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Peculiarities of the Development of Migration Processes in Georgian Autonomous Regions (Adjara Autonomous Republic)

Adjara, the historical province of Georgia, was claimed the Autonomic Republic within Georgia on July 16, 1921. One of the reasons of its autonomy was majority of Georgian Muslims there, and loyalty toward them from government of Turkey at that time. Soviet Russia took into account Turkey's wish and insisting desire. Adjara has the status of Autonomic Republic under the present constitution as well. Due to the religious factor, fertility and natural increase rate was relatively high as compared to other regions of Georgia during the whole XX century. For example, in 1960 natural increase amounted to 24 pro mil in Adjara, in Georgia in average to 18 pro mil, and these indices were 4,5 and 0,1 pro mil relatively in 2005. Adjara highland was characterized by especially high natural increase rate. Due to scarce agricultural resources the government was organizing the transfer of the "excessive population" to other regions of Georgia, where there was the extreme deficit of labor resources. Therefore, during the whole XX century, Adjara was carrying on the function of the "demographic donor", which was of great importance for normalization of demographic development of Georgia's demographically depressed regions.

After the disintegration of the USSR, in the whole Georgia, and in Adjara among them, deep demographic crisis developed due to the economic collapse. General natural increase rate reduced by 2,7 times. At the same time, intensive migration processes took place, which finally resulted in decrease of population number in this region.

According to the population census in 1989, Adjara's population numbered 392,4 thousand, and 376 thousand by population census in 2002. In the period between censuses more than

50 000 people migrated away from Georgia, mainly of not Georgian nationality, that considerably changed the ethnic structure of the population. (Table 1)

In the period of the deep economic crisis after the USSR disintegration, that is still going on with more or less intensity, intense stationary migration as well as labor migration is taking place in the whole Georgia and Adjara too. This was caused by disastrous decrease of demand on labor force in labor market of Adjara.

Table 1

Changes in nationality structure of population in Autonomic Republic of Adjara 1959-2002 years.(Percent in total)¹

Year Nationality	1959	1970	1979	1989	2002
Georgian	72,8	76,5	80,1	82,8	93,4
Abkhazian	0,5	0,4	0,4	0,4	0,4
Russian	13,4	11,6	9,8	7,7	2,4
Ukrainian	2,4	2,3	1,5	1,5	0,3
Armenian	6,4	5,0	4,6	4,0	2,3
Greek	2,3	2,2	2,0	1,9	0,6
Other nationalities	2,2	2,0	1,6	1,7	0,6
Total	100	100	100	100	100

We conducted the sociological survey of labor migration in seaside regions of Adjara and t. Batumi, using the method of “substitute respondents”. There were inquired 350 respondents, migrants’ family members and relatives, who were well informed on employment and lifestyle of their family members, migrated abroad for seeking jobs. It was revealed that labor migration flow is mainly directed to five countries: Russia, Greece, Germany, USA, Turkey.

Table 2

Migration direction specified distribution of labor migrants (Percent in total)

Year	Russia	Greece	Germany	USA	Turkey	England	Spain	Italy	other European countries	Total
2007	38,1	13,5	13,1	12,9	8,6	2,2	2,4	1,3	7,9	100

¹ According to the data of population general censuses of relevant years.

Analogous researched we conducted in 2003 too. (400 “substitute respondents”). The comparative study revealed no essential changes in migration directions. The part of Russia in the whole migration flow was diminished, while Turkey’s part was increased. (2004 -4,9%; 2007 -8,6%).

The trend of decrease of Russia’s part and increase of Turkey’s part in the labor migration flow was noticed in the labor migration of Georgia as well. The reason for this is imposition of visa regimen traffic between Russia and Georgia, and on the contrary, legitimating non-visa traffic with Turkey. Reduction of labor migration to Russia was the result of developed there migrant- phobia, turned also into ethno -phobia to Georgians.

In spite of established direct traffic with neighboring Turkey, Georgia holds only the fifth place in Turkey’s labor migration flow. In the first years of the 1990-s deep crisis, Turkey was flooded by the immense wave of labor migrants from Georgia. However, this flow considerably diminished in following years. According to 2003 year survey, only 4,9% of Adzharia ’s labor migrants were working in Turkey. This was caused by the low price for labor force in Turkey labor market, different from the Turkish population mentality, and partly, by existing then visa traffic. It should also be mentioned that extended economic crisis in Georgia and strained political relations with Russia in some way forced young people in Georgia to study English hastily, as a foreign language, instead of Russian. This has become totally widespread in Georgia; it also strengthened Georgian labor migrants position in the labor market of western countries, and consequently, reduced providing Russian labor market with labor force from Georgia. However, labor migrants’ role for Russia will be important for the long period.

The survey revealed that very highly educated contingent is leaving Adjara for job hunting, 55% out of which has he higher education, however, most of them are employed in rather nonqualified, irrelevant for their specialties jobs; 86% of them manages to send some part of

the incomes to Georgia, which in average makes 290 \$ monthly. The sum, sent from the foreign countries, is mostly used for providing the population with the living minimum, though there can be noticed the trend of large money orders, used later for small business investments.

The survey showed that labor migration from Adjara as well as from other regions of Georgia, is rather steady and it will intensively go on until the complete economic rehabilitation of the Autonomic Republic.

Therefore, the influence of the population migration on the quantity and also qualitative indices of the population and labor resources of Autonomic Republic of Adjara is of crucial importance. If it could not create the circumstances for depopulation in the Adjara's seaside and highland regions before the period of the crisis in the 1990-s, the condition was radically changed during the crisis: the population number started to decrease. The qualitative worsening of labor resources was mainly caused by the labor migration. Supposedly, this excessive migration will go on rather intensively until the revival of Adjara takes place.