolia. In the same years leaders of a few tens of Osset families delivered via the Trabzon port to the Sivas *vilayet*, asked authorities to move them into the Erzurum *vilayet*, preferably to the *sancaks* of Kars, Çıldır and Bayezid on the Russian-Ottoman frontier⁸, where several thousands of their compatriots who crossed the border by land route, had already settled.

³ BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 464/71 (20 N 1277); BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 222/5 (30 Za 1277).

⁴ BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 222/9 (30 Za 1277).

⁵ BOA, İ.D, no: 38018 (17 L 1282), encl. 6.

⁶ BOA, C.D, no: 6832 (n.d.).

⁷ BOA, A.MKT.NZD, no: 352/92 (4 Za 1277); BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 481/98 (29 Z 1277).

⁸ BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 425/8 (17 S 1277); BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 484/71 (7 M 1278).

The strive for joint residence was often expressed by members of Caucasian groups of different origins. No doubt, they thus intended to somewhat extend their “inherent”, usual ethno-social milieu on the local level, and at the same time to facilitate their integration – even though as a peculiar community – into the local environment. The mentioned phenomenon can be illustrated by the request advanced by the leaders of some Hatuqwai, Kabardai, Daghestani and Chechen groups settled in the Uzunyayla plateau, who asked to provide them with a new settlement for 500–600 families in the vicinity of Pınarbaşı, poorly inhabited, but rather perspective from the point of view of its climatic and socio-economic potential. Besides this, the need to protect themselves from the *Afşars*’ attacks was also stated to be a significant ground for integration of the groups⁹.

The majority of such appeals were met by the authorities with understanding, because in the 1850s–1860s the Empire disposed of considerable reserves of spare fertile lands. Besides, the central authority demonstrated sympathetic attitudes towards the refugees and often found it appropriate, when appending instructions on their requests, to emphasize the necessity of satisfying the needs of the people, “who abandoned their homeland to save their religion and honour, and who seek refuge under the canopy of the Sublime State”¹⁰. However, as land recourses grew shorter, it became rather difficult to comply with such requests, especially in cases with “permanently settled” (from the authorities’ point of view) groups, which had been already provided by the state and population with certain material assistance, but still claimed for placement in other regions. In 1862, for example, 32 Circassian families who failed to adapt to climatic conditions of the Güzelhisar *kaza* of the Saruhan *sancak*, petitioned for their resettlement to the Sivas *vilayet*, preferably to Uzunyayla. The request was complied with only after the special investigation, the results of which confirmed the fact of numerous death cases and growing impoverishment of the migrants; however, the Porte specified that the leave will be carried out at the expense of the Circassians themselves, and that the case could not be applied to other groups residing in the mentioned region¹¹. In 1871 several dozens of Daghestani families, placed in the Hama and Balka *sancaks* of the Syrian *vilayet*, applied to the government with the request to change their settlement area because of the unfavourable climate and the entailed death of a number of arrived compatriots. However the authorities, willing to avoid recurring

⁹ BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 491/43 (4 S 1278). Petitions of the North Caucasian immigrants for settling in a certain area see also in: BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 475/75; BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 175/78; BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 176/1; BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 177/89; BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 219/53; BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 222/55; A.MKT.MHM, no: 229/22; BOA, A.MKT.NZD, no: 314/9; BOA, A.MKT.NZD, no: 314/10; BOA, A.MKT.NZD, no: 343/21; BOA, A.MKT.NZD, no: 353/70; BOA, A.DVN, no: 74/100; BOA, İ.D, no: 67593; BOA, İ.D, no: 78645.

¹⁰ See: BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 464/71 (20 N 1277); BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 227/51 (16 M 1278).

¹¹ BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 526/19 (17 C 1278); BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 529/37 (29 C 1278); BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 530/71 (5 B 1278).

expenses for their transportation to Anatolia, preferred to solve the problem by taking prompt local actions to meet their urgent socio-economic needs¹². It should be mentioned that during the whole period of immigration process, the major part of complaints about adverse climatic conditions had been lodged by the North Caucasians, placed in the Syrian *vilayet* and the neighbouring Aleppo and Adana *vilayets*¹³. Aspiration of refugees for reunification with relatives was another wide spread reason for the change of settlement area. As a rule applications of this kind were issued by small groups and were readily supported by officials¹⁴.

A considerable part of the studied documents contain complaints about various faults and errors, entailed by the above-mentioned factors in the process of initial economic accommodation of the refugees. Obviously, a considerable part of the North Caucasians confronted to various degree breaches and protractions with land allotment, provision with dwellings, monetary and natural allowances, agricultural inventory, etc. Authors of numerous petitions characterized their situation as critical. Thus, in 1861 representatives of over 40 Circassian families, temporarily placed in the vicinity of Sakarya of the İzmid *sancak*, reported to the authorities, that because of local bureaucrats' negligence, they were not allotted with land and implements, and daily allowances were paid irregularly, which altogether had brought them to abject poverty. Reminding that they "had abandoned the homeland for the sake of the religion and the state and, having suffered extreme hardships, moved to the Ottoman lands", the North Caucasians asked to provide them urgently with appropriate areas within the *sancak* and to keep supporting them with allowances until their ultimate settling, in order to save them from hunger¹⁵. In the same year 35 Circassian families placed in the Eskişehir *kaza* of the Kütahya *sancak*, communicated, that delays in their dwellings' construction and in provision with cattle and seeds had led them to calamity on the eve of the winter, and asked for urgent assistance¹⁶. In the petition of 1871 the mentioned Daghestani migrants, settled in Syria, also complained about inopportune land allotment, incomplete payment of allowances and the resulting impoverishment¹⁷.

As seen from the response of the official structures fixed in the documents, the Porte took such signals very seriously, even if very small groups of refugees were concerned. Local authorities were given watertight instructions for prompt addressing the migrants' problems, and

¹² BOA, İ.D, no: 44541 (14 Ş 1288).

¹³ See for example: BOA, A.MKT.DV. no: 205/74 (9 R 1278); BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1325/24 (13 Za 1295); BOA, İ.ŞD, no: 2123 (12 N 1295).

¹⁴ See for example: BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 484/84 (8 M 1278); BOA, A.MKT.DV, no: 205/74 (9 R 1278); BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 335/21 (21 M 1282); BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1328/75 (2 M 1297); BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1552/114 (14 S 1306).

¹⁵ BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 467/57 (13 L 1277).

¹⁶ BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 525/25 (13 C 1278).

¹⁷ BOA, İ.D, no: 44541 (14 Ş 1288).

in case of need additional funds were allotted and more qualified officials appointed. Quite a number of the North Caucasians' applications contain gratitude and appreciation of measures, taken by Istanbul and provincial authorities and individual officials for resolution of the problems encountered by the refugees¹⁸. However, the fact that similar and even repeated complaints, lodged by the same groups in some cases, could be found during the whole studied period, suggests the idea of inefficient implementation of the central authorities' instructions on the regional level. For instance, in 1888 the group of Circassians who had been residing in the Niğde *sancak* in unsettled condition for 10 years, submitted the application to the Ministry of Internal Affairs¹⁹; the fact illustrates, that even at the stage when the problem of refugees' placement lost its former acuteness after the decrease of inflow rates, peculiar cases of utmost calamity could still be found in the migrants' communities²⁰.

A certain amount of applications issued by the North Caucasians, contain requests for settlement of interrelations with indigenous population. As a rule the bone of contention was in formally spare treasury lands (arable grounds, pastures, forests, etc.), that actually were used or claimed for by the local dwellers. Naturally, the fact that the Porte populated these areas with the refugees, caused extremely negative response from local concerned groups, which often used force or lawsuit to prevent the migrants from settling in the areas under dispute. As a rule such situation forced the migrants to seek support of the Istanbul authorities. The typical example is the petition dated by 1861, when a small group of Abkhazians asked to secure their rights for the lands, allotted to them in the Hendek *kaza* of the İzmid *sancak*, from encroachment of some influential persons, who included the head of the *sancak*'s *meclis* and clergy representatives²¹. Analogous situation was mentioned in application, submitted to officials in 1862 by other Abkhazian community, placed in the Eskişehir *kaza* of the Kütahya *sancak*²². In both cases (probably, like in other similar ones) the central authorities unequivocally ordered local administrations to secure the interests of the refugees from illegal meddling, inadmissibility of hindering from any part the official policy of the new subjects' settlement on vacant state lands having been particularly underlined.

The studied documents also reflected on some aspects of adaptation of various social groups of the North Caucasian immigrants in the Ottoman Empire. Whereas the overwhelming majority of the migrants was represented by the peasants and the problem of their adaptation to

¹⁸ See for example: BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 222/96 (14 Z 1277); BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 481/98 (29 Z 1277); BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 530/65 (5 B 1278); BOA, İ.D, no: 38018 (17 L 1282), encl. 6, 7.

¹⁹ BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1508/13 (2 N 1305).

²⁰ Applications of the North Caucasians, complaining about improper settlement, and their requests for material assistance also see in: BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 458/35; BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 477/67; BOA, A.MKT.NZD, no: 353/100; BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 228/22; BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 238/33.1; BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1512/22.

²¹ BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 228/54 (21 M 1278); BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 490/95 (5 S 1278).

²² BOA, A.MKT.DV, no: 216/63 (24 B 1278).

local peculiarities was reduced – at least at the initial stage – to successful running of households in rural areas provided by the government, for a comparatively limited category of persons initially belonging to non-agrarian class, or willing to incorporate in it, the objective of obtaining their place within the structure of the host society was of more actual and even urgent character. The fact is confirmed by numerous petitions submitted to the authorities by representatives of the mentioned population group, who sought assistance in getting appropriate social and professional status.

The content of the petitions gives a clear enough idea of preferences existing in this sphere. In particular, prevalence of applications for enrollment into military service is evident. Obviously, in spite of the deferment of military service conscription, provided by the Porte, a considerable part of immigrants deliberately staked on military career or long-term military service on contractual basis. To a certain extent such attitudes were based on militarized character of the traditional social structure and life mode of the North Caucasian groups, which acquired particularly apparent shape in the result of their mass involvement in the lasting military operations against the Russians before the migration took place. Some evidences show that as far back as during immigration stage the North Caucasians used to position themselves as potential defenders of the new homeland, a kind of “warriors of the Sultan-Caliph”. Thus, in his above mentioned petition Hatozukoğlu Çolak Mehmed Bey ascertained readiness of each Circassian family to destine one rider-warrior “for the Islam and the Sublime State”²³. At the same time, undoubtedly, the opportunity of rapid achievement of a certain welfare level, so necessary to many migrants, was a significant stimulus for joining various regular and irregular military units.

A number of documents referred to the first half of the 1860s, testify to significant rates of the North Caucasians’ requests for their enrollment in “voluntary and chargeable” military service. In this connection the Ottoman government sanctioned formation of several cavalry “Circassian regiments”. In general the authorities favored for such aspirations, though the applicants were obliged to present reliable guarantors of their proper service in the army up to the expiry of the contract terms, which usually accounted for five years²⁴. Another splash of mobilization zeal within the North Caucasian community took place after the beginning of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–1878, when thousands of recent migrants voluntarily joined primarily irregular cavalry units, incorporated in the Anatolian and Balkan armies²⁵.

²³ BOA, C.D, no: 6832 (*n.d.*).

²⁴ BOA, İ.D, no: 30174 (*19 L 1276*); BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 183/37 (*29 L 1276*); BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 218/37 (*27 L 1277*).

²⁵ Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Anılar*, II, İstanbul, 1996, pp. 40, 42, 48, 57, 91, 155–156, 166, 189; S.E.Berzeg, “1877–1878 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşında Kuzey Kafkasya ve Sürgündeki Kafkasyalılar”, *Kafkasya Gerçeği*, no. 1, Samsun, 1990, pp. 6–8. We do not dispose of any data on existence of relevant individual applications from the

The petitions of the North Caucasian immigrants – former officers of the Tsar’s army – willing to continue their professional career in the Sultan’s forces, generally were met with official support too. For instance, in 1860 the authorities complied with the request of Şahin Giray Bey, the representative of the Bzhedugh (a subdivision of the Adyghes) nobility. He was granted with the rank, equivalent to the one he used to have when in the Russian army; besides, he was awarded with honorable medal, and the authorities took measures for the wardship of his children²⁶. In 1866 the former major-general of the Russian army Musa Kundukhov, an Ossetian noble who immigrated a year earlier in the head of 5 thousand of Chechen, Ingush, Kabardai and Osset families, expressed his aspiration “to make up for his honour” by devotion to the Ottoman state. Soon the Porte conferred him on the title of *mir-liva* (brigadier general) and enrolled him in the headquarter of the 4th Army²⁷.

We may suppose that due to the active enrollment of the North Caucasians in the Ottoman army, already in the 1860s – 1870s the level of their representation there was much higher than one could expect considering the fact that significant part of them had valid conscription privileges during that period. In an indirect way this fact was also confirmed by numerous applications submitted to the authorities by the North Caucasians – veterans of various wars and their family members – requesting for battle service awards, pensions, allowances and other kinds of assistance²⁸.

The studied materials reveal inclination of non-agrarian class of the North Caucasian immigrants to integration in not only the military class, but also in other sectors of the Ottoman state bureaucratic system, though to a comparatively small degree. Beginning from the very first years of their stay in the country, the immigrants started to apply to relevant official structures for their appointment for the positions of low and middle levels in law-enforcement and civic administrative bodies: the sought vacancies ranged, for instance, from bread accountant at the town council and ordinary policemen to the head of *kaza* administration (*kaim-makam*) and major of gendarmerie²⁹. As far as we can judge from the known facts, the authorities complied with the majority of such requests. In other cases the refusal was motivated by insufficient professional and educational level of applicants. Thus, in 1886 a certain Mehmed Han, “from the

immigrants. Probably, this mobilization was executed in the form of mass involvement of volunteers to the mentioned units by local civil and military authorities.

²⁶ BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 177/29 (21 B 1276).

²⁷ BOA, İ.MM, no: 1398 (29 L 1283); BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 376/53 (5 Za 1283).

²⁸ See for example: BOA, A.DVN, no: 117/54 (10 S 1273); BOA, A.MKT.NZD, no: 202/91 (2 R 1273); BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1321/29 (30 N 1294); BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1321/33 (30 N 1294); BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1367/77 (24 Z 1303); BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ, no: 12/1 (29 Z 1304).

²⁹ See for example: BOA, A.DVN, no: 117/54 (10 S 1273); BOA, A.DVN, no: 146/2 (7 S 1276); BOA, A.DVN, no: 155/3 (17 M 1277); BOA, A.DVN, no: 183/8 (n.d.); BOA, ZB, no: 2/75 (21 C 1285); BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1326/78 (21 Ş 1296); BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1333/78 (21 Za 1297); BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1367/77 (24 Z 1303); BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1435/44 (9 Za 1304); BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1457/66 (8 S 1305); BOA, Y.PRK.BŞK, no: 60/39 (24 R 1317).

Daghestani *muħacirs*”, who contributed considerably to the campaign of 1877–1878, requested for his appointment for the position of the captain of gendarmerie; the Ministry of Interior declined the petition in view of his illiteracy, but found it expedient to provide him with worthy monetary allowance³⁰.

Quite striking was a high level of migrants’ disposition (in particular of the representatives of aristocracy, clergy, traders and other comparatively educated and wealthy circles) for getting education in the new homeland. Beginning from the first months and years after the immigration they appealed rather actively to the authorities on the problems related to entering various educational establishments. For instance, in 1860 the eminent Chechen leader Muzay (Mazay) Bey petitioned for taking his sons and nephews in military schools. Soon they were provided with the opportunity to enter land, naval and artillery colleges³¹. Approximately at the same time analogous petitions were submitted to the War Ministry by the noble Kabardais Hatoşuka Bey, Arslan Bey and Zekeriya Bey, who requested for educational opportunities for their sons, brothers and other relatives and received affirmative reply³². In spite of the visible predominance of requests for access to military education, submitted during the early period after the colonization, the subsequent decades witnessed considerable increase of petitions for taking in civil, both ordinary and privileged, lyceum (*idadiye*) and higher (*aliye*) educational establishments and in various specialized schools – from religious to musical ones³³.

Actually, the defined events illustrated the process of rather intensive formation of military and civil intellectual and bureaucratic strata within the North Caucasian immigrant community, the fact being of utmost importance for its further social evolution in the Ottoman state.

Petitions of migrants from among the clergy are of somewhat specific character. Obviously, representatives of this category who had moved to the Ottoman Empire mainly for the reasons of religious character, counted for special patronage of the caliph and care from the part of official structures. As a rule they asked the state for material and social support (provision with temporary or permanent dwelling, allowances, salaries, etc.) and for creation of conditions for them to duly carry out the mission correspondent with their order (settlement in prominent

³⁰ BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1367/77 (24 Z 1303); BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1394/37 (27 R 1304).

³¹ BOA, A.MKT.NZD, no: 329/28 (15 R 1277); BOA, A.MKT.NZD, no: 329/66 (17 R 1277); BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 198/100 (17 R 1277); BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 199/65 (27 R 1277).

³² BOA, A.DVN, no: 155/3 (17 M 1277); BOA, A.MKT.DV, no: 204/83 (4 R 1278). Other petitions of the North Caucasian immigrants, primarily from among the nobility, for acceptance in military colleges see in: BOA, A.MKT.DV, no: 87/24 (28 Ra 1272); BOA, A.MKT.NZD, no: 349/68 (14 L 1277); BOA, A.MKT.NZD, no: 354/58 (22 Za 1277).

³³ See for example: BOA, A.MKT.NZD, no: 224/42 (11 L 1273); BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 177/29 (21 B 1276); BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 202/28 (27 Ca 1277); BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 270/80 (5 S 1280); BOA, A.DVN, no: 99/15 (n.d.); BOA, A.DVN, no: 184/75 (n.d.); BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ, no: 14/75 (2 Ca 1306); BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ, no: 50/124 (13 Ca 1323).

religious centers, ensuring access to the professional activity or study, etc.). Usually these kinds of requests were met by the authorities with understanding. For example, in 1851 the Porte considered the petition of several elderly persons, who had arrived to Erzurum *vilayet* among nearly one hundred refugees from Daghestan, and were, according to their application, teachers of the Islamic theology. They were allowed leaving the rest of the group and settling down in Bursa or Damascus at their option, and were provided with lifelong cash allowance (“since deliverance of this kind of people from need is a matter of the Highest honour”)³⁴. Quite a number of documents testify to the fact that during the studied period applications of the North Caucasian clergy for assistance in leaving for Hejaz to perform *hajj* or settle there as anchorite-prayers (*mücvirs*) were also complied with³⁵.

Among the studied documents special place is occupied by petitions evoked by patriarchal domestic and agricultural slavery and attendant slave trade – the phenomenon inherent in the traditional social structure of the majority of Caucasian groups, but not quite corresponding to the Ottoman legal system. Leaving aside complicated problems, entailed by this phenomenon in the Ottoman society in the second half of the XIXth century, we should state that during the first years and decades following the mass immigration of the North Caucasians, many regions of the Empire had witnessed aggravation by members of higher estates of exploitation of their compatriots from among slaves, serfs and even free people, on the one hand, and activization of attempts of the latter to get free from the mentioned dependence, on the other hand, which took place on the background of the Porte’s gradual and cautious measures aimed at elimination of the “Circassian slavery”³⁶. At the same time, however, both parties considered the authorities to be the main addressee of their applications in conflict situations. Thus, in 1860s – 1870s various official structures were receiving appeals from the persons of the slave status (in accordance with traditional classification) complaining of violent treatment from the part of their hosts, as well as applications on illegal retention as slaves or selling in slavery of free-born people³⁷. Equally numerous were petitions from slave-owners (representatives of nobility, clergy, slave traders), who demanded of the search and punishment of their escaped or

³⁴ BOA, İ.MV, no: 7398 (18 Za 1267).

³⁵ See for example: BOA, A.MKT.DV, no: 176/89 (21 Ca 1277); BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 524/62 (10 C 1278); BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 556/81 (21 L 1278). Other petitions of the immigrant North Caucasian clergy representatives and responses of the authorities see in: BOA, A.DVN, no: 158/27 (2 Ca 1277); BOA, A.DVN, no: 184/35 (*n.d.*); BOA, A.MKT.NZD, no: 88/96 (29 Za 1269); BOA, A.MKT.NZD, no: 379/61 (17 Ca 1278); BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 508/11 (24 Ş 1317).

³⁶ For details see: E.R.Toledano, *Osmanlı Köle Ticareti (1840–1890)*, İstanbul, 1994, pp. 127–154; Ö.Şen, “19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Devleti’ndeki Köle Ticaretinde Kafkasya Göçmenlerinin Rolü”, *Dünü ve Bugünüyle Toplum ve Ekonomi*, no. 6, 1994, pp. 175–180.

³⁷ See for example: BOA, A.MKT.DV, no: 181/59 (19 B 1277) /the request of two slaves to secure them from being taunted by hosts and to prevent their separation from brides/; BOA, A.MKT.DV, no: 183/39 (9 Ş 1277) /the request for the return of the niece, sold as a slave/; BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ, no: 2/60 (20 M 1296) /complaint from the family about their forced retain as slaves/; BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ, no: 41/3 (14 C 1318) /request for the return of the female relative sold as a slave/.

disobedient slaves³⁸. Evidently, the differences between the common law of the North Caucasians and *Shari'a* in interpretation of slavery institute and the Porte's efforts to observe in its practice the interests of all classes, made resolution of such conflicts quite a difficult task for the authorities, and probably in each case the decision was taken in favour of either party with account for specific circumstances.

The studied documents also include quite a numerous group of immigrants' petitions for settling of various types of suits – from property and civil disputes to conflicts, entailed by heinous criminal offences³⁹. Quite noteworthy is the fact that beginning from the very first years of the stay in the country, a considerable part of the North Caucasians had been appealing to the Ottoman administrative and judicial structures for resolution of problems, which prior to the migration had been regulated by the traditional standards of the common law. Undoubtedly, this fact testified to a certain level of credibility of the immigrants in official structures of the host country and their aspiration for turning in its loyal subjects.

As already mentioned above, apart from the characterized categories of applications and petitions, aimed at resolution of settlement, placement and adaptation problems of individuals, families or small migrant communities, during the period under scrutiny more substantial documents, considering the situation of the North Caucasians in the whole Empire or in its large regions, were submitted to the Ottoman official instances, too. Only several testimonies of this type are known to us.

The earliest of them are the materials of the assemblage of more than 300 representatives of nobility, clergy and elders of immigrants residing in the Sivas *vilayet*, that took place in the beginning of July of 1868. Upon the agreement with the provincial administration, the meeting was initiated by the mentioned *mir-liva* Musa Paşa (Kundukhov). The direct goal of the assemblage was elaboration of methods that would prevent deeds, committed by criminal North Caucasian groups and undermining public security, which the authorities of *sancaks* and *vilayets*

³⁸ See for example: BOA, A.DVN, no: 153/15 (21 Za 1276) /the request for the return of the bondwoman who took cover in the Russian embassy, or for the compensation paid/; BOA, A.DVN, no: 178/20 (13 L 1278) /the request for bringing of the escaped slave to trial/; BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1316/46 (9 Ra 1288) /the request for the return of the escaped bondwoman or for the compensation paid/; BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1316/46 (9 Ra 1288) /the request for the return of slaves who left for another host/.

³⁹ The most typical examples see in: BOA, A.MKT.DV, no: 160/92 (22 Za 1276) /the request for considering the dispute on property succession right/; BOA, A.MKT.MHM, no: 238/89 (18 Za 1278) /the request for the return of bondwomen and property, misappropriated by the relatives/; BOA, A.MKT.UM, no: 478/18 (7 Z 1277); BOA, A.MKT.DV, no: 220/25 (7 L 1278) /the requests for resolution of disputes on slave-owning rights/; BOA, DH.MKT, no: 335/21 (21 M 1282) /the request for debt recovery for the sold bondwoman/; BOA, A.DVN, no: 134/93 (14 S 1275) /the request for condemning to alimony payments/; BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1558/53 (21 S 1306) /the request for resolution of intra-family property dispute and for condemning to alimony payments/; BOA, A.MKT.DV, no: 185/30 (2 N 1277) /the request for the recovery of unpaid ransom for blood/; BOA, A.DVN, no: 170/33 (17 Ra 1278) /the request for criminal prosecution of the relative's murderers/; BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1310/49 (18 Za 1286) /the request for the legal punishment of violator/; BOA, DH.MKT, no: 1311/113 (16 Ca 1287) /the request for the punishment of the person, who encroached upon the property and lives of the relatives/.

were unable to cope with. Having discussed the situation, the delegates approved the code (“statute”) elaborated, probably, by Musa Paşa. It included 15 items and, for the purpose of struggle with crime, stipulated for appointment in immigrants’ settlements of headmen (*muhtars*) and their assistants (*kâhyas*) from among local authoritative people, who would be in charge of keeping order in the settlements; introduction of the elaborated tough system of fines and encouragements with elements of collective responsibility of residents; involvement of immigrants in the local law-enforcement structures on a full-time basis and formation of a special stock for their material support, that would be formed of fines and other takings; expulsions of criminals’ families to distant regions; imposture of ban on the North Caucasians for carrying arms in public places, etc.⁴⁰

The extensive petition, adopted by the assemblage, conveyed urgent request to the central and *vilayet* authorities to approve the code as the only way to ensure peace and security in the region. At the same time the petition laid a considerable part of responsibility for unlawful deeds of some refugees on official circles. Thus, improper settlement and land allotment processes, indifference of bureaucrats to the needs of the immigrants, connivance of numerous officials in relation to criminal elements, were indicated among the major reasons for crime growth among the North Caucasians and aggravation of interrelations with local population. To improve the situation and to prevent unfavourable developments, the petitioners urged for assigning of “qualified and conscientious officials” from Istanbul to Anatolia to provide for urgent completion of the North Caucasians’ settlement and meeting their vital needs, appointment of a special commissioner who would study the situation of the migrants all over the country and report to the central authority on it, inclusion of immigrants from among “prominent people and nobility” to *meclises* and local administrations of the regions of their settlements, meticulous punishment of infringers, etc. From their part, the Caucasian leaders promised to henceforth execute greater irreconcilability in relation to the criminals from among their compatriots and to promote to establishment of neighbourly relations with indigenous population including its non-Muslim part. Besides, willing to dispel rumours about the immigrants’ resentment about the Porte’s policy in their relation, the petitioners ascertained their utmost loyalty to the Ottoman state and readiness to defend it with arms in case of need⁴¹.

These initiatives demonstrated aspiration of the delegates – representatives of the immigrants’ nobility – for convincing the authorities in their readiness for cooperation and mediation of problems emerged in the process of the immigrants’ colonization and social adaptation and, at the same time, for strengthening their own position in local power structures.

⁴⁰ BOA, İ.MM, no: 1481, encl. 3 (*n.d.*).

⁴¹ BOA, İ.MM, no: 1481, encl. 4 (*II Ra 1285*).

However, the authorities kept to somewhat different approach. As follows from the resolution made by the Council of Ministers in response to the petition, during that period the Ottoman government was noticeably prejudiced against the North Caucasian feudal elite, suspecting a part of its representatives in aspiration for preserving their privileges and power over dependent classes to illegally manipulate by the latter so that to put pressure upon official structures on the regional level. Based on this assumption, the Porte preferred to decline the nobility's support in resolution of the mentioned problems and charged the headquarters of the 4th Army to control both placement and settlement of the immigrants in the Sivas and other Anatolian *vilayets*, and to preclude their unlawful deeds. The goal of governmental policy in this field was prompt conversion of the refugees into loyal subjects involved in agriculture, as well as their liberation from obedience to their traditional leaders, the most obstinate of which were to be evicted to other regions; these objectives were supposed to be achieved through strict observance of existing laws and instructions, without resorting to extraordinary measures stipulated for in Musa Paşa's "statute"⁴².

However, a year and a half later Musa Paşa, who probably was charged for informing the authorities on needs of the North Caucasians, sent his personal application to Istanbul. He once again draw the authorities' attention to the unfavourable situation in the regions of immigrant settlements and formulated certain recommendations on correction of errors and injustices committed during the land allotment process. Proposals, put forward as the means for the problem resolution, envisaged implementation of undoubtedly painful redistribution of the refugees' lands. In particular, he wrote about expropriation of land surpluses allotted to the immigrants settled in certain areas prior to the arrival of other refugees; it was ascertained that these lands were allotted illegally, with the connivance of officials, and should be expropriated in favour of those immigrants, who arrived there later and failed to receive the prescribed amount of the land, because the reserves of vacant areas intended for colonization in Anatolia grew short⁴³. Besides, Musa Paşa petitioned for more extensive involvement of the immigrants in the military service prior to expiration of conscription privileges terms. He suggested that "their worthy people" should be enrolled in the army as personal substitutes (*bedel-i şahsi*) of local people unwilling to be recruited by lot. It should have inured the North Caucasians to discipline and provided with sustainable living those of them who had failed to find the use of their abilities in agriculture. Thus, it would somehow loosen social tension in the areas of the migrants' settlement. The application also drew the attention of the authorities to the necessity of better

⁴² BOA, İ.MM, no: 1481 (12 Ca 1285).

⁴³ Musa Paşa headed the large group of the North Caucasians that arrived to the Sivas *vilayet* later than most of other immigrant groups did, in 1865. Perhaps suggestion of such a radical and, undoubtedly, conflict-prone project, could be explained by the pressure exerted on him from the part of his "wards", the fact reflecting certain clashes between "old" and "new" settlers in the region.

provision of the refugees with “means for their introduction to civilization and religion” in order to fill a gap in this field⁴⁴.

The mentioned application stimulated the decision, made by the Porte in the March of 1870, on conducting the general inspection of the immigrants’ situation in various regions of Anatolia. The inspection was to be carried out by the officials of central governmental bodies. The instruction, elaborated for them, gave proper weight to a number of recommendations included in the petition of the Sivas assemblage of the Caucasian leaders of 1868 and in application of Musa Paşa. Thus, for the settlement of the land problem, it was decided to redistribute previously allotted plots. However it was to be done in a less tough manner than proposed by Musa Paşa: only those surpluses were to be expropriated which were not farmed by the hosts without good reason, and additional waste lands were to be found and allotted to the immigrants. Some other requests of the authors of the mentioned applications also received the support: appointment of muhtars and *imams* from among the residents of the migrants’ villages, provision of the North Caucasians with better access to administrative and judicial *meclises* of *kazas*, encouragement of substituting chargeable military service, construction of mosques and schools in the areas of the immigrant settlements to better handle their cultural-religious needs, interdiction for carrying arms in public. At the same time, further to the suggestions contained in the above-mentioned applications and partly against them, the instruction accentuated again the need for applying tough sanctions to the part – evidently, quite a numerous one – of the North Caucasian aristocratic elite who incited and compelled their dependent compatriots for the armed criminal activity, thus counteracting the Porte’s general tack for economic and socio-cultural integration of the refugees in the local Muslim community and equation of their legal status, regardless of their class identity, to that of other subjects of the state⁴⁵.

Another noteworthy testimonial in the field of our interest is the undated application of the immigrants to the Porte, which probably can be related to the first half of the 1870s⁴⁶. Though the archive copy of the document lacks the names of its authors, their evident aspiration to advocate concerns and expectations of all compatriots, placed in Anatolia and Rumeli, and to assert serious claims on the migrants’ behalf to the Ottoman authorities, suggests the idea, that

⁴⁴ BOA, İ.MM, no: 1590, encl. 1 (16 L 1286).

⁴⁵ BOA, İ.MM, no: 1590, encl. 2 (text of instruction).

⁴⁶ BOA, A.DVN, no: 166/52. This document can be approximately dated on the basis of some testimonies contained in its text. In particular, it is stated that the petition was written no later than a year after the war minister Hüseyin Avni Paşa ceased occupying the ministerial office. As is known, he has been occupying this position in 1869–1871 and then, with several short intervals, in 1874–1876 up to his death (E.Z.Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, VII, Ankara, 1995, pp. 70–76, 103–104, 134, 186–187, 353–356, 360). On the other hand, the application mentions as a functioning body the Directorate of Immigrants’ Affairs (*Muhacirin İdaresi*), which existed in this status and under this name in 1866–1875 (A.Saydam, *op. cit.*, pp. 114–117). Consequently, the given application could have been written not earlier of the end of 1871 and not later of the beginning of 1875, but most probably in 1872. Anyway, the dating of the document by 1277 year of Hegira (1860/61 according to the Gregorian calendar), indicated on its margins by the archive employees, should be recognized erroneous.

the appeal was lodged by rather authoritative representatives of the immigrants' traditional elite. Rather consistent and logical character of the statement, frequent adducing of Arabic and Persian idioms and phrases are suggestive of a certain educational level of the authors. Since 28 items of the document summarize almost all major issues of the migrants' concern and anxieties, which had been formulated in other appeals and petitions, it would be expedient to consider it more thoroughly.

The appeal started with the reminder of innumerable sacrifices and hardships experienced by the Circassians in the course of their lasting resistance to the superior Russian numbers "in defense of the religion, honour and dear homeland". The shocking statement that during this struggle, in order to overcome disastrous poverty, the Caucasians had sometimes "to send their children and compatriots to Islamic countries and to sell them for nothing to the Ottoman nobles", revealed both the attempt to justify this historic phenomenon, so painful for the Caucasian mentality, and to address indirect reproach to the Ottoman state and the society. Further, expressing gratitude to the Porte for generous allotment of financial and material resources to the North Caucasians who were compelled to seek refuge in its territory, the authors of the document noted that a considerable part of these resources was plundered by corrupted officials, who were ravaging the state treasury and brought the refugees to the utmost poverty. Though the appeal recognized that due to the efforts of certain honest-minded officials in some regions, particularly in the Balkan provinces, the refugees were settled properly and had already started "to punctiliously and proudly pay taxes", still the situation of the majority of the immigrants was characterized as disastrous. In particular, according to these statements, venal bureaucrats in numerous areas, having concluded shady deal with influential persons from among indigenous residents, deliberately concealed vacant state lands from the central authorities and settled the refugees' groups in areas which were downright insufficient for them: for example, nearly 300 of migrants' families were settled in the vicinity of Mandıra of the Tekfurdağı *sancak* in the confined area, capable to provide sustenance for only 30–40 peasant families. Moreover, the demarcation of lands, allotted to the North Caucasians, was dragged out pretty often, and certificates, confirming their property rights, were not issued. As a consequence the immigrants who had been cultivating the granted lands, could not feel safe from possible encroachments from the part of local "arbitrary elements" and bureaucrats bribed by them. Numerous cases of years-lasting protraction in provision of refugees with the intended agricultural implements, bullocks, money for dwellings construction, allowances, etc., were also brought to attention. For all that the authors regretted the fact that Istanbul governmental bodies, confiding false reports of local officials on allegedly thorough and prompt placement and settlement of the immigrants, ignored complaints and petitions of the North Caucasians, who,

after having roamed for months in central and provincial institutions, often failed to find support and, moreover, were insulted and oppressed by bureaucrats.

Namely these very abuses and unlawful acts were reported to make the desponded refugees resort to larceny and robbery. For all that the authors emphasized that it would be inappropriate to make leaders of the North Caucasian groups responsible for it, since their efforts to assist the authorities in search and bringing to trial of their malefactor compatriots used to confront unwillingness of local law-enforcement bodies to get seriously involved in the struggle with crime; nevertheless the fact did not prevent unfair officials from “stamping all Circassians to be thieves and robbers... and provoking hatred of the indigenous population to them”. Such ill administration and bureaucratic arbitrariness were claimed to be the main factors that “undermined honour and violated national (*milli*) rights” of the immigrants.

It is noteworthy that, contrary to the initiators of the 1868 appeal, the authors of the given document insisted that the North Caucasians were not deprived of the right for carrying arms, ascertaining that the authorities’ measures on arms withdrawal, made the immigrants exposed to criminal offence. However, the major relevant argument was apprehension that the North Caucasians could lose “the skills in the noble martial art, inherent in them from of old”, since “...all *muhacirs*, aged from seven to seventy, wish to be ready... any time to sacrifice their lives in the battlefield for the sake... of our religion and the state”.

The claim for the provision of the immigrants with more access to education, to the military one in particular, was another crucial item of the petition. The petitioners were rather anxious about the fact that the majority of the North Caucasian villages lacked mosques and schools, whereas the existing ones were deficient of teachers and *hocas* who would have good command of “the Ottoman language”. As a result the immigrants’ children stayed illiterate and subsequently experienced problems when entering military educational establishments. Thus, according to the document, during the period under question only one of twenty applications for acceptance of children of the North Caucasian nobility to military educational institutions was complied with, the number being downright irrelevant to actual strive within this community for becoming officers. In this connection the authors requested for provision of the immigrants’ settlements with sufficient amount of mosques, schools and qualified teachers. They also asked not to reject applications for entering military schools, submitted by young North Caucasians whose health condition allowed them to be enrolled in military service.

The petition also featured the problem of relations between traditional classes of feudal slave-owners and slaves within the North Caucasian groups. Obviously, the circles which initiated this appeal, were rather anxious about the measures taken by the Porte in the second half of the 1860s – the beginning of the 1870s under the pressure of Western countries to somewhat

constrain the “Circassian slavery” (through partial prohibition of slaves selling, encouragement of their liberation by means of ransom, etc.), as a result of which cases of disobedience of members of dependent classes to their hosts became more frequent⁴⁷. The position of the North Caucasian aristocracy, presented in the petition, was evidently aimed at substantiation of historic, legal and moral justification of this patriarchal phenomenon, which was proclaimed to be correspondent with *Shari‘a*, having nothing in common with “savage and inhuman slavery... inherent in some areas of America, Europe and Africa”, and therefore “irrelevant to the category disputed by foreigners”. Describing interrelations of nobility and various dependent classes as being rather paternalist than exploiting and ascertaining that their socio-economic and household situation was quite successful, the authors stated that as a consequence of instigations of individual officials, positioning themselves to be the supporters of Europeanization and progress, “...these slaves, giving up the job and neglecting our agriculture every now and then, got in the abyss of insurrection, and we have, like vagrants, to pursue them, thus incurring losses...” The latter circumstance was claimed to be the potential reason for considerable deficiency of tax payments to the state treasury. Yet, the most significant argument of the opponents of slavery-abolition was the reminder about guarantees, allegedly provided by the Porte to the leaders of the North Caucasians, of “preservation of their ancient mode of life”, thus insisting on non-interference of the authorities in the internal social system of the immigrants. However, reference to numerous violations of governmental interdictions by officials themselves was a more valid argument in this dispute; thus, the authors of the petition, pointing to the facts of unhampered acquisition of slaves and concubines in immigrants’ settlements by members of higher Ottoman bureaucracy, reasonably stated their embarrassment with the fact that “prohibition of slaves’ selling is not accompanied by prohibition of their buying”. In general, many theses of the document undoubtedly testified to a considerable, though hardly justified enough, disappointment of the provincial immigrant aristocratic elite in its actual social status in the new homeland, and to its discontent with the Porte, which was revealed, for example, in the exaggeratedly dismal complaint that “in Anatolia and Rumeli our leaders... became disregarded and despised, whereas some of our lowers and kinless became lucky men and lords”.

Nevertheless, the petitioners persistently requested the Porte “not to leave in Russia” other North Caucasians, still remaining there, and to let them immigrate to the Ottoman Empire for reunification with their relatives and compatriots.

In conclusion the authors formulated some more “measures, to be necessarily taken for elimination of *muhacirs*’ ill-being,” viz.: resumption of the practice of appointment of ethnic North Caucasians, who were well informed of the situation with the refugees and who proved to

⁴⁷ For details see: E.R.Toledano, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–154; Ö.Şen, *op. cit.*, pp. 175–180.

be worthy state employees, for leading positions of the Ottoman Immigration Department (*Muhacirin İdaresi*); involvement of “literate and apt” North Caucasians in *meclises* of *sancaks* and *kazas* in the regions of migrants’ settlements, “like the other allied Ottoman peoples”; permission to enroll the immigrants “able to provide themselves” to police and gendarmerie, with guarantees of authoritative representatives of their communities, with the aim “to strengthen friendship and trust between the immigrants and indigenous population groups”⁴⁸.

The considered document can be regarded as demonstration of high degree of anxiety of the immigrant nobility with morbidity of the process of socio-economic adaptation of the North Caucasians in the Sultan’s domains, and with growing tendency towards destruction of their patriarchal mode of life, reasonably apprehended by the traditional leaders as a potential threat to their welfare, privileged status within their communities and prestige in the opinion of the Ottoman authorities. However, hopes of the petitioners for convincing the Porte both in the need to preserve archaic forms of relations within the immigrants’ community and to introduce them to the emerging institutions of representative administration system contained an obvious historic contradiction. At the same time, it is evident that as far back as several years earlier such fundamental claims as representation of the immigrants in local government bodies, their integration in security services, access to education, etc., were adopted and approved by the central government as essential elements of state support policy towards the immigrants⁴⁹, and the fact of their renewed actualization could be explained only by slow implementation of relevant resolutions in practice. Unfortunately, we do not have any data on the authorities’ response to this application, and we thus cannot judge about the possible character and degree of its impact on the official position on “the immigrant issue”.

Concluding the review of disposable immigrants’ appeals to the Ottoman instances, we find it expedient to mention another document – the letter (dated by February 1893) of a certain İsmail Hakkı Kubatizade, a member of the North Caucasian nobility, well received, to all appearances, in some influential circles of Istanbul, to “the leaders of Circassian, Chechen and Daghestani *muhacirs* staying in the Bitlis, Van and Erzurum *vilayets*”⁵⁰. The letter contains indirect testimonies of preparation (or at least, discussion) of the appeal to the Sultan by the leaders of the immigrants settled in Eastern Anatolia, with expression of their anxiety about the fact that the North Caucasians, as against the Kurds and Bedouins, were not included in the *Hamidiye* irregular cavalry regiments, which had been in the process of formation during that period. The letter also mentioned that similar petition on behalf of the immigrants, settled in the Sivas *vilayet*, had already been sent to the relevant governmental bodies and was at the stage of

⁴⁸ BOA, A.DVN, no: 166/52.

⁴⁹ See: BOA, İ.MM, no: 1590, encl. 2.

⁵⁰ BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ, no: 23/80 (19 B 1310).

consideration. The wording of Kubatizade's letter gives a round idea of major arguments, intended by the Caucasian leaders for justification of their point. In particular, they evidently placed the emphasis on usual statements about higher degree of loyalty of the North Caucasians, as compared to the Kurds and Bedouins, to the Ottoman State, and their superiority over the mentioned peoples in valour, courage, military art, particularly in cavalry, etc. As follows from the mentioned text, the intention of the Porte to render privileged status to some Kurdish and Arab tribes and their leaders, made the North Caucasians, residing in Eastern Anatolia, feel insulted by underestimation of their services to the new homeland. Besides, they were anxious about the possible shift of fragile interethnic balance of forces in favour of anyway more numerous local communities in the region, where the control of the central authorities was rather weak⁵¹. At the same time, regardless of the fact, whether the immigrant leaders had actually sent the petition to the capital, the mentioned document once again illustrates that during the studied period attitudes and claims of the North Caucasians for execution of the social function of the military community, or even the class of military settlers, irrevocably devoted to the Sultan and the Porte, had been considerably widespread.

Summarizing the considered above, we should mention the following:

The North Caucasians, immigrated to the Ottoman Empire, had initially positioned themselves as subjects of the Sultan and the Porte and were irrevocably disposed to integration in the host society. The scale of economic and every-day ties, experienced by them during the process of colonization and settlement in the new country, were very significant and, evidently, unanticipated by the majority of the migrants. However it had not entailed any noticeable changes in loyalty of the North Caucasians to the state. In their search of the ways out of emerging difficulties individuals or communities of immigrants from the very first weeks and months of their stay in the Ottoman Empire intensively applied to official structures of various levels, regarding them to be the very instances, capable of their problems' resolution. Such form of direct dialogue with the state was a completely new experience for the overwhelming majority of North Caucasian groups, since before the migration it was almost impossible, to any substantial extent, in their interrelations with the Russian administration. The considered applications illustrated that a considerable part of the immigrants was disposed to integrating military class and civil bureaucracy of the Empire and to get accessible types of education. Comparatively innumerable applications on the problems of the whole North Caucasian community of the country were written during that period by representatives of the traditional

⁵¹ For details on peculiarities of interrelations of the North Caucasian immigrants, settled in Eastern Anatolia, with various local ethnic groups see: G.Chochiev, B.Koç, "Migrants from the North Caucasus in Eastern Anatolia: Some Notes on their Settlement and Adaptation (Second Half of the 19th Century – Beginning of the 20th Century)", *Journal of Asian History*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2006.

feudal-patriarchal elite, who attempted to persuade the Ottoman authorities to accelerate socio-economic, cultural and political (“civil”) adaptation of their compatriots, at the same time striving for strengthening of their own position and preservation of certain archaic class privileges. In spite of the fact that a number of petitions qualified the North Caucasians as one of the Ottoman peoples (*millet*), no requests or claims of the specific ethno-cultural character had been identified.



Circassian World

Circassian World is an independent non-profit web site dedicated to create an informational resource for Circassians and non-Circassians who wish to learn more about the heritage, culture, and history of the Adyghe-Abkhaz people. For more information regarding Circassian World, please contact info@circassianworld.com
