

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL-CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE BLACK SEA AREA: TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS (THE LATE 18TH AND FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURIES)

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ABSTRACT

This study represents the first ever attempt to assess the degree to which the Christian historical-cultural heritage of the Black Sea area has been preserved to the present day and identify the reasons as to why that extent varies so much, with some of the temples being well-preserved (those in Abkhazia) and others lying in ruins (those north of the area between the Psou River and the modern-day resort city of Anapa). The authors' use of the historical-comparative method and extensive application of the method of comparison of historical facts. The authors conclude by inferring that the principal reason behind the destruction of Orthodox monuments in the historical-cultural heritage of the Black Sea area was the activity of Islamic extremists during the period between the 1830s and 1850s, as part of their struggle against Christianity as a phenomenon.

Keywords: Black Sea area, Abkhazia, historical-cultural heritage, Byzantine temples, Islam, Christianity, Paganism

LA DISTRUZIONE DEL PATRIMONIO STORICO-CULTURALE CRISTIANO DELL'AREA DEL MAR NERO: TENDENZE E CARATTERISTICHE (TARDO '700 E PRIMA METÀ DELL'800)

SINTESI

Lo studio rappresenta il primo tentativo di valutare l'attuale stato di conservazione del patrimonio storico-culturale cristiano nell'area del Mar Nero e identificare le ragioni dei grandi contrasti riscontrati tra alcuni templi molto ben conservati (quelli di Abcasia) e altri completamente in rovina (i templi al Nord dell'area tra il fiume Psou e la città turistica moderna di Anapa). In base ai risultati dello studio, nel quale si sono avvalsi del metodo storico-comparativo e di una vasta applicazione del metodo di raffronto di fatti storici, gli autori concludono che il motivo principale della distruzione dei monumenti ortodossi nel patrimonio storico-culturale dell'area del Mar Nero è stata l'attività degli estremisti islamici nel periodo tra il 1830 e il 1850 come parte della loro lotta contro il fenomeno del cristianesimo.

Parole chiave: area del Mar Nero, Abcasia, patrimonio storico-culturale, templi bizantini, islam, cristianesimo, paganesimo

INTRODUCTION

During the period of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the examined portion of the Black Sea area was inhabited (from north to south) by such tribes as the Natukhai, Shapsugs, Ubykhs, Jigets, and Abkhaz (Fig. 1). These tribes, in varying proportions, professed paganism, Christian beliefs, and, increasingly, Islam. Note that with the Natukhai, Shapsugs, and Ubykhs, due to closeness to the Turkish fortress of Anapa, Islam initially was professed chiefly among their noble mountaineer clans, which contributed to the more intensive spread of the religion. It was these nobles who, led by a desire to regain their former status in mountaineer society, which they had lost during the civil war of 1785, sought to promote the ethics and forms of governance in alignment with the precepts of the Quran.

The Jigets and the Principality of Abkhazia retained the feudal aristocratic form of government. The year 1810 marked the start of the process of incorporating Abkhazia into the Russian Empire. An autonomous principality all along since then, Abkhazia would, eventually, go on to be annexed by the Russians in the mid-1860s (Lakoba et al., 1991).

Somewhat different from the afore-mentioned tribes of the Black Sea area were the Samurzakan, who lived along the border with Georgia, spoke a dialect influenced by Mingrelian, and almost exclusively professed Christianity.

The afore-noted originality of the tribes which inhabited the Black Sea area was the principal factor in the attitude towards Christian monuments in their territories.

The study's chronological range is as follows. The lower limit is the year 1785, associated with the civil war in the area, which brought about modifications in the existing system of government and changes in the locals' religious beliefs as a consequence of Islam being promoted among them. The upper limit is the mid-19th century, when the strife of Islamic extremists against Christianity in the area was over.

And here is the geographical range covered by the study. The historical material under examination deals with the littoral portion of the Black Sea area from Anapa to Abkhazia inclusive.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In writing this article, the authors made use of reports from archaeological expeditions, sources of personal



Figure 1: A map of the area's tribal formations

origins from travelers and emissaries from the period of the Caucasus War, as well as scholarly publications and some reference literature related to the issue under study. Among the materials left behind by travelers and emissaries, of particular interest are the diary notes of Englishman James Bell, French Swiss Frédéric Dubois de Montperreux, and Pole Teofil Łapiński.

The work carried out by the authors is based on the principle of historicism. The fact that some of the temples have been destroyed in one portion of the area under study and some have been preserved in the other is viewed as the result of specific social-historical conditions shaped by a set of deciding external factors. The authors' use of the historical-comparative method and extensive application of the method of comparison of historical facts made it possible for them to identify the key preconditions for the period's phenomena and reveal the cause-and-effect relationships between them.

An important characteristic of this study is that no historical events related to the destruction of Christian cult buildings have been reflected in the related sources. The mountaineer tribes, which knew no writing, could simply not have left any written accounts of them, while the related testimonies of Europeans who visited the region are quite fragmentary and scant. This lack of information is filled, to one degree or another, by findings from archaeological research, various indirect testimonies from preceding works, as well as logically substantiated hypotheses.

DISCUSSION

It is worth noting that the topic explored by this study has never been the subject of serious scholarly discussion. Also, for a long time, the region remained closed to travelers, i.e. someone capable of supplying detailed descriptions of the area. Things changed only in the late 18th century, when the area's population began to come under the impact of first the Ottoman Empire and then the Russians. The fact that there are no sources from the medieval and late-medieval periods may well suggest that Christian temples must have been destroyed here as a result of military conflicts or natural disasters.

There have been numerous archaeological expeditions around the area's cult sites, but nearly none of them has reported solid scientific evidence as to when a particular temple was destroyed (Natolochnaya et al., 2015).

RESULTS

In the territory of the present-day Black Sea area from Anapa to Abkhazia, there is not a single *undamaged* medieval temple that has survived to this day. During the period between the 10th and 12th centuries, this territory was part of the Zikh diocese in the Constantinople Orthodox Church. Afterwards, the Europeans would long



Figure 2: The ruins of the temple in Loo; its present-day condition

call the locals 'Zikhians' or 'Zikhs' (de Montperreux, 2010). For many centuries, the Zikh diocese had been having its cultural impact across the Trans-Kuban Region as well. Much of the cultural influence on the region also came from Christian Georgia.

Since the 1740s, attempts to restore Christianity among the native population of the North Caucasus had been made by the Ossetian metochion, later known as the Ossetian Spiritual Commission, which had been in operation, including in Abkhazia, with a few intervals up until 1860 (Savenko, 2011).

The influence of Orthodox Christianity was founded on numerous temples and monasteries from the medieval period, which have reached our day with varying degrees of preservedness.

The density of the concentration of temples in the examined territory of the Black Sea area was significant. Across the coastline alone, which extends 230 kilometers from Sochi to the southern part of Abkhazia, there currently are 26 medieval temples which have been preserved to varying degrees, including 10 temples in Greater Sochi, 6 in Jigeti, and 10 in Abkhazia (Dbar, 2006).

It is worth noting that some of the Christian cult structures were situated within the area of fortresses. This study's sample incorporates only the temples outside fortress compounds, almost all of them located within the littoral zone.

Among the temples in Greater Sochi, the one in the best condition is located in the vicinity of the settlement of Loo. The temple of Loo has been explored in depth by Soviet archaeologist Yu.N. Voronov, according to whom "The temple in Loo is situated 2 km from the sea coast at an altitude of about 200 meters. The monument's south wall is destroyed completely, while its west and east walls are, likewise, badly damaged by time. Only its north wall still retains its former height. The temple's outer dimensions are 12.25 m wide by 21 m long. The



Figure 3: The exterior of the temple of Loo during the 11th–14th centuries



Figure 4: The Byzantine temple in the rural locality of Lesnoe (the basilica Lesnoe-2)

walls' thickness is up to 1.1 meters" (Voronov, 1979).

On the strength of descriptions from archaeological expeditions, the temple's exterior has been reproduced through reconstruction to give one an idea of what it looked like during the period of its cult activity.

According to archaeologists, the walls of the temple in Loo were made of reworked limestone blocks and sandstone and slate slabs. Sandstone was used to face the entire outer surface of the walls, as well as the windows and the door. The blocks made up the bonding foundation of the pilasters piercing the walls. The solution was a mixture of very coarse sand and selected pea gravel. An important part of the solution was special organic-inorganic composite material which incorporated such organic supplements as milk, egg-white, rice water, etc. It is the use of these supplements that made for amazingly sturdy brickwork, which was virtually immune to moisture and time (Vinogradov et al., 2013).

The rural locality of Lesnoe (in Adlersky City District in Greater Sochi) contains the ruins of two Byzantine temples. The picture below features the basilica Lesnoe-2.

The temple is believed to have been built somewhere between the 7th and 8th centuries. It is a three-aisled and triapsidal structure, with a narthex before the main (west) entrance. The surviving parts of the wall were put together using the ashlar masonry technique. The basilica is about 18.25 m in length, including the narthex; the reconstructed width of its three aisles is 16 m. The structure functioned as a cult building until the 14th–15th centuries.

Additionally, here are some of the other temples in the area which are in ruinate condition: those in Khosta, Lesnoe, Kashtany, on Mount Akhun, underneath Mount Yefrem, and others (these are located in Adlersky City District and Khostinsky City District in Greater Sochi).

We could presume that the temples in Loo, Lesnoe,

and other places in the Black Sea area were destroyed by a devastating earthquake. But this immediately raises a number of questions: 1) Why were the temples not restored afterwards?; 2) What must the power of an earthquake be for it to be able to knock down a temple built with special limestone brickwork, with walls of a thickness of no less than 1 meter; 3) Why did the earthquake not destroy any other temples located relatively not that far from the destroyed ones?

To answer these questions, we need to compare the destroyed historical-cultural heritage of the Black Sea area with its counterpart in Abkhazia.

The geographical territory of Greater Sochi borders on that of Abkhazia. In contrast with those in Sochi, Abkhazia's early-medieval and medieval cult structures have been preserved in all their original splendor. Below are two drawings of the temples in Pitsunda and Dranda. These are the earliest drawings which date back to the 1830s.

The temples across Sochi and Abkhazia are dated to similar chronological periods, and the structures belong to the same architectural school.

There were temples from the Eastern-Byzantine school of architecture throughout the Black Sea area, including Abkhazia. Its center was Trebizond. Here are some of the school's major characteristics. The mainstream Syrian architectural tradition predetermined the massive, ponderous, and compact character of the school's cult structures, which were based on simple geometric shapes. The building mass was little articulated, faceted apses being an exception. The structures had smaller window openings and were predominated by blank surface walls. Most of the time, they stood isolated and were situated on elevated ground and hills. The interiors of Trebizond's buildings employed pillars for support, which were mostly cross-shaped, massive, and heavyish and divided the inner space into separate



Figure 5: The temple in Pitsunda; a lithograph after a drawing by Frédéric DuBois De Montperreux, 1833

parts, which made it look compartmentalized. The main construction material was ashlar stone. So, we have every reason to believe that in building temples in this area they used the same construction materials, forms, and techniques.

If, assumingly, the Byzantine temple in Lesnoe was razed to the ground as a result of an earthquake with a maximum magnitude of 10, then, according to seismologists, the shocks within 30 kilometers of the epicenter would have had to be no less than 5–6 points in magnitude.

The ruins of the temple in Lesnoe are in the vicinity of the road from Adler to Krasnaya Polyana, and the distance between Adler and Gagra is 30 km along the coastline. This means that in the event of a major earthquake in the area of Adler, the temple in Gagra would have been destroyed too, albeit not even the roof of its narthex was damaged (Fig. 8). Quite logically, this leads us to conclude that the destruction of Byzantine temples in the Black Sea area was not caused by a natural cataclysm.

The drawings of the temples in Abkhazia contain one more very important detail – there is some vegeta-

tion shown, whose age could be estimated, considering the characteristics of the formation of the ground, at 50 years. Which means the desolation of the place began in the late 18th century.

So, what really was going on in the littoral areas?

In 1785, a civil war broke out in the Russian Black Sea area and Abkhazia, which was provoked by an uprising led by Sheikh Mansour in Chechnya (Cherkasov *et al.*, 2015a). During the war, new religious rules began to be instituted in these Christian territories, with the Quran getting ground alongside the Bible, the Psalms of David, and the Book of the Evangelists (Cherkasov *et al.*, 2014).

The process of the implantation of Islam in the area was going in an augmented fashion and with substantial amplitude. There started to appear lots of mullahs in the territories, with increasingly much of the trade being conducted with the mountaineers – adherents of Islam.

Polish emissary Teofil Łapiński, who fought alongside the mountaineers during the last period of the Caucasus War, noted that “the clergy in the land of the Adyge can be divided into two classes. The first one incorporates the old Christian-Pagan clergy, called the Jiour,



Figure 6: *The Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God in Dranda; a lithograph after a drawing by A. Nordmann, 1835*

who, being illiterate, have never enjoyed much respect and have, therefore, never been able to compete with their Mahometan counterpart, with its mysterious Quran replete with wisdom, which, according to the Adyghe, was written by almighty Tkha himself. These old priests hold their church services and rites openly only in certain places on the shore of the Black Sea; and most of the time they pray in secret; the new Mahometan clergy hate them and persecute them" (Łapiński, 1995).

One should not take T. Łapiński's personal evaluations of the mountaineers' old faith and its inconsistencies seriously, for Łapiński fought on the side of the

Moslem Adyghe against Russia. What matters is that Teofil Łapiński describes this in the late 1850s – i.e. it took just 70 years from the moment the Quran was introduced into circulation in the area for its residents' former religion to become the object of persecution virtually throughout the region.

It is worth noting that the only written record outlining the circumstances of the destruction of the region's historical-cultural heritage belongs to Edmund Spencer. He visited the Black Sea coast in 1836 and traveled from Gelendzhik to Mingrelia along the seashore. While staying in the land of the Shapsugs, he made the following



Figure 7: A diagram map of the area's major historical-cultural heritage sites

notes in his diary: "Since the Russians have taken possession of the old church and convent at Vadran, and fortified them, I have been assured that the Abasians

have destroyed several interesting remains of antiquity, such as churches and convents of the earliest Christians, under the apprehension that the invaders might transform them into forts, and thus enslave them. This demolition is the more to be regretted as there is every reason for believing that many contained records of high value and great antiquity" (Spencer, 2008).

It is worth noting that in 1836 there were a great many non-Moslems among the mountaineers in the area. The destruction of Christian monuments must have caused controversy among the Christian-Pagan clergy and their congregation. A role here was played by the Islamic version of a military-political reason for the destruction of Orthodox churches and monasteries. To be able to effectively sort this issue out, we need to examine the geographic location of those structures – say, the one in Loo. As we have mentioned above, the temple is 200 meters above sea level and 2 km from the seashore. Sending landing forces down there meant a virtual death sentence for them, for they would be easily encircled by the enemy. This means it was totally impossible to use the temple as a military site or a strongpoint during the



**Figure 8: The Temple of Saint Hypatius of Gagra (the early 6th century)
An engraving after a drawing by Frédéric Dubois de Montperreux, 1833**



Figure 9: An ancient cross hanging on a tree near the village of Socha

Caucasus War. On top of that, temples in the Black Sea area were small in dimensions (no more than 100 square meters), which meant their garrison could not have consisted of more than 10 men. Thus, the region's cult structures were not likely to pose any military threat.

The 1830s were marked by the arrival of foreign secret agents in the Black Sea area. The interference of foreigners in the affairs of the mountaineers began almost immediately following the Treaty of Adrianople. Apart from foreigners, to destabilize the situation in the Black Sea area, they also used individuals from the local population. At first, the job of the emissaries was to spread misinformation and provide advice, but in a short while it was already more of abetting a popular uprising (Berzhe, 1881). The emissaries promised support from the English government, Ottoman Empire, and Egyptian Pasha. This support manifested in the gratuitous distribution of arms, lead, and powder (Berzhe, 1881). Putting all of these subversive projects into effect required considerable finances. These finances were coming in, along with secret agents, with enviable regularity from Turkey by sea (Karataev, 2014).

To illustrate the validity of our hypothesis regarding the destruction of the area's Byzantine temples through the human factor, we shall give you one more example – a temple in the area of a fortress in Gagra. The settlement of Gagra was part of the territory of the tribe of Jigets. The Jigets bordered Abkhazia along the Bzyb River and the Ubykhs along the Khosta River. As you may know, the area from the mouth of the Kuban River to Poti officially became part of Russia following the Russo-Turkish War of 1828–1829. As early as 1830, Russia brought a garrison into the area of the medieval fortress in Gagra and kept it there up until the Crimean campaign, i.e. until 1854 when the Russians left Gagra. Over the course of the existence of the Gagra fortification, the Russian leadership was able to enter into a dialog with the Jigets and, most importantly, the Jiget gentry. There is reason to believe that the relationship developed between the Russians and

the Jigets contributed to the temple being preserved during the period between 1854 and 1864, i.e. up until Mujirism – the mountaineers' exodus to Turkey.

Within the context of this subject, it is important to clear up the issue of the attitude of the mountaineer princes (the pshi) and nobles (the uorks) towards the outcomes of the civil war of 1785. One of its most significant effects was permission to profess Islam in the littoral areas, something not allowed before. The other crucial outcome was the fact that the civil war deprived the mountaineer gentry – the Natukhai, Ubykhs, and Shapsugs – of the rights they had enjoyed for centuries. The reins of power shifted to the people's assemblies, where the gentry only had the right to vote alongside the commoners.

These radical changes did not, obviously, suit the princes and nobles within the mountaineer community. Teofil Łapiński notes that the gentry remembered with pain their lost greatness and tried to always hold together (Łapiński, 1995).

The gentry's new status did not just manifest in their disgruntlement. There are numerous testimonies to the fact that the littoral princes and nobles had themselves enlisted in the Russian service during the military confrontation of the Caucasus War (Cherkasov et al., 2015c, ADACS, Cherkasov et al., 2015b). On top of that, they even solicited the Russian leadership to reinstate serfdom in the littoral areas, i.e. help them restore their authority (Cherkasov et al., 2014).

Concerning the gentry's attitude towards Islam, of interest is the testimony of English emissary James Bell about Ubykh prince Ali Akhmet Oblagou, who carried a Spanish sword as a weapon and had never been spotted by foreigners saying a Moslem prayer, and was even suspected to adhere to the old faith (Bell, 2007).

J. Bell also left a detailed description of a cross (Fig. 9) hanging on a tree on Mount Aoubla-Arnykh in the vicinity of the village of Sasha (today's Sochi): "Here I came to the object of my curiosity, pendent from the arm of a huge old oak, to which it was attached by an iron wedge. The accompanying sketch can best convey some idea of this curious relic of antiquity and undoubted proof of Christianity having once here prevailed, as well as of the locality chosen for it. The hooks were the recipients of many a various offering, which were scrupulously left there till borne off piecemeal by the elements. Some rags of the last showed that such offerings had not long since been made" (Bell, 2007).

The cross was in immediate proximity to the Russian fortification of Navaginskoye. The Ubykhs, fearing that the Russians might attempt to found on it a claim to the area, suggested taking it down and moving it to a safer location, but Ubykh prince Ali Akhmet Oblagou rose in opposition of that and ordered it be protected where it had been set up. By defending the cross, Ali Akhmet Oblagou referred to it directly as a relic of the faith of his remote ancestry (Bell, 2007).

At the same time, many faithful Circassians observed only the external rules of Islam. On the one hand, they totally quit drinking wine, but, on the other, that did not prevent them from consuming the other kind of alcohol – mead, a beverage made with honey and fermented grape syrup. The mountaineers consumed local vodka as well (Bell, 2007).

Naturalist Frédéric Dubois de Montperreux notes: “Only the Circassian princes and gentry – who are Moslems – observe Mahometan rites, but they do it only for the sake of salving their conscience and with total indifference; and they often make fun of all those ceremonies” (de Montperreux, 2010).

In our view, the fact that a portion of the area’s princes and nobles adopted Islam had to do with their attempt to retain control of the majority of the local population, by leaning on the Quran as well as some knowledge of the nature of social relations in Turkey, which was exemplary to them.

The events of 1785 associated with the forced modification of the system of governance urged the mountaineer gentry to look for allies. The local gentry joining hands with the Russian leadership started to become a regular practice throughout the region. Teofil Łapiński notes that very few uorks and pshi did not collaborate with the Russian leadership, namely the clans of Tsatsiok in Djougba, Abat on the Abin, and Berzek and Brak in Ubykhia (Łapiński, 1995).

The events of the civil war of 1785 were preceded by the Treaty of Georgievsk signed in 1783 between the Georgian kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti and the Russian Empire. Subject to the treaty, tsar Irakli II would recognize the patronage of Russia and partially discontinue the pursuit of an independent foreign policy, pledging that the kingdom would faithfully serve the Russian empress with its military. Catherine II, in turn, would act as a guarantor of Kartli-Kakheti’s independence and territorial integrity. Georgia would be granted total sovereignty. The two sides went on to exchange envoys (Yuzhakov, 1903).

Once signed, the treaty was in force for 3–4 years. Then there was considerable resistance on the part of Turkey. Under its influence, there was an increase in incursions into the Georgian lands of the Lezgins from Dagestan and the Akhaltsikhe pasha. There was a sharp rise in the activity of murids in Dagestan and Chechnya; the year 1785 saw the initiation of a civil war on the coast, including in Abkhazia.

During the period of 1802–1804, eastern and western Georgia became part of the Russian Empire, and 1810 saw the start of the process of incorporating the Principality of Abkhazia into the Russian Empire.

In 1822, the rule of Abkhazia was passed over to pro-Russian prince Mikhail Shervashidze. However, complicated relations within the prince’s family resulted, 8 years later, in the emergence of a movement for making Abkhazia a territory under Turkish control. That is what, in our view, the civil war of 1785 was all about.

Prince Shervashidze was, however, able to prevent this from happening, as he kept things under control until the arrival of Russian troops, which effectively quelled the movement. Using a minor detachment of the Russian army and his Abkhaz militia, M. Shervashidze was able to secure the area against the activity of Islamic radicals. Thus, thanks to the efforts of the Russian leadership and prince Mikhail Shervashidze, Abkhazia’s historical-cultural heritage was preserved.

While the situation in Abkhazia stabilized, Islamic radicals were still active in the northern part of the Black Sea area. Among the most prominent of them was one of Shamil’s naibs, Magomet Amin, who, essentially, was in charge of the littoral areas during the period of 1848–1859. Here is how Head of the Postal Service of the Ottoman Empire Ismail Pasha characterized Magomet Amin in 1856: “...this man is a fanatical mullah, just recently a figure of consequence thanks to the spread of Mohammedanism, but his influence has totally withered away now and he no longer has any authority to wield; besides, the naib is an irreconcilable enemy of any Christian, so we must be on guard for him almost as much as the Russians do, should he, God forbid, become powerful again” (Łapiński, 1995).

A testimony to the activity of newly converted Moslem mountaineers, Magomet Amin’s henchmen, who destroyed Christian monuments across the area from the mouth of the Kuban River to the Shapsukho River (the lands of the Natukhai and Shapsugs), was left by Teofil Łapiński: “There are still quite many gravestones around here with inscriptions in Latin on them and plain crosses hewn from solid rock or made of wood. The new Moslems are on a constant hunt for these symbols and are doing their best to destroy them” (Łapiński, 1995).

Following the capture of Shamil in 1859 and Mahomet Amin’s flight to Turkey, the situation in the area changed. According to T. Łapiński, “The residents of the littoral area no longer wanted to hear about either the naib [Magomet Amin] or Sefer [Sefer-pasha, the Sultan’s vicegerent in Circassia]; adherents of Christian and Pagan rituals, they hated Mohammedanism emanating from Dagestan and Constantinople alike” (Łapiński, 1995).

CONCLUSION

The local population of the Black Sea area, prior to Islam spreading around there, had, to one degree or another, been adherents of Christian, as well as Pagan, beliefs. The major attributes of Christian worship among the area’s locals are the medieval temples from the Byzantine period and religious paraphernalia related to Christianity.

As a result of the civil war of 1785, the region had to go through the process of change in the religious beliefs of its residents, which involved the forced implantation of Islam in the area, the Ottoman Empire’s Caucasus

policy being a defining factor in the situation in the region.

Islamic expansion in the region was characterized by the total destruction of Christian cult structures across the littoral area from Anapa to Abkhazia, while temples in Abkhazia and Jigeti were left undamaged. The differences in the magnitude of destruction in the various parts of the Black Sea area were associated not only with the efforts of the Russian leadership in Abkhazia but the stance assumed by the ruler of the Principality of Abkhazia, Mikhail Shervashidze.

Systematic destruction of Orthodox sanctuaries by Islamic radicals took place during the period between the 1830s and 1850s. The process involved more than one stage and had a number of distinctive characteristics. The first period (the 1830s) was characterized by the destruction of temples under the pretense of pre-

venting the Russians from using them as military defensive fortifications. During the second period (the 1840s–1850s), every single Christian monument in the area's historical-cultural heritage was subjected to destruction.

The principal cause behind the destruction of Orthodox monuments in the historical-cultural heritage of the Russian Black Sea area was the purposeful activity of Islamic extremists.

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POVZETEK

Kulturnozgodovinska dediščina ruskega ozemlja ob Črnem morju je bogata s spomeniki iz preteklosti, začeni z velikim številom najdišč prazgodovinskih naselbin v regiji. Med najpomembnejše zidane spomenike tega področja se uvrščajo templji iz bizantinskega obdobja. Samo v Sočiju z okolico, ki se razteza preko 100 km daleč vzdolž obale Črnega morja, je deset templjev, ki so bili uničeni v začetku 19. stoletja. S pričujočo študijo smo kot prvi poskusili podati oceno, kako dobro ali slabo ohranjena je danes krščanska kulturnozgodovinska dediščina na črnemorskem področju, in ugotoviti, zakaj so stopnje ohranjenosti tako različne, saj so nekateri od templjev v zelo dobrem stanju (denimo tisti v Abhaziji), od drugih pa dandanes ostajajo samo razvaline (denimo templji severno od območja med reko Psou in sodobnim letoviškim mestom Anapa). Raziskave so pokazale, da so bili dogodki po letu 1785 odsev težnje otomanskega cesarstva, da bi razširilo svojo oblast nad krščanske dežele goratih predelov črnomskega področja, zaradi česar je zoper tamkajšnjo krščansko-pogansko duhovščino nastopilo z represivnimi ukrepi. Avtorji prispevka so na podlagi izsledkov prišli do sklepa, da je bilo uničenje pravoslavnih spomenikov kulturnozgodovinske dediščine v pokrajinah ob Črnem morju predvsem posledica delovanja islamskih skrajnežev v obdobju med letoma 1830 in 1850 kot del boja proti krščanstvu nasploh.

Ključne besede: področje ob Črnem morju, Abhazija, kulturnozgodovinska dediščina, bizantinski templji, islam, krščanstvo, poganstvo

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