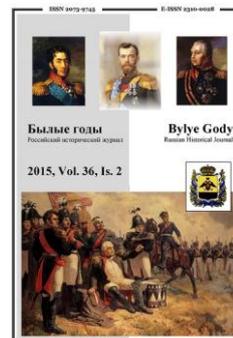




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Ethno-Demographic Processes in the North-East Black Sea Area in the 19th – Early 21st Centuries (through the Example of Greater Sochi)

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Abstract

This article examines ethno-demographic processes in the north-east Black Sea area, more specifically the territory of Greater Sochi, in the 19th – early 21st centuries.

In writing the article, the authors have relied on archive materials from the archives department of the administration of the city of Novorossiysk and the archives department of the administration of the city of Sochi. The authors have consulted reference pre-revolution literature, Soviet-era and present-day population censuses, as well as the findings of present-day research studies.

The methodological basis of this study are the principles of historicism, objectivity, and systemicity, which helps to get an insight into the general patterns and regional peculiarities in the demographic development of the major ethnicities in the north-east Black Sea area in the 19th-20th centuries.

The authors touch upon the process of colonization of the territory and its ethnic composition. In the end, the authors come to the conclusion that the ethno-demographic picture of Greater Sochi had been forming in a complicated fashion. As a consequence, in the second half of the 19th century, following the Caucasian War, the territory had to be repopulated. Resettlement flows from different locations in the Russian Empire and overseas had formed by 1917 an ethno-picture that featured Russians and Armenians as two principal ethnicities. The authors note that this picture has not changed in a major way to this day.

Keywords: ethno-demographic processes; Greater Sochi; Black Sea area mountaineers; colonization.

Introduction

The territory of present-day Greater Sochi stretches 109 km along the coast of the Black Sea. The area is currently inhabited by 400 thousand people, who represent 100 ethnicities. In the early 19th century, the area was inhabited by mountaineer tribes: Shapsugs and Abazins in some parts of and Ubykhs throughout the region. For a long time, this territory had been a zone virtually isolated from external influence, and only in the early 19th century interest in the lands was renewed, due to their annexation to the Russian Empire. After the close of the Caucasian War and the resettlement of mountaineer tribes to Turkey, there began Russian colonization. On the whole, by 1917 the colonization of the region had been completed; however, the Civil War in Russia, political repressions, World War II, and the international situation at the time had been transforming the ethno-demographic situation in the region.

Materials and methods

In writing this article, the authors have employed archive sources from the archives department of the administration of the city of Novorossiysk and that of the city of Sochi. The authors have made use of reference pre-revolutionary literature, as well as data from pre-revolutionary, Soviet, and present-day population censuses. An important source for the study of ethno-demographic processes in the Black Sea area in the first half of the 19th century are first-hand accounts and personal testimonies, namely diary entries and memoirs by numerous envoys, emissaries, and travelers.

In working on the article, the authors have employed the principles of historicism, objectivity, and systemicity, which has helped to get an insight into the general patterns and regional peculiarities in the demographic development of the major ethnicities in the north-east Black Sea area in the 19th-20th centuries. The historicism principle has helped to bring to light historical trends in ethno-demographic processes and examine them in their actual development, the association between the general and the particular, the past and the present. The methodological principle of objectivity realized in this work presupposed exploring all the links in totality, inclusive of the correlation between subjective and objective factors which determined the dynamics of ethno-demographic processes in the region. The principle of systemicity has helped to get a comprehensive insight into the historical process via methods of analysis and synthesis.

Discussion

The earliest materials on the composition and size of the population of the present-day territory of Greater Sochi were gathered back in the period of the Caucasian War (the first half of the 19th century). Those were accounts by travelers, emissaries, and envoys from various countries – F.D. de Montperreux, J.S. Bell, J.A. Longworth, F.F. Tornau, to name a few [13, 14].

The most detailed information on the region's ethno-demographic composition during the pre-revolutionary period is contained in the materials of the 1897 First All-Russian Census. These data were later published in "The Great Encyclopedia" in 1902-1904 [18]. Similar censuses have been conducted during the Soviet and present-day periods.

In characterizing the degree to which the issues has been investigated, we should note that different periods in the region's development have attracted researchers interested in those periods specifically. Thus, for instance, the history of Ubykh society has been studied by V.I. Voroshilov and A.A. Cherkasov [8, 17], the region's pre-revolutionary history by I.A. Tveritinov [12], and the history of the north-east Black Sea area in the New Age by O.V. Natolochnaya, A.M. Mamadaliev, and others [10, 16].

Yet, despite these efforts, the integral ethno-demographical picture of the region is yet to be presented.

Results

There is no credible information on the origins of the population inhabiting Greater Sochi. The mountaineers themselves, however, believed they "were composed of Abazins, Circassians, and Europeans who, according to a legend, had been cast up on a Circassian shore back during the First Crusade" [13, pp: 164]. The First Crusade lasted from 1096 to 1099 and had a definite impact on the region, for Crusader troops did gather around the Constantinople area. Another interesting fact is that by the beginning of the 19th century all the tribal units in the region, despite the attempts at Islamizing the region, had continued to profess Old Testament Christianity [9; 10; 11; 16]. The presence of the above tribes in the area's inhabited localities was mixed. Thus, for instance, the Ubykhs' principal rural locality, Sochipsy (translation: "Sochi" – place, "psy" – river), numbered, according to F.F. Tornau, as many as 450 Abazin and Ubykh and some Turkish families [7, f. 19, s. 8, 9, 13]. Also mixed was the population of inhabited localities in Greater Sochi's Lazarev district, where Ubykhs were close neighbors with Shapsugs. Besides, there also lived 6 thousand Armenians throughout the territory of the mountaineers of the Black Sea area, from Anapa to Gagra. There is no credible information on the size of the mountaineer population, as, based on the mountaineers' belief, counting people was not only useless but sinful [13, pp: 57]. As a consequence, all the information available at this point is of quite an approximate nature and at times highly discrepant. Thus, for instance, Frédéric Dubois de Montperreux estimated the population of Shapsugs (who inhabited the area from Anapa to the River Shakhe) at 200 thousand and that of Ubykhs at 19 thousand people [14, pp: 34]. F.F. Tornau believed that there were as many as 150,000 Shapsugs living in the area and a combined 12,000 Ubykh and Sadz (the Abazin tribe which inhabited the area from Sochi to Gagra) males, with Ubykhs numbering 5-6 thousand [13, pp: 327; 17].

Modern researcher V.I. Voroshilov estimated the Ubykh population at about 50,000, while he agreed with the other assessments as well [8, pp: 47]. Thus, we observe considerable variation in the numbers of residents from the tribe of Ubykhs. Nevertheless, using the above data we can infer an approximate size of the population in the territory of Greater Sochi. If we suppose that by 1830 the Shapsug population was 175 thousand people, who were evenly settled all the way to Anapa, we may estimate the Shapsug population in the territory of the Lazarev district at 50 thousand. The averaged number of Ubykhs would be about 30 thousand and that of Abazins about 15 thousand people. Thus, the population of Greater Sochi at the time would be 95-100 thousand (including up to 1.5 thousand Armenians). After the close of the Caucasian War in 1864, the predominant part of the population presented in this paper resolved to resettle in Turkey, where it

was later assimilated. Only a part of the Shapsugs declined to resettle, who later stayed in the Lazarev district of Greater Sochi.

The systematic reclamation of the coast, and consequently the territory of Greater Sochi, begins following the release of “The Enactment on the Settlement of the Black Area District and the Government Thereof” of March 10, 1866. This helped initiate a large-scale resettlement to this territory (the first wave of resettlement) both from the internal regions of the Russian Empire and Turkey. As a consequence, apart from Russians, there appeared in the territory of present-day Sochi Greeks, Georgians, and Armenians.

The 1897 Census put the population of the Sochi district at 13,153 people – 7,604 males and 5,549 females [18]. Table 1 provides figures on the population of the Sochi district broken down by ethnicities [19].

As of January 1, 1904, the district’s population was 24,084 people [20].

The time of the Stolypin agrarian reform saw the second colonization wave of settlers rushing to the territory of Sochi, which deformed the ethno-demographic image of the population of pre-revolutionary Sochi.

In 1917, the population of the Sochi district was over 70 thousand people, out of whom 62% were Russians (Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians) [6, f. 7, s. 7]. Over the Civil War years, the district’s population decreased by 2 times.

The changes in the dynamics of the size of the Sochi district population are illustrated in Figure 1. As a result of migrations and military confrontation, the district’s population decreased from 70 thousand in 1917 to 33 thousand people in 1922 [1, f. 166, s. 250].

While the June 1919 census put Sochi’s population at 9,054 people, one year later, in June 1920, the figure was 8,405 people, and already 7,752 in September the same year [3, f. 1, s. 2, 3, 12].

That was the effect of population migration.

After the Civil War, the Sochi district was administratively dismantled and there emerged the Sochi region, which included the territories of Sochi, Khosta, Adler, and Pilenkovo (now a part of Abkhazia). The lifting of the martial law in the Black Sea area in 1922, as well as the annexation of the Transcaucasian republics, stabilized the demographic situation in the region.

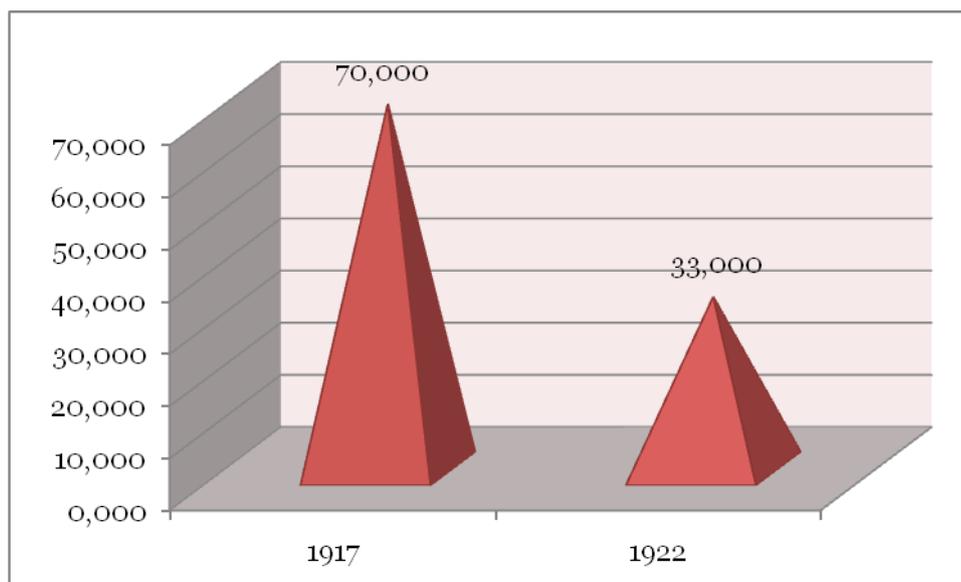


Figure 1. The dynamics of the size of Sochi’s population, people

As a result, by 1927 the region’s population exceeded 54 thousand people [2, f. 153, s. 184-198]. 1934 saw, following Sochi’s getting declared a top-priority construction venue, a sharp increase in the size of the population, which was also facilitated by a flow of migration to the city from the rural areas.

As of January 1, 1940, the region’s total population was 78 thousand people, out of which 53 thousand resided in the city, with the number of inhabited localities in the region (inclusive of the city) totaling 33 [4, f. 36, s. 1-3]. In 1939, the Sochi district had the following ethnic composition: Russians – 66 %, Ukrainians – 14.8 %, Armenians – 5.9 %, Greeks and Georgians – 1.9 % each [5, f. 31, s. 14]. There were major changes in Sochi’s ethnic picture as a result of the policy of collectivization (Figure 2).

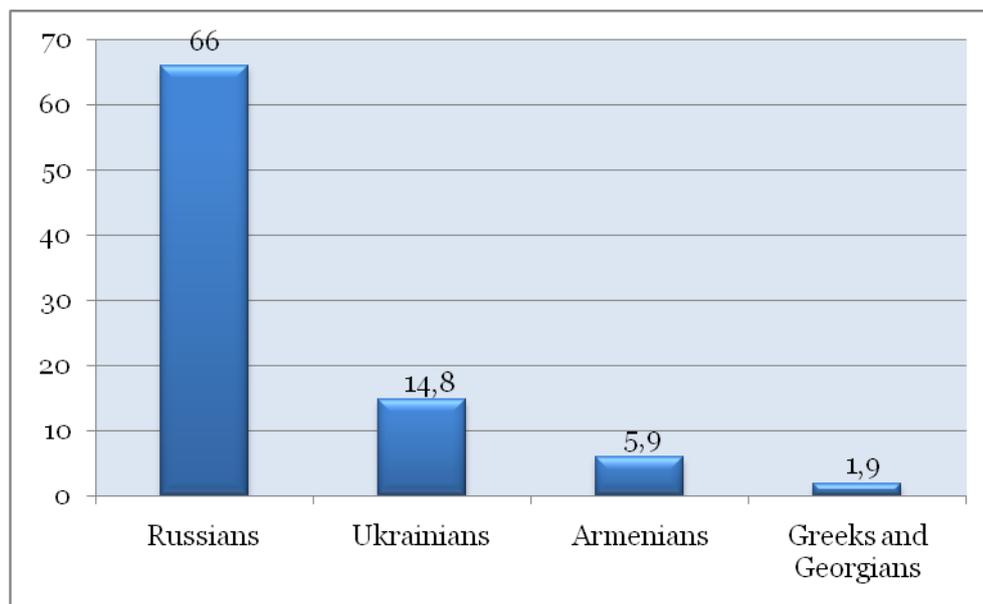


Figure 2. Sochi's ethnic composition as of January 1, 1940, %

As we can see from Figure 2, the region's largest ethnic group is represented by Russians – 66 %. Changes in the dynamics of the size of the Russian portion of the region's population over the period from 1927 to 2010 are illustrated in Figure 3 below.

During the period, an especially heavy toll was taken on the Greeks, whose numbers declined, despite the natural population increase, by more than 3 times (Table 1).

In 1961, Greater Sochi settled administratively into its present-borders. However, the ethno-demographic picture of Greater Sochi remained, nonetheless, virtually unchanged. According to data from the All-Union Census, as of January, 1989, Sochi had a fixed population of 361,2 thousand people (as opposed to 292,3 in January, 1979), with 314,8 thousand (87.2 %) residing in the city and 46,4 thousand people (12.8 %) in the countryside [15].

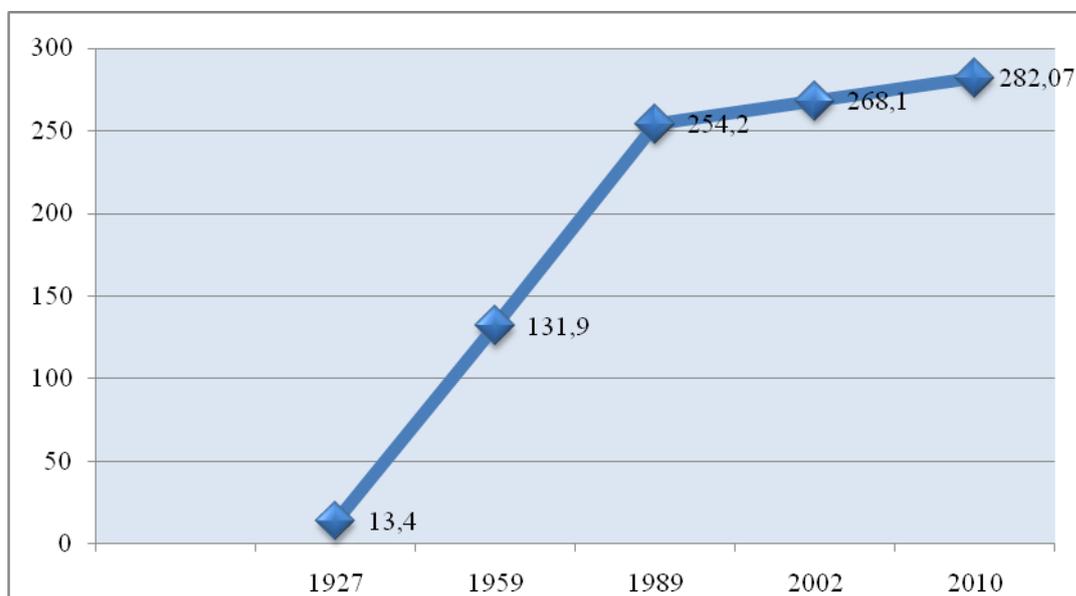


Figure 3. The size of the Russian portion of Greater Sochi's population during the period from 1927 to 2010, thousand people

As of 1992, Sochi's population was 373,5 thousand people and was composed of about 100 nationalities and ethnic groups. The population's ethnic composition was subject to constant changes. We observe constant growth in the population of Greater Sochi on the cusp of the 20th-21st centuries, an average increase of 4 thousand people per year, migration being the main reason behind the population increase. The next snapshot of the ethno-demographic situation in the territory of Greater Sochi was the 2002 All-Russian Census, which put Sochi's fixed population at 397,103.

An analysis of the above data reveals that the absolute size of virtually all ethnic groups residing in Sochi (except for just the Greeks) had grown over the above period.

However, there were major changes in the share of specific ethnic groups in the total population, percentage-wise.

Unfavorable disproportions in migration processes in the territory of Greater Sochi are attested by a special study into migration flows conducted at the laboratory for sociological research at the Sochi Scientific-Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences in June-July, 1992. The study explored statistical data on the special aspects of the migration processes.

Using a special methodology, the researchers examined, on a sampling basis, 1,416 city resident arrival and departure cards for the period between 1951 and 1992 [12].

An analysis of the results revealed that it was the proximity of the republics of the North Caucasus, within the Russian Federation, and the Transcaucasia states to Sochi that governed the increased yearly migration flows into Sochi, their size constantly rising. In the first instance, this pertains to Georgia (Abkhazia), Armenia, and a number of regions in the North Caucasus.

The last detailed ethno-demographic snapshot was made during the 2010 All-Russian Census [21]. The census revealed a sharp decline in the number of Ukrainians – from 14,5 thousand people in 2002 to 9,2 thousand in 2010. There was a decrease in the number of Greeks, Georgians, and Belarusians. At the same time, we observe a major increase in the number of the Adyghe – from 0.5% (2002) to 1.2% (2010).

According to statistical data, as of January, 2014, the population of Greater Sochi was 455 thousand people.

Below are presented data which describe the ethno-demographic composition of the population of Greater Sochi for the period from 1897 to 2010 (Table 1).

Table 1: The ethno-demographic situation in the territory of Greater Sochi over the period 1897–2010

Years	1897	1917	1927	1959	1989	2002	2010
Size of population, thousand	13,153	70	54,7	187,9	361,2	397,1	420,6
Out of them:							
Russians	2,561 (18.9%)	45 (62%) (lumped together with Ukrainians and Belarusians)	13,4 (24.5%)	131,9 (70%)	254,2 (70%)	268,1 (67%)	282,072 (69.92%)
Armenians	3,857 (28.5%)	21 (~ 30%)	18,3 (33.5%)	23,8 (12.7%)	52,6 (14.6%)	80 (20%)	81,045 (20.09%)
Ukrainians	1,240 (9.2%)	(lumped together with Russians and Belarusians)	8 (14.6%)	15,6 (8.3%)	21,9 (6.1%)	14,5 (3.7%)	9,240 (2.29%)
Georgians	1,001 (7.4%)	N/A	2,7 (5%)	3,0 (1.6%)	5,6 (1.6%)	9,3 (2.4%)	8,190 (2.03%)
Greeks	2,092 (15.5%)	N/A	6,8 (12.5%)	2,1 (1.1%)	4,5 (1.2%)	3,7 (0.9%)	3,292 (0.82%)
Adyghe	746 (5.5%)	N/A	(less than 1%)	2,3 (1.2%)	4,4 (1.2%)	2,1 (0.5%)	4,778 (1.20%)
Belarusians	53 (0.4%)	(lumped together with Russians and Ukrainians)	1,1 (2.1%)	1,9 (1.0%)	4,0 (1.1%)	2,5 (0.6%)	1,765 (0.44%)
Other ethnicities	1,914 (14.6%)	N/A	3 (4.3%)	7,3 (3.9%)	14,0 (3.8%)	3%	13,019 (3.21%)

Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to note that the ethno-demographic picture of Greater Sochi had been forming in a complicated fashion. As a consequence, in the second half of the 19th century the territory had virtually to be settled “from scratch”. Resettlement flows from different locations in the Russian Empire and overseas had formed by 1917 an ethno-picture that featured Russians and Armenians as two principal ethnicities. This picture has not changed in a major way to this day.

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