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THE ISSUE OF WOMEN IN ADJARA IN THE PRISM OF SOVIET ANTIRELIGIOUS POLICY (1920s)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the article to present the problem of women in the prism of the Soviet atheistic policy in Ajara in 1920s. Soviet religious policy from the very beginning was characterized by heterogeneity, bias, and one-sidedness, with communism and atheism considered as the mainstays of ideology. The Bolsheviks seemed to preach the inviolability of the religious feelings of the believers, but in fact fought with fire and sword against any manifestation of religiosity. The Soviet government encouraged controversy among believers. A clear confirmation of this was the so-called 'The chador taking' campaign, which has been met with serious controversy in the region. Examining the problems related to the wearing of the chador, presenting the issue of women in the context of anti-religious policies is the main task of our research.

The scientific novelty of the research is the discussion of the factors that collectively led to the 1929 mass protests in mountainous Adjara (Georgia). At the same time, a number of unpublished archival documents, which are kept in the Adjara State Archive, enter the scientific circulation. The factual materials presented in the article and the analysis of the documents kept in the Adjara Archives Division clearly show the Soviet policy of neglecting and insulting the religious feelings of believers, which led to the 1929 large-scale anti-Soviet protests in mountainous Adjara.

The **methodological basis** of the research is the universal scientific principles of objectivity, comprehensiveness and systematics, historical-comparative and historical-typological methods.

Conclusions. As a result of the research, the determining factors of the mass demonstrations of 1929 were identified, in particular: the anti-religious policy of the Soviet government, which included the implementation of various measures by the government, in particular: the formation of the Militant Atheists' League and other anti-religious bodies, the mass destruction of religious institutions, theatrics against religion, the introduction of various awards to reward activists who fight against religion, the creation of women's committees and 'Muslim women's sections' to separate women from the religion. Added to this was the rudeness and arbitrariness of the party officials in all spheres of public and social life, the imposition of various restrictions on religious services and other factors, the combination of which led to the mass uprising of 1929. The results of the research proved once again that despite the various methods used to intimidate the believers, the government was powerless to suppress the religious feelings of the people.

Keywords: religion, rebellion, woman, church, believers, chador, Adjara, Georgia

ЖІНОЧЕ ПИТАННЯ В АДЖАРІЇ ЧЕРЕЗ ПРИЗМУ РАДЯНСЬКОЇ АНТИРЕЛІГІЙНОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ (1920-ТІ РОКИ)

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Метою статті є представлення проблеми жінки в Аджарії (Грузія) 1920-х років через призму радянської атеїстичної політики. Радянська релігійна політика з самого початку характеризувалася неоднорідністю, упередженістю й однобічністю, де опорами ідеології вважалися комунізм та атеїзм. Більшовики на словах проголошували недоторканість релігійних почуттів віруючих, а насправді «вогнем і мечем» боролися з будь-якими проявами релігійності. Радянська влада сприяла протистоянню серед віруючих. Яскравим підтвердженням цього стала так звана кампанія «Зніми чадру», яка викликала серйозні суперечки в регіоні. Вивчення проблем, пов'язаних із носінням чадри, представлення проблеми жінок у контексті антирелігійної політики є основним завданням нашого дослідження.

Наукова новизна дослідження полягає в обговоренні факторів, які в сукупності призвели до масових протестів 1929 року в гірській Аджарії. Одночасно до наукового обігу вводиться низка неопублікованих архівних документів, які зберігаються у Державному архіві Аджарії. Наведені у статті фактичні матеріали й аналіз документів яскраво свідчать про радянську політику нехтування й образи релігійних почуттів віруючих, що призвело до широкомасштабних антирадянських виступів у гірській Аджарії в 1929 році.

Методологічною основою дослідження є загальнонаукові принципи об'єктивності, комплексності та системності, історико-порівняльний та історико-типологічний методи.

Висновки. У результаті дослідження сформульовано визначальні чинники масових виступів 1929 р.: антирелігійна політика радянської влади, яка передбачала здійснення владою різних заходів, зокрема формування Спілки войовничих безбожників та інших антирелігійних організацій, масове знищення релігійних установ, антирелігійні театральні виступи, запровадження різноманітних нагород для активістів-антирелігійників, створення жіночих комітетів і «секцій мусульманських жінок» для відриву жінки від релігії. До цього додалося зухвалість і свавілля партійних чиновників у всіх сферах громадського та суспільного життя, встановлення різноманітних обмежень на богослужіння й інші фактори, сукупність яких призвела до масового повстання 1929 р. Результати дослідження вкотре довели, що незважаючи на різноманітні методи залякування віруючих, влада була безсила придушити релігійні почуття людей.

Ключові слова: релігія, повстання, жінка, церква, віруючі, чадра, Аджарія, Грузія

INTRODUCTION

Soviet religious policy from the very beginning was characterized by heterogeneity, bias, and one-sidedness from the very beginning, with communism and atheism considered as the mainstays of ideology. The religious feelings of the believers were the

object of constant insult during the communist era. The 1921 government decree on the 'taking out of ecclesiastical values' also provided for the use of bullets against believers who opposed them. This policy of the government was followed by fierce opposition throughout the empire.

It was essentially the same policy in Georgia. The Bolsheviks seemed to preach the inviolability of the religious feelings of the believers, but in fact fought with fire and sword against any manifestation of religiosity. A similar situation was in the south-western part of Georgia – Adjara, where the population was converted to Islam as a result of three centuries of Ottoman rule. Anti-Muslim hysteria prevailed in the region, which in some ways lasted until the era of Gorbachev's transformation, although its intensity was variable. National and angular motives were added to the anti-religious hysteria in Georgia. The Soviet government encouraged controversy among believers. A clear confirmation of this was the so-called 'The Chador taking' campaign, which has been met with serious controversy in the region.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Generally, chador was not characteristic feature for Ajara population. Its tradition is related with Islam conquest and its forcible spread as the result of occupation.

Firstly (from the end of the XVI century almost during one century) Islam expansion in Southland South-West Georgia had a social nature. Application of 'voluntary' islamization, promoted by economic impact application (free plots for those who became Muslims, additional taxation for those who kept vinery and piggery), resulted in islamization of population. But in the second half of Islam conquest, especially after increase of Russia's interest towards the region, Osmons made tougher religious policy to speed up islamization of population. After the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 South-West Georgia returned to the motherland, but Russian Empire increased and promoted Islamic ideology. The number of mosques was increased. Russia's policy was aimed at implementation of imperial aims with the purpose of removal of the local population and placement of Slavic population to the border regions. The policy resulted in muhajir migration. Disorder started in the beginning of the XX century and following wars negatively impacted upon the region of Ajara, which was badly suffered from chaos. The situation aggravated in the period of the First Republic (1918-1921).

From the first days of establishment of the Soviet rule in Georgia, mass antireligious campaign was started, 'League of Militant Atheists' and 'Religious Cult Councils' were established, religious buildings were destroyed, antireligious plays were delivered broadly. Antireligious activity always foresaw wearing of special antireligious badges¹.

Women issue was one of the most important components of antireligious policy. So-called women committees were established in 1920-s, which managed the issue. Women committees supported women in family, everyday life, legal, wedding and other issues and involved them into social life. 'Muslim Women Section', aimed at support of vocational education (dressmaking), was established from 1924².

¹ Putkaradze T. Collection of documents. II, "Universal" publishing house, vol. 2013. P. 4.

² Ajara Archive Administration, Central State Archive (ASS, CSA). Fund P-1. List 1. File 358. P. 2, 4, 6-7, 10, 17, 18.

The next letter presents “a list of Muslim women, who desire to study dressmaking: Zori Khabadze, Ekhsan Diasamidze, Asmie Diasamidze, Patkume Kirimogli, Zeki Khabadze, Khummie Diasamidze, Khatije Shakhamogli, Kunkar Shakhamogli”³.

Neither this publicity campaign had positive results. Men protested against women vocational courses. One of the documents directly displays attitude of the local population: „our women shall study at home... our customs reject education for women... a man is a patron of a woman... men don't want education for their women... The head of the executive council shares the same position”⁴. Activity of the government persons in such conditions faced many serious problems, resulted in their request of resignation. “Agrafina Talakvadze, working among Muslim women in Khulo District” sent a letter to Ajaristan Women Division on November 20, 1924 “based by my report, it is clear that Khulo District is not ready to make background for employment of women and there are no reasons to hope for that. Taking above mentioned in consideration, kindly ask my resignation from my position”⁵.

One of the letters sent to the revolutionary committee reflects that “the first years of the Soviet rule” were very difficult for government members, that “activity in Ajara was equal to become hero”, that it was “impossible to act in Ajara”. Thus, “it was necessary to develop a plan to restore confidence and dispel all doubts among population”⁶. It is specially noted in the letter that the competence of party leaders is very low, their activity “resulted in Kemalist oriented Mejlis creation”. According to the letter the decree on Ajara Autonomy is negatively assessed and noted that ‘the Kemalists’ headed it⁷.

Pro-Turkey forces actively implemented public campaigns and provocative acts. A part of Muslim spiritual leaders were involved in active anti-Georgian activities. The consul of Turkey actively assisted them⁸. The All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Speculation, and Sabotage was informed about activities of pro-Turkey oriented members of mejlis (‘Sedai Mileti’, Kemalists), who later created armed forces⁹. Antireligious activities, agitation, area of impact upon the local educational institutions was strictly regulated at the first stages. The Main Political-Educational Committee was created to monitor such issues. At the beginning, its functions contained rehabilitation of mosques. There was not a barrier to join the party in sake of religiosity of candidate. One of the protocols of one of the meetings shows that several Muslims joined Communist Party in Khulo, but the majority was rejected¹⁰. Gradually, the situation was changed. From the second half of 1920s rude behaviour of the Communist party officials became noticeable in all sphere of social life. Religious restrictions were also established. For example, Khazirikhoja was prohibited to provide funeral religious procedures, causing three days’ delay in muslim person funeral. Spiritual leaders were forced to sign a document, prohibiting implementation of religious procedures (for example in the village of Dioknisi). In the Gorjomi village, intentionally humiliating feast tables were implemented at time of Ramazan (fasting in

³ Ibidem.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Ibid. Fund P-1. List 1. File 358. P. 17.

⁶ Ibid. File 10. P. 1.

⁷ Ibid. P. 2.

⁸ Ibid. File 77. P. 171.

⁹ Ibid. Fund P-2. List 1. File 2a. P. 7.

¹⁰ Ibid. Fund P-1. List 1. File 10. P. 1.

Islam), muezzins were threaded in case they continued their religious activity. The letter explains the reasons of the local population attitude negatively predisposed to women education and chador removal. Partly it is explained by activity of the local feudal lords and Muslim spiritual leaders. "One part of the feudal lords is Turkey oriented, the second one has Georgian orientation. We could not be supported by them. We cancelled relations with both parts of the feudal lords. We aimed our activity at the full isolation of the feudal lords from the farm-workers and finally we reached our aim"¹¹.

The government abated not a jot of demands. Registrars of Births, Marriages and Deaths were established (the first such Registrar was established in Village Khutsubani), the aim of which was to remove spiritual leaders from population¹². Registrars of Births, Marriages and Deaths should manage and monitor marriage registration issues, and eradicate early marriages of under age people. The reform was supposed to gradually change the existing practice. But the registrars often could not manage marriage registration. The registrars were located in the central parts of the villages, which were restricted for women due to existed religious limits. Thus, Council member signed the documents instead of women¹³.

According to the record, arranged in 1925, Women Committee demanded protection of women and children rights in case of divorce and development of simplified rules and procedures for child spousal support¹⁴. They implemented special meetings to provide immediate respond to the women applications and tried to manage and monitor all issues related with women needs¹⁵.

Anti-religious campaign touched churches, mosques and other religious institutions. According to the decree of Ajaristan Central Committee of January 13, 1923, meeting 35, which was based on decision of Council of People's Commissars of January 3, 1923, the St. Alexander Nevskiy Cathedral, military hospital church and St. Mikhail Church and were transferred to 'Communal division fund', and church property was given to 'Famine Combat Committee'¹⁶.

There were 158 acting mosques in Ajara in 1929, the construction of part of them was finished during the Soviet rule, but they soon almost all of them were closed. Only the Ortajame Mosque in Batumi continued its activities until 1935¹⁷. Later it became a military warehouse¹⁸.

During the World War II, when it became necessary to open religious institutions and legalize their activity, on November 28, 1943 Soviet Government statement 1325 'On Churches Opening' was put into force. On April 19, 1943 similar decree 'On opening of religious prayer houses' gave possibility to restore Ortajame in 1946 in Batumi¹⁹.

¹¹ Ibid. P. 2.

¹² Ibid. File 733. P. 19.

¹³ Ibid. Fund 14. List 4. File 301. P. 153.

¹⁴ Ibid. Fund P-1. List 1. File 465. P. 10.

¹⁵ Ibid. File 590. P. 8.

¹⁶ Ibid. Fund P-2. List 1. File 21. P. 6.

¹⁷ *Барамидзе П.П.* Мечети Аджарии (проблемы периодизации и классификации) // Лавровский сборник: материалы XXXVI и XXXVII среднеазиатско-кавказских чтений 2012-2013: этнология, история, археология, культурология. Санкт-Петербург: МАЕ РАН, 2013. С. 404.

¹⁸ *Baramidze R., Rumiantsev S.* Ba'tumis meçet'ebi // Bat'umi – C'arsuli da t'anamedroveoba, I. Bat'umi: gamomcemloba Šot'a Rust'avelis saxelmc'ip'o universiteti, 2009. P. 201-207.

¹⁹ Putkaradze T. (collection of documents), II, "Universal" publishing house. Vol. 2013. P. 4-5.

Medreses closing and 'The Chador taking' campaign was broadly started from the second half of 1920s, which was implemented in 1928-1930. A. Pantskhava, secretary of Ajara District Committee, informed the Central Bodies of the Party about closing of 147 medreses in the region in 1929, and that religious leaders refuse to implement religious rules and about success in 'The Chador taking' campaign, he specially noted that all the results were reached without riot and public disorder.

Naturally, the statement was far from reality. By that time, chador was refused by approximately by 300 women and mainly because of administrative abuse. Archive documents prove that even the active communist did not remove chador from their family members. Population protested the terror of administration members but the governmental structures tried to explain it as "separate individual mistakes"²⁰.

Installation of new Soviet rules and discredit of traditional points of view was the main purpose of 'League of Militant Atheists', 'Militant Atheist' journal established in 1925²¹.

Opposite to Christianity, Islam required wearing of chador, but the holy book of Quran does not contain such requirement. This issue was successfully used by Soviet propagandists. The meetings of voters were conducted in all villages in 1928-1929 in the frames of antireligious campaign, aimed at medreses closing and chador removal. According to the statement accepted at Sagoreti voters meeting of January 16, 1929: "wearing of chador was introduced by local feudal lords who wanted to suppress their wives. This is an old, obsolete custom, having no place ad purpose in Soviet village"²². Similar records are fixed in decisions of other villages and speeches of communist propagandists. At 'Poor people Conference' (December 20, 1928) of Keda District, speaker Kh. Zoidze explained the reasons of chador removal: "formerly, a woman was subject to sale and purchase and chador covered woman's face not to cause the interest of other males. The Quran does not contain requirement to wear chador and nowadays during Soviet period, it is clear that it is inadmissible to sell or to buy women. ...We shall remove chador from our women and involve the into social life. Even in Turkey and Afghanistan chador is removed, thus Ajaristan stays as the backward region. It is necessary to develop Ajaristan and demolish all obsolete traditions and customs..."²³, "if hoja eats chicken every day and we eat only lobio, it is clear they betray us"²⁴.

Anti-religious policy of Soviet Government was based on heavy-handed methods. The policy resulted in weakening of the influence of spiritual leaders and religious institutions, strengthening at the same time dissatisfaction among Muslim population. Correction of such 'mistakes' became the aim of the Soviet government.

According to Islam rules, Georgian Muslim women should carry chador. Antireligious policy implementation was started in Soviet rule period. It was characterized by implementation of campaign of forcible withdrawal of chador. Pembe Khozrevanidze removed her chador and burnt it publicly in January 1929 in the centre of Khulo. Naturally, it was a result of the Soviet brain washing and easily detectable propaganda ploy.

²⁰ Archive of the President of Georgia. Fund 14. List 1. File 301. P. 150.

²¹ *Zosiže R. Islami, morcmune, t'anamedroveoba, Sabčot'a Ačara. Bat'umi, 1978. P. 25-28.*

²² ASS, CSA. Fund P-4. List 1. File 340. P. 31.

²³ *Ibid.* File 299. P. 1-3.

²⁴ *Ibid.* Fund P-1. List 1. File 241. P. 3.



Fig. 1. The first women, who removed chador
(ASS, CSA, photo fund, description 1, photo 21)

Such Soviet policy increased protest mood of population. Domestic and foreign factors, as well internal political tension in 1922-1925 caused disorder in Ajara, but it was stopped by the local party active members. Soviet government tried to condemn wounding religious feelings and related mistakes. Appropriate recommendations and atheistic campaign were developed. At the same time, study of Muslims' religious issues were started and resulted in large-scale data reflecting conditions of religious buildings, educational institutions, spiritual leaders. In line with above mentioned, active poaching of spiritual leaders was also implemented. Economic measures were also applied.

Above mentioned measures were fruitless. Public disorder started in 1929 and resulted in the full-scale riot. The processes were also related with the processes of the rest parts of Georgia²⁵.

The first Meeting of Georgian Muslim Women was conducted at Batumi State Academic Theatre on February 8, 1929. The meeting was attended with 447 women delegates, 380 of them were Ajarian women. Women made speeches at the meeting. At the end of the meeting thirty women went to the platform and shouted: "Long live women's freedom, down with the chador!", – they removed their chadors, threw them and burnt, causing applause from the meeting participants. According to archive data, the walls were designed with banners: "Long live to the holiday!", "Let's make our efforts to struggle with old traditions stronger!".

Women, prepared by special service became the activists of 'Women Divisions', Komsomol members and finally transformed into the integral part of the communism builders army. 'Chador removal' campaign faced serious problems. Numerous group of

²⁵ *Manveliže I. Politikuri mgelvareba ačaraši 1922-1925 c'lebši. Bat'umi, 2002. P. 196-198.*

defenders of old traditions resisted breakage of religious rules and way of living. It was very difficult to keep peaceful situation despite mass campaign provision and conduction of 'Congress of Georgian Muslim Women' (which took place in Batumi on February 8, 1929 attended by 447 delegates and 380 of them presented Ajara). The wave of emancipation of women caused public concern. Georgian governmental 'Women Division' created the body 'Our Way', which was involved in active propaganda, published women correspondence and systematically covered chador related data.

Many documents, kept in archive institutions, prove that despite the active propagandist activities, chador removal process in Muslim Ajara had more opponents than supporters, causing sharp debates from both sides. Attitude of supporters is clearly displayed through the questions put during discussions. The next questions were often asked at the meetings:

- "is it admissible to teach 2 children but to leave one child for assistance at home?";
- "is it admissible to take a child to khodja for studies in the summer, when a child is free from school?";
- "is it admissible immediately to withdraw chador, so deeply rooted in the traditions?"²⁶;
- "our women say – we wear chadori and prefer to commit suicide but not to refuse chadri"²⁷;
- "we will not remove chador voluntarily, will the government do it violently?"²⁸;
- "I prefer to die but not to remove chador or to close medrese. We don't want your freedom, leave us alone"²⁹;
- "in case medrese is close we lose our religion and how our children understand what religious procedures shall be provided when we die?"³⁰;
- "we will not remove chador, we want our religion, our children will study at school and then at medrese"³¹;
- "we keep our conscience under the chador"³²;
- "Chador shall be removed not violently but voluntarily"³³.

According to opinions displayed at the meetings, some women agreed to remove chador, but could not resist opinion of the countrymen. Thus, they demanded introduction of the appropriate law, under which all females shall remove chador. Aishe Memiadze, resident of Uchambi village declared: "Chador removal is difficult. There may be one or two supporters, but our neighbourhood will not give us opportunity to act so. We can't resist their humiliation and the law is necessary to remove chador and no person shall be humiliated due to chador removal"³⁴. Archive

²⁶ ASS, CSA, Fund P-4. List 1. File 299. P. 14.

²⁷ Ibid. File 298. P. 1.

²⁸ Ibid. P. 6.

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ Ibid. File 299. P. 14.

³² Ibid. File 298. P. 17.

³³ Ibid. P. 40.

³⁴ Ibid. P. 144.

documents show that Kedi residents were relatively less aggressive towards the chador removal process than Khulo residents. Their question seems logically asked: What is the profit for the Government if we remove chador and close medrese?³⁵

The 8th Congress of Ajara Councils (April 5-7, 1929) dealt with chador wearing issue in line with other economic and cultural issue. Congress data did not pay special attention to chador wearing issue, dealing with it as only with the obsolete tradition. In reality it was related with Osman Conquest, thus the Congress delegates displayed a serious dissatisfaction because of less attention to the issue from the governmental structures³⁶.

Application of heavy-handed methods caused mass dissatisfaction, which soon transformed into the riot. It covered the whole Ajara. Cultural memory of Ajara population keeps the events related with these processes.

As the example we may bring field data recorded in 1969, keeping memoirs of participants of the event. "Nazire Makharadze... started agitation against chador among women of our village... They said Nazire became Georgian (Christina is meant. – *Authors*), the older members of congregation condemned her, the majority of women ignored her, but Nazire prolonged her activity, she used quotation from the Koran, which declares, that **the Muslims shall firstly obey the State, and then the God**. Thus, if the state requires, we shall remove chador. Such agitation technique was fruitful³⁷. Naturally, it was not written in the Koran and village women, who did not know Arabic could not check correctness of this postulate. These factors were taken by the Soviet agitation into consideration and successfully applied.

Cynicism was characteristic feature of Soviet civil servants during implementation of anti-religious campaign. The facts of offending the feelings of the believers were frequently detected. People remember severity of A. Kalandadze, who headed Khulo Party Committee. By information of Niaz Bolkvadze, descendant of one of the witnesses, one of the heads of 1929 riot, Alisultan Bolkvadze 1929 sent a letter to the pitiless and relentless public person, demanding to stop offending believers.

The first center of mass protest and resistance was fixed in the village Chvana. Soon it spreader to all villages of mountainous Ajara. Lavrentii Beria and other members of Soviet Government came to Ajara from Tbilisi to study the situation accompanied with army forces. According to Niaz Bolkvadze, L. Beria twice met A. Bolkvadze and some other heads of the riot, who, in line with other demans, also requested to withdraw communist officials from the district and provision of freedom of religion. The riot was not finished despite the promises to improve the conditions. The rebels put under control Purtio-Skhalta strategic bridge and conducted military parade in Skhalta.

The special three member committee of L. Beria, L. Gogoberidze and Kovalev was established to crush the riot³⁸, whose activities were resulted in subdue of the riot and establishment of Soviet dictatorship in Ajara in 1929.

M. Tskhakaia, Chairperson of the Central Committee of Georgia, of the 11th Congress of Ajara Councils (March 18-22, 1930) promoted inclusion of women from Ajara to

³⁵ Ibidem.

³⁶ Ačaris sabčoebis krilobebi 1921-1937. Dokumentebisa da masalebis krebuli. Batumi: Ajara publishing house, 1971. P. 297-299.

³⁷ Bat'umis samecniero-kvlevit'i institutis et'nografiuli fondi sakme N 52. (Bat'umis samecniero-kvleviti institutis et'nografiuli fondi, canac'eri N 5, sak'me N 52, mt'xrobeli: Maxaraze Šaisuf T'eufis že, 36 c'lis, Xulos raioni, sofeli Č'ao. Č'amweri: Levan Kalandarišvili, 1969 c'lis 23 ivlisi.

³⁸ *Bolkvadze N., Bolkvadze A.* Girsebisa da t'avisuflebisat'vis: Bolkvažet'agvaris istoria: kulturuli memkvudreoba, sak'art'velos erovnuli akademია. Tbilisi, 2016. P. 154-201.

social life and increasing literacy rate among them³⁹. During the period, chador was not a necessary attribute of Ajarian Muslim women. Changes also touched other sides of religious life. Religious wedding was prohibited, but religious rules were implemented in hidden manner, the doctors secretly implemented posthotomy in neighbouring Christian regions to protect the local medical personnel, funeral procedures were also implemented secretly, mainly at nights.

Soviet government started implementation of active measures of creation and installation of new soviet traditions. At time of religious holydays communist and komsomol holidays were arranged: Komsomol Christmas, komsomol wedding, Komsomol baptizing, Communist Red Funeral, etc. It became a trend to perform revolutionary songs during funeral, to deliver pathetic speeches and publishing announcements of civil funeral rites in mass media⁴⁰.

Some years before the riot, in 1924, soviet holidays related protocol was established. In line with other activities, the first Red Wedding was arranged in Ajara. The appropriate plan was developed. Wedding was supposed on August 18, 1924⁴¹. Such plans were developed to implement different Soviet holidays. So called 'Red Bairam', 'Red Easter' and other similar holidays having deep propaganda insight were planned to replace religious ones.

But attempt to change religious traditions did not result positively. This policy was not successful. Different religious procedures, rules or customs were performed in hidden manner in different form. I was known both for the partocracy and spiritual leaders and in some cases the government turned a blind eye to such cases. For example, a spiritual leader hold teacher's position at more then in twenty schools. At the same time, there were some cases of the protests against non-religious education. Archive data contains a letter of village correspondent 'Khmalı' dated by 1927, describing woman appointment at teacher position in village Didajara of Khulo region and the protest related with unpaid salary for Muslims⁴².

One of archive fund keeps report dated by November 16, 1929, sent by citizen Rizali Gogitidze to the Kavtaradze (name is not fixed), deputy Head of Ajara Council. The letter describes ant-governmental and anti-school leaflets. Tension was caused by wounding of the teacher in Kobuleti. According to the documents, two meetings were conducted to educe agent provocateur in village Legva. One of the meetings was attended by the Zekeria Lortkipanidze, Head of Ajara Soviet Council. The commission containing twenty four member was established by decision of the meeting aimed at detection of provocateurs. Khoja Ramiz Baladze was detected as the provocateur. He sheltered in the forest with the criminal Murad Khabazi. Brother of khoja applied to the government asking to arrest khoja, 'because he will perish brother'. Khoja was detained, he tried to use arms and was killed during detention⁴³.

The other facts of anti-school proclamations spread are also kept at archive documents. The people who distributed proclamations were inspired by local khojas and Turkish agents. According to the document dated by October 13, 1929 N. Chkonia, a teacher of Chernali (supposedly Charnali) village noticed the envelope at school window, which was brought to the head of station 5. The envelope contained the following

³⁹ *Turmanidze O.* Ačaris politikuri da ekonomikuri istoria (1921-1940). Batumi, 2012. P. 133.

⁴⁰ ASS, CSA. Fund P-1. List 1. File 145. P. 35.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁴² Ibid. File 733. P. 19-23.

⁴³ ASS, CSA. Fund P-2. List 1. File 91. P. 34.

proclamation: “we don’t need you, teacher! Go there where you want, if you stay, we’ll kill you ...khoja shall e at our mosque, we will not let our children to go to school”⁴⁴. Presenting the letter, the teacher noticed that he worked at school from 1928 and noticed no protest from population, and could not notice possible author of proclamation⁴⁵. During the same days, Chernali (supposedly Charnali) village school was burnt. The government started active investigation to detect the authors of proclamation⁴⁶.

Soviet government tried not to divulge such facts, thus special commissions did not prove resistance of people⁴⁷.



Fig. 2. The first women, who removed chador
(ASS, CSA, photo fund, description 1, photo 20)

The government gradually made its policy tougher. In 1926 it was prohibited to teach law of God, later in 1929 according to the special governmental statement, general education became mandatory and at the same time spiritual educational institutions were prohibited to implement educational activities⁴⁸, thus, religious traditions were transferred in oral manner. Accordingly, some different interpretations followed this process.

It also shall be noted that the documentary exactly fixes ideological signs of chador burning process. It is enough to quote the slogans, presented at the meeting to understand Soviet antireligious policy: ‘Religion is peoples’ enemy’, ‘Down with the chador slave heritage’, ‘Down with the chador, polygamy, early marriages and bride-

⁴⁴ Ibid. File 2a. P. 7.

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Fund P-1. List 1. File 232. P. 13, 16.

⁴⁸ *Čxartišvili I. Antireligiuri bržola sak’art’veloši*. Tbilisi: “Mecniereba”, 1982. P. 182-196.

money'. The first slogan clearly shows that the state doctrine is against all religions. The second and the third slogans clearly show rejection of Islam rules. The documentary, discussed by us, shows the importance of chador removal process and participation of top public figures in this procedure.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, from the presented material, the reasons and factors, the combination of which led to the mass uprising of 1929, were identified. The results of the research proved once again that despite the various methods used to intimidate the believers, the government was powerless to suppress the religious feelings of the people.

Chador removal, women emancipation and related 'successful activities' became the basis of the further 'brilliant victory' of Soviet people and 'native Communist party'. The issues related with women emancipation are unknown to the youth of the twenty first century impeding their full understanding of their legal condition, explaining that their future legal condition depends on their free choice and active inclusion into civil and political processes.

All regions of Georgia are characterized with a rich cultural heritage, unacceptable for the Soviet reality, which aim was to create a unified like-minded 'Soviet citizen' (Homo Sovieticus). That is why, the Soviet ideology forced Georgian art in the light of the Soviet ideology to show Georgian ethnological culture as the impediment of Georgia development, but, in reality, the Georgian artists created a rich visual evidence of the ancient Georgian spiritual and material culture for the future generations.

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