

**Название публикации:**

The Abkhazian and Mingrelian Principalities: Historical and Demographic Research

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**Аннотация:**

This article examines the historical and demographic aspects of the development of the Abkhazian and Mingrelian principalities within the Russian Empire. The attention is drawn to the territorial disputes among rulers over the ownership of Samurzakan. The sources used for this study include documents from the State archives of Krasnodar Krai (Krasnodar, Russian Federation), the Central state historical archive of Georgia (Tbilisi, Georgia), statistical data of the 1800s-1860s on Abkhazia, Mingrelia and Samurzakan, as well as memoirs and diaries of travelers. The authors came to the following conclusions: 1) the uprising of Shikh Mansur in 1785 led to the adoption of new religious rules among the population of Circassia and Abkhazia. As a result, Islam began to spread in Abkhazia. At the time, Islam did not, however, reach Samurzakan and Mingrelia. Both territories remained Christian; 2) as soon as the Abkhazian and Mingrelian principalities were annexed to the Russian Empire, the ruling princes started greatly overestimating the local population rates. They believed that there were on average at least 9-10 people per household on the territories they ruled. In reality, there were 4,7 people per household in Abkhazia and about 7 in Mingrelia; 3) the beginning of the process of decentralization, which was characteristic of the Circassian tribes, can be illustrated by the Abkhazian principality, where it was very awas accompanied by the emergence of independent estates. By contrast, Mingrelia was not subject to decentralization processes; 4) the decision to attach the Russian administration to the Sukhum Military Department of the Samurzakan pristavstvo in 1864 was taken to create an inter-confessional balance between the strongly Islamized Abkhazia and Christian Samurzakan.

**Ключевые слова:**

Abkhazia; Mingrelia; Principalities; Samurzakan; Russian Empire; 1800-1860s