

# The Russian Empire's Colonial Administration and Decolonization Wars In the Caucasus during the first half of the Nineteenth Century

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## 【要約】

本稿はロシア帝国の植民地統治の実態を明らかにするため、研究事例として19世紀前半にコーカサス総督とコーカサス独立軍総司令官を兼務したミハイル・セミヨーノヴィッチ・ヴォロンツオフ陸軍大将の辺境支配体制に焦点を当てた。そして彼独自の理念と統治手法に基づいた植民地行政と反植民地戦争の鎮圧により、帝国領コーカサスの政治的、経済的、文化的、軍事的統合が達成されたことを明らかにした。

## 1. Russian Empire and Caucasus

This paper focuses on the history of the Russian Empire after the Napoleonic War in the first half of the nineteenth century, when young aristocrat generals were dispatched with their forces to Russian frontiers to expand the empire's territories, and gradually carried out their missions using both administrative authority and military power. These territories included the Grand Duchy of Finland, the Baltic Sea countries, and the Kingdom of Poland in the west, the Siberian steppes in the east, and the New Russia (currently the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukrainian Republic) and the Caucasus in the south. These territories were confronted along their respective borders by European empires, or more specifically the Ottoman Empire and the Persia.

In particular, the Russian Empire experienced great hardships in the Caucasus concerning colonial administration and decolonization wars. The famous Caucasian War (1817-1864) lasted about half a century, led by the “anti-imperialist” and Sufism (Islamic mysticism) leader Imam Shamil (1797-1871), who fought for independence from Russian rules and sought to create a Muslim state with the Caucasian mountaineers. In addition to this war, the Russian colonial administration in Georgia, Armenia, and Shemaha (currently the Republic of Azerbaijan) struggled to establish effective rules over the Caucasian peoples, who had different languages, religions and ethnicities. As a result, the legitimacy of the Russian rules over these areas faced its most critical crisis, and the Russian struggles with this problem ironically induced many significant lessons concerning the difficulties of executing colonization policies as part of the process of modern

empire building.

This problem related to colonization was also experienced by other European empires in their respective colonies. The “anti-imperialistic” and “Islamic” slogans heightened during this period. Some of the examples included the Indian mutiny in the British Empire and the Algerian insurgencies against French conquest, and respectively, both of which operated as part of the European balance of power system in international politics<sup>1</sup>.

From these aspects, this paper will attempt to analyze the Russian Empire’s rules over its Caucasian colony led by Michael Semenovich Vorontsov (1782-1856), who was a Caucasian governor-general (viceroy<sup>2</sup>) and a commander-in-chief of the Caucasian Independent Forces (1845-1854), and demonstrate that his idea and methods of rules contributed to establish an original colonial administration and to subjugate anti-colonial wars for politico-economic integration of the Caucasus with the Russian Empire.

## 2. Methodology: Archival and Historical Approach

The empirical study of this research is based on two primary sources of the Russian archives of the late of nineteenth century. One is the “Collections of Documents of Ancient Literatures in the Caucasian Committee<sup>3</sup>” and the other is the “Archives of Vorontsov Family<sup>4</sup>”. The former source was written by the instruction of Grand Duke Nikolas (1859-1929), who was a Caucasian governor-general and also a famous intellectual. These collections are comprised of twelve volumes and summarize the history of colonial administration and Caucasian wars of the past sixty years since the Georgian kingdom’s annexation on September 1801. These contain many documents and official letters between the Ministry of Army and the Caucasian governor-generals, which are very effective to understand the power relations between the imperial center and the colonial frontier. The latter source was compiled by young Russian officers from 1870 through 1895 and contains many memorandums and official (or private) letters of the Vorontsov family, who was one of the most prestigious families in the Russian Empire. These archives are comprised of forty volumes and official letters and correspondences with the Tsar (Russian Emperor) Nicholas I, Alexander

<sup>1</sup> U. Halbach, “Holy War against Czarism: The links between Sufism and Jihad in the Nineteenth Century Anticolonial Resistance against Russia.” in A. Kappeler and G. Simon, *Muslim Communities Reemerge*, (Duke University Press, 1994). pp. 251-276.

<sup>2</sup> A.H. Rhinelander, *Prince Michael Vorontsov: Viceroy to the Tsar*, (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> (In Russian) Акты, Собранные Кавказскою Археографическою Комиссию (АКАК). Тифлис, 1865-1890.

<sup>4</sup> (In Russian) Архив Князя Воронцова (АКВ). Москва, 1870-1895.

Benckendorff, Alexei Ermolov, Ivan Paskevich, Alexander Chernyshev and others were examined for this paper. Such documents are crucial in determining the broad range of his friendship and political positioning.

In addition, secondary sources include his diary (dictation) during the period in which he served as the Caucasian governor-general, which was written by his subordinate Dondukov-Korsakov<sup>5</sup>, and his biography written by Shervinin, who served as an official secretary for over twenty years. They wrote about his accomplishments as a hero of the “Patriotic War” (in the battlefield of Craonne of 1814), a Russian commander-in-chief of the French occupation corps in Paris (1815-1818), a governor-general of the New Russia and Bessarabia (1823-1844) and a Caucasian governor-general with some praise words for the General of Army<sup>6</sup>. Thus, in order to examine his colonial administration and military strategy, not only the Caucasian official documents, but also his historical personality has been taken into careful consideration to elucidate his idea and character as a Russian imperialist.

### 3. Vorontsov and his Enlightenment

Michael Vorontsov was born on 19th May, 1782 in St Petersburg. The Vorontsov family was one of the most distinguished and wealthy families in the Russian Empire, and produced some noble politicians and educators in the beginning of the nineteenth century. His uncle Alexander Romanovich was the prime minister under the Tsar Alexander I, and Catherine Dashikova was the first president of the Imperial Academy of Sciences and edited the collections of Michael Lomonosov, founder of the Moscow State University in 1775. Ancestors of this family include Viking hero Semenev Africanovich and he accepted the Russian Orthodoxy during the reign of the Yaroslav the Wise of Kiev in the eleventh century<sup>7</sup>.

When Vorontsov was four years old, he moved to England (St. James's Palace), where his father Semenev Romanovich was appointed and worked as the Russian ambassador under Catherine the Great. He eagerly learned not only European liberal arts - Roman-Latin literatures, spiritual cultures and contemporary enlightened literatures of the second half of the eighteenth century, particularly Edmund Burke - and several foreign languages (English, French, Latin and

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<sup>5</sup> Доду́ков-Корса́ков А.М. Князь Михаил Семенович Воронцов. // Старина и новизна. 1902. Кн.5. С. 119-154., Мой воспоминания. Князя Дондукова-Корсакова. СПб., 1902.

<sup>6</sup> Щербинин М.П. Биография генерал-фельдмаршала князя Михаила Семеновича Воронцова. СПб., 1858., Воспоминания М.П.Щербинина. // Русский Архив. 1876. Кн.3. С. 285-313.

<sup>7</sup> АКАК. Т. 10. С. VII.

others), but also his homeland's Russian language and traditional literatures. It was necessary for him to understand such European liberal arts and Russian culture to become a noble aristocrat and a successor of his family, and it should be noted that Vorontsov learned "to become a Russian aristocrat not only by birth, but above all by spirit<sup>8</sup>." He grew into a Russian young general engaged in contemporary European enlightenment ideas and modern civilization, while supporting his father's diplomatic affairs as a private secretary.

In addition, his friendship extended to include many aristocrat generals, especially in the English and Russian aristocrat societies. An interesting episode to make note of this that he experienced the French Revolution of 1789 in London. It is also well known that William Pitt (Pitt the Younger) and young Arthur Wellesley (the Duke of Wellington) met him in St. James's Palace, and about fifteen years later they fought together against Napoleon's French army. Vorontsov returned to the Russian capital on March 1801 and soon became friends with young generals and officers of his generation, who also defended their homeland at the risk of their lives. Russian historian Udovick wrote that the historical character of Vorontsov was as though he was "a best friend for all.<sup>9</sup>" Most importantly, his enlightened ideas and extensive relationships with his friends and acquaintances contributed to the building of strong networks between Europe and Russia<sup>10</sup>, and such network played a significant role throughout his carrier.

However, his anglophilic idea and political positioning were rather exceptional in the Russian Empire because that the Russian enlightenment was considerably influenced by French intellectuals in the era of Catherine the Great, thus their thinking was very similar to that of Decembrist's republicanism and the claim of emancipation of serfs. In contrast, Vorontsov supported the Russian constitutional monarchy and prudently opposed the radical emancipation of serfs similar to the English Conservatives<sup>11</sup>. In a sense, he was a noble aristocrat who was surrounded by many bright and talented friends and subordinates, but remained aloof from the Russian traditional aristocrat society.

#### 4. Vorontsov and his colonial administration in the Caucasus

On November 1844, even at the age of sixty-two and in ill health Michael Vorontsov decided to accept an appointment to the Caucasian governor-general and commander-in-chief of the

<sup>8</sup> Захарова О.Ю. Генерал-Фельдмаршал Светлейший Князь М.С.Воронцов. Москва, 2001. С. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Удовик В.А., Кацук В.О. М.С.Воронцов и А.С.Пушкин. СПбГУП, 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Rhinelander, A.H. Prince Michael Vorontsov: Viceroy to the Tsar. McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990.

<sup>11</sup> Авалиани С.Л. Граф М.С.Воронцов и Крестьянский Вопрос. Одесса, 1914.

Caucasian Independent Forces. He received a personal letter from Tsar Nicholas I in his own Alupka Palace, at which time he ordered the famous English architect, Edward Blore, to build a structure that incorporated styles ranging from Gothic revival to Arabic revival in the Crimea<sup>12</sup>. The letter expressed that the Tsar's concern about the adverse effects of the colonial rule in the Caucasus since the annexation of Georgian kingdom. In the north Imam Shamil restarted to lead anti-Russian and Sufism wars in Chechen region and the Dargo fortress with many Caucasian mountaineers, and in the south the colonial administrative reform in 1840 was not able to obtain sufficient results. The Caucasian Committee, which was set up by the Minister of Army Chernyshev in the capital, decided to establish two prefectures in the Caucasus and divide it into two, East-West Georgia and Dagestan. However, this division did not reflect on Caucasian historical contexts and did not function effectively<sup>13</sup>. Therefore the Tsar and the Russian Empire desperately needed a distinguished aristocrat general who "had both brilliant military achievements and government career as an administrative general or officer with full trust and honor from his majesty"<sup>14</sup>.

At first Vorontsov had refused to accept this appointment because of his old age, but soon changed his mind and decided to obey the Tsar's order and command. His official secretary, Shervinin, wrote on his memorandum that Vorontsov stated. "I would not have been Russian if I dared not go everywhere the Tsar wanted"<sup>15</sup>." This phrase symbolizes his historical character as a great aristocrat general and a colonial imperialist. He arrived in Tiflis<sup>16</sup> on March 1845 with his family, subordinates and forces, and he started to reconstruct the Caucasian colonization and to put an end to mountain wars to break the sieges of Imam Shamil using absolute authority and military power.

In Georgia, first he created the new Supreme Council, where Russian generals and Georgian noble aristocrats could participate together, and concentrate the administrative power in the Caucasian secretariat of the government-general. His talented subordinates were put into important positions of the government-general to limit the power interference from the capital. At the same time, he started to investigate all titles of the Georgian peerage to reestablish Russian rule under the allegiance to the Tsar Nikolas I. For this policy, he set up two "temporary investigative commissions" in Tiflis and Kutaisi (west Georgian main city). These investigative commissions

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<sup>12</sup> In Japanese, HANADA, T. "The Vorontsov Palace and its Cosmopolitan Space." In *Slavic Eurasian Studies*, No. 23. Hokkaido University, 2008. pp. 73-79.

<sup>13</sup> Полное Собрание Законов Российской Империи (ПСЗ). Т. 64. 13368.

<sup>14</sup> АКВ. Кн. 40. С. 499.

<sup>15</sup> Там же. С. 499.

<sup>16</sup> Vorontsov changed the name of Georgian capital from Tbilisi to Tiflis, because the word "Tiflis" was more similar to "Georgian pronounce". This name lasted until 1936.

categorized all Georgian aristocrats, clans, tribes and the extended families into five types.

【Classification of all Georgian aristocrats<sup>17</sup>】

1. The princes, princesses and noble aristocrats or the feudal lords of old Georgian kingdom acknowledged by the new Supreme Council
2. The noble aristocrats or the feudal lords of old Georgian kingdom that needed to be investigated by the commissions in Tiflis and Kutaisi
3. The aristocrats who needed to be investigated regarding their titles in Tiflis
4. The aristocrats who needed to be investigated regarding their titles in Kutaisi
5. The aristocrats whose titles were rejected by the commissions

Among these the aristocratic titles of the first and second categories were recognized and their family crests were registered into the Caucasian secretariat of the government-general. The third, fourth and fifth categories were investigated by the commissions. As a result, some aristocrats were deprived of their titles, and they had to work for free as farmers for the Georgian vineyards and forestry.

In fact, these administrative methods of rules facilitated the effective integration of indigenous peoples and the society of old Georgian kingdom in the Russian Empire. It is very interesting that he also created the new Supreme Council which included the local political elites, strengthened administrative power of the secretariat of the government-general and appointed his talented subordinates to important positions in the government-general when he was the governor-general of New Russia and Bessarabia. Vorontsov's distinctive ideas and historical character which reflected on his philosophy of dominance played a significant role in Caucasian colonial administration so much.

Vorontsov also contributed to the economic development in the Caucasus. He improved local infrastructures (roads, ports, bridges and rivers) and positively encouraged the production of farms and factories, particularly Georgian red wines and Armenian cognacs<sup>18</sup>. He also bought several high-performance steamships from English shipping company to export Russian products to the western European markets from the Caspian and Black Sea through the Mediterranean<sup>19</sup>. The promotion of such industrial development and construction of the establishment of the distribution networks were possible because of Vorontsov's personal background of being well immersed in

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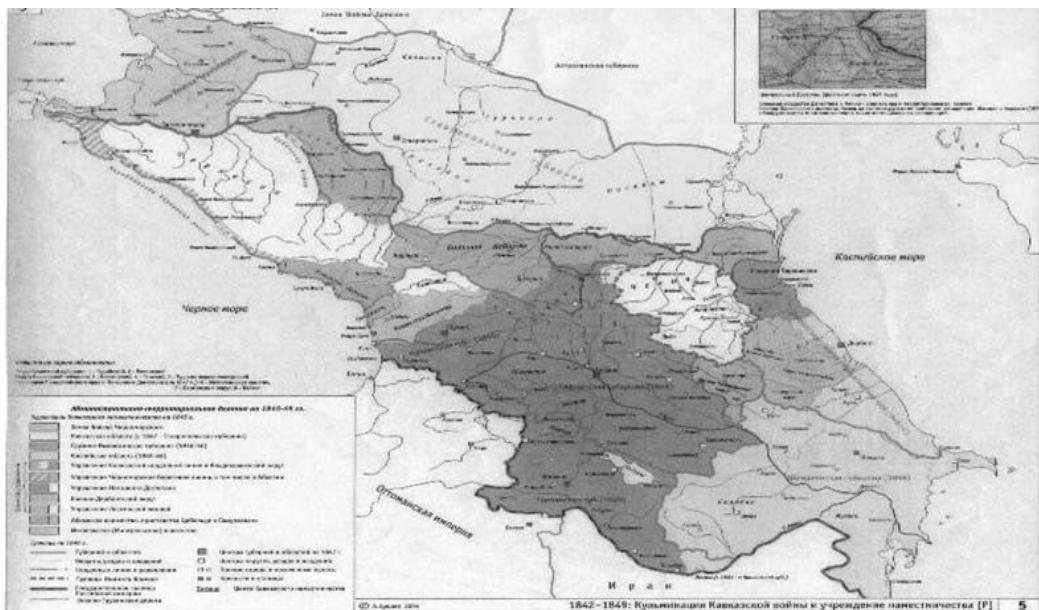
<sup>17</sup> AKAK. T. 10. C. 46-47.

<sup>18</sup> Tam же. C. 17-20.

<sup>19</sup> Tam же. C. 833.

enlightened ideas as well as utilizing his European connections, which was unheard of in the Caucasus before. I must be noted that this is not only an economic development, but also the integration of the Caucasus with the Russian Empire, thus, it is presumed that his economic methods of rules also functioned effectively for the colonial administration as well.

【Map.1. Caucasian Map in 1842-1849<sup>20</sup>】



## 5. Military Strategy in the North Caucasus

As a commander-in-chief of the Caucasian Independence Forces, he deliberately inspected the war situation, the Sunja river front, the Grozny fortress and the north Dagestan front in the end of April 1845<sup>21</sup>, and decided to launch an all-out attack to the Dargo fortress that was stronghold of the Sufism. This war program had already been completed before his arrival in Tiflis<sup>22</sup>, and he executed an order to march straight into the North Caucasus. The Caucasian Left Army soon occupied the Chir-Yurt and the Fubar fortresses in June. However, while they kept attacking the Andy fortress that was also the stronghold of Sufism, Imam Shamil had already abandoned the Dargo fortress and

<sup>20</sup> Цициев А. Атлас Этнополитической истории Кавказа (1774-2004). Москва, 2006. С. 21.

<sup>21</sup> АКАК. Т. 10. С. I-III.

<sup>22</sup> Дегоеев В.В. Три силуэта Кавказской войны: А.П.Ермолов, М.С.Воронцов, А.И.Барятинский. // Большая Игра на Кавказе: история и современность. Москва, 2001. С. 180.

retreated to the Caucasian mountain range. The Caucasian Left Army led by Vorontsov was completely encircled by the Caucasian mountaineers and they fell into the guerrilla trap of “hit-and-run tactics”. The Russian army was devastated by the surprise attacks, which resulted in more than 9000 casualties.

After this tragic defeat Vorontsov judged that it was impossible to conquer and defeat Imam Shamil and Sufism in North Caucasus like the all-out attack of the Dargo campaign, therefore revised a new military strategy to encircle them with a long-term war program and consequent small-scale battles. He started to deforest on a large scale in north Dagestan to prevent from the mountaineers’ raids. Through this military strategy the Russian army’s mobility improved, and the attacks by the musketeers (artillerymen) became much more effective. In addition, new fortresses (Hasab-Yrt, Achihoi, Urs-Martan) were constructed in the vast deforested lands and the mountaineers were deprived of their living spaces.

Small-scale battles immediately began for the encirclement operations in the Caucasian mountains. Special attention was given to the nature and climate of the North Caucasus, which was reflected in the new military strategy. He thought that, “in autumn and winter when the leaves of the forest withered it was preferable to launch an attack in north Dagestan, and in summer it was preferable to do so in the vast plains<sup>23</sup>. The Russian army succeeded in occupying the Gergebri and the Sarto fortresses, and gradually forced Imam Shamil to the mountain’s interior.

Moreover, this new military strategy was crucial in the “mental conquest” of the mountaineers to reduce their morale. He understood the importance of alienating the mountaineers from Imam Shamil to conquer these wars, thus actively utilized anti-war propagandas and accepted surrenders in the Russian army. Such mental operations were also effective, and though he retired as the governor-general in 1854, the Caucasian war ended on August 1859, which was truly a victory of his strategy. It is needless to say, of course, the long-term war program and consequent small-scale battles resulted in Russian triumph.

## 6. Vorontsov’s lessons and the Russian Empire

To conclude, Vorontsov played a significant role as a frontier leader in the Caucasus, who utilized both the administrative authority and military power entrusted in him by Tsar Nikolas I. The Russian Empire overcame the most critical crisis against the legitimacy of Russian rules because of his efforts and achievements. In the course of the history of the Russian Empire, few of Vorontsov’s

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<sup>23</sup> AKAK. T. 10. C. XI.

subordinates were appointed to important positions such as governor-general in the second half of nineteenth century. For example, Konstantin Kaufmann was the Turkistan governor-general in 1867-1882, a young officer, who had fought against Imam Shamil. The implication of such appointments thereafter suggest that there was a continuation of “Vorontsov’s legacy” as his government and military services brought about crucial lessons for the Russian Empire concerning the philosophy of dominance.