The beginning of comprehensive studies of the nature and population of Ciscaucasia in the XVIII century

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Abstract. The paper covers the history of geographical studies of Ciscaucasia carried out by academic expeditions of the 18th century. Large-scale expeditionary activities of this period marked the beginning of comprehensive studies of the nature and economy of the northern part of the Caucasus, made it possible to collect geographic information on the territory. New information contributed to the development of new research areas, formed a basis for the development of new textbooks and cartographic materials. The information about the Pre-Caucasus enriched science. It has a scientific value.

1. Introduction

The second half of the XVIII century is a bright page in the history of geographical research of the Caucasus. It is associated with activities of academic expeditions. It marked a new era in the development of geography. Expeditionary activities were aimed at studying remote territories of the Russian Empire and synthesizing information about its nature and population. The idea of expeditionary studies in the Russian Empire belonged to M.V. Lomonosov (1711-1765). European education shaped his views. He wanted to see Russia an enlightened and developed European country. St. Petersburg Academy established relations with German states and had great prestige in Europe [1].

Prior to the second half of the XVIII century, there was only scattered information on the territories of the Russian Empire. Most of the data were obtained by travelers. Military departments played a crucial role in collecting and accumulating information about the Caucasus. Diverse natural conditions of the Caucasus, the multinational composition of the population, traditions, religion, unique ethnocultural values, trade exchange between nations were research areas. All this determined the most important task of the expeditions: implementation of the socio-political order, collection of information about the natural wealth of Russia, especially its north-eastern and southern territories. Activities of academic expeditions are covered in many literary sources and archives [2, 3]. However, there are many “white spots” which can be of scientific interest for modern scientists.
2. Materials and methods

Research materials are literary and archival sources. Historical research methods, complex scientific analysis were used as research methods.

3. Results

Geographical information about the Caucasus has been accumulated since antiquity. The routes of European travelers of the XIII-XV centuries passed through the Caucasus. A. Nikitin (15th century) was one of the first Russian travelers who collected information about his journey, including the Caucasus. His route to India covered the Caspian coast of the Caucasus, Persia. However, detailed geographical information about the Caucasus was obtained thanks to the activities of 18th century academic expeditions. The wide coverage of issues, the scope and content of the research program had no analogues in the scientific world.

In 1768-1774, the Imperial Academy of Sciences sent five expeditions, three of which were from Orenburg (P.S. Pallas (1741-1811), I.I. Lepekhin (1740-1802), J.P. Falk (1727-1774) and two ones were from Astrakhan (S.G. Gmelin (1744-1774) and J.A. Güldenstädt (1745-1781). The main goal of these expeditions was to collect information about the nature and population of the little-studied territories of Russia. Uniform instructions, plans c and routes were developed for the expeditions [4–6]. The expeditions had to collect information on destroyed monuments, ruins, barrows, graves, tools and other material evidence that could be attributed to archaeological monuments. At the same time, special attention was paid to coins and their origin [2]. “They should make every effort to spread their knowledge and increase it, so that all memorable things such as animals, birds, fish, insects, and will be described” [7]. According to the instructions, the leaders of the expedition were obliged to send their reports to the Academy.

Noting the socio-political significance of the expeditions, M.A. Polievktov (1935) writes: “The expedition of the Academy of Sciences serving economic interests and aspirations of the nobility of feudal Russia of the second half of the XVIII century ... examined the southeast of European Russia and a number of adjacent areas. Gmelin and Güldenstädt captured the entire Caucasus” [3, p. 12].

Expeditionary teams headed by J.A. Güldenstädt and S.G. Gmelin were the first ones sent to the Caucasus (the Astrakhan academic expedition of 1768-1774). Young J.A. Güldenstädt was instructed to examine vast territories of the south-east of the European part of Russia. The Caucasus route of J.A. Güldenstädt ran through Kizlyar, Kabarda, Ossetia, Georgia [8]. He was entrusted with "... a survey of those areas of the Caucasus where in the XVI-XVII centuries Moscow State carried out surveys but which were not covered by the Russian Russian Caucasus studies of the 13th century” [3, p. 123]. There are detailed descriptions of Güldenstädt route through Novgorod, Pskov, Old Russia, Ostashkov, Rzhev, Mozhaisk, Moscow, Tula, Yelets, Voronezh, Tsarskyn and Astrakhan. Güldenstädt went to Kizlyar, examined its surroundings, banks of the Kambile, Sunzha, Aksai, Koisu and other rivers. He conducted surveys of oil fields and mineral springs [3].

Complex studies of the route of the expedition headed by Güldenstädt (1768-1775) are of great value from a scientific point of view, because factual materials were collected. Numerous reports, diaries and cartographic materials collected by J.A. Güldenstädt are stored in St. Petersburg branch of the archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences [9, 10, etc.] and published in a number of papers [11–13]. The results of his work formed a basis of many works which contain detailed descriptions of his travels [3, p. 125]. One of the works is highly appreciated by the scientific community: “... For the Caucasus, mainly Northern and Reisen Georgia, J.A. Güldenstädt’s work is crucial. It covers all aspects of natural science (especially botany and zoology), provides information on local productive activities (agriculture, silkworm breeding, mining, oil, manufacturing, etc.) and trade, ethnography and history of the region; dictionaries of Georgian, Mingrelian, Svan, Circassian, Chechen and other languages and the Caucasian adverb are given .. ”[3, p. 125].The information about the geographical location of the Caucasus Mountains and their general natural conditions, the Terek river and its tributaries, Caucasian villages and peoples (statistical data on the number, customs, customs, religion, etc.), industry and the economy, etc. have not yet lost its scientific significance. This was written by K. German (1809) in the preface to
the Geographical and Statistical Description of Georgia and the Caucasus: “Güldenstädt’s journey through Russia and the Caucasus Mountains contains precious data...” [11].

The route of the expedition headed by S.G. Gmelin passed through Astrakhan, the Terek estuary, Derbent and Baku, the coastal part of the Caspian Sea. They visited Shamakhi, Salyan, Iran. From 1771-1773, they explored the entire coast of the Caspian Sea. S.G. Gmelin had to study the Caspian region. S.G. Gmelin began his journey from Astrakhan, visited “… northeastern Ciscaucasia, western and eastern shores of the Caspian Sea…” [3, p. 116]. He had to study areas of the Caucasus which attracted attention of Western European and Russian travelers [3, p. 116]. The program developed by the Academy of Sciences was intensive. Gmelin's research results formed a basis of his five-volume description of his journey. Detailed information on natural history, ethnographic descriptions of various ethnic groups of the Northern Ciscaucasia were obtained. Gmelin described Astrakhan and Astrakhan territory, Mozdok, Kizlyar, Derbent; flora, fauna, political relations, history of the region, historical monuments [3, p. 116]. Descriptions are accompanied by illustrations and maps. Gmelin’s handwriting and other materials are stored in the St. Petersburg ARAS [14–16, etc.]. The most important results of his research (valuable scientific materials, observations, records and travel diaries) were processed and published by Güldenstädt and Pallas in 1777-1806 [17].

The expedition headed by P.S. Pallas was crucial. They did a lot in the field of geography, geology, paleontology, botany, history, archeology, economics, philology. Pallas is known as a scientist and naturalist. “They had to examine all areas of the “Russian Empire””; this expedition focused on the south-eastern sector of European Russia, the Urals, the Caspian region, the Caucasus and part of the Black Sea. A significant contribution to the study of this part of the Caucasus was made by the second expedition (1793-1794 (to the Astrakhan region) [3, p. 156]. Throughout the journey, Pallas kept detailed records. The factual material collected became a basis for his famous work “Journey to different parts of the Russian state” which was a reference book for many generations of scientists [17]. Pallas paid significant attention to the reliability of information and considered this to be the main feature of journey descriptions. Pallas made it possible to raise the level of knowledge in various scientific fields. He studied water, soil, farming, diseases and treatment methods, beekeeping, sericulture, and cattle breeding. He studied the mineral wealth and mineral waters, arts, crafts, crafts, etc. P.S. Pallas collected all sorts of information about customs and beliefs of the peoples [17]. P.S. Pallas headed the scientific expedition of J.A. Güldenstädt after his tragic death in 1781. For three years, P.S. Pallas worked on his manuscripts and diaries. The result of this work was the two-volume book “Journey to Russia and the Caucasus Mountains (1787-1791) (J.A. Güldenstädt) published in Germany and translated into Russian in 2002 [18].

The Caucasian route of J.P. Falk (1768-1775) passed through Astrakhan and Kizlyar. He investigated the Terek greenhouses and Kizlyar waters [17]. There is not much information about Falk in the domestic and foreign historical literature. During the journey to the Russian Empire, he collected a lot of factual materials that are stored in the St. Petersburg branch of ARAS [6]. Falk’s records were processed by his contemporaries who tried to translate Falk's texts. Moreover, the recordings were made in three languages. Materials on the flora are of great importance. J.P. Falk tried to make the most accurate descriptions of nature (plants, animals), life and activities of the population. Many entries were made in three foreign languages. Materials collected by J.P. Falk were being processed for many years. The main results were published in the first quarter of the XIX century [19].

4. Conclusion
Academic expeditions of the eighteenth century opened an era of integrated geographical research. Valuable factual materials on the nature, ethnography, folklore, religion, traditions and customs of the peoples of the Caucasus were collected and systematized. Detailed information on the natural and cultural wealth of the Caucasus was collected. Drawings, descriptions, plans of archaeological monuments were created. This was part of the geographical description of the territories of the Russian Empire [20]. Of particular interest were field materials on
natural resources of the North Caucasus [9]. The results of the expeditions were used in scientific publications and cartographic materials on the Caucasus. Information collected by academic expeditions enriched geographical information about poorly explored territories of the Caucasus. The latest information on the territories of Russia allowed Russia to strengthen its political influence in the world. This paper continued a series of works on the history of geographical studies of Ciscaucasia whose results were published in a number of papers [21, 22, etc.].

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